



Islamabad POST

Tuesday, November 24, 2020

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Price Rs. 20

PM Imran for all steps to check spread of virus

Detailed News On Page-01

Facilitating the Pak-Afghan trade necessary: Qaiser

Detailed News On Page-08



China rebukes US for Treaty withdrawal

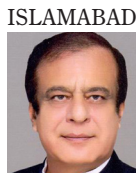
Detailed News On Page-07



Briefs

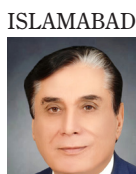
PDM's small rallies threat to people

RANA FARRUKH



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Senator Shibli Faraz on Monday said the small rallies of PDM were a threat to the lives and livelihoods of the people and not to the government. The "political opportunists" had no care for the people as they were wandering in cities in search of an NRO (National Reconciliation Ordinance), he added in tweets. The minister said the disappointment and frustration of the PDM leaders after their flopped meeting in Peshawar.

NAB has great regard for business community



ISLAMABAD: Justice (RET D) Javed Iqbal Chaudhary said that NAB has great regard for the valuable services of the business community in the progress and prosperity of the country. Talking to a delegation of Pakistan Flour Mills Association led by Asim Raza Khan, Chairman Punjab Flour Mills Association comprising of Muhammad Riaz, former Chairman Punjab, Muhammad Jamil, former Vice Chairman, Munir Ahmed, Secretary General and Malik Ghulam Mustafa Arif at NAB Headquarters. He said that NAB is not pursuing the sales and income tax related cases of the business community. – APP

Schools closure decision to contain virus



ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination Dr Faisal Sultan on Monday said the government had taken the timely decision of closing educational institutions to contain further spread of the coronavirus in the country. The prevailing corona situation in all the provinces was kept in view as there were a threat of increase in the number of its patients across the country which could further overload the already overburdened health system, he told. – APP

Educational institutions shut till Jan 10

The decision has been made during the Inter-Provincial Education Ministers Conference (IPEMC) on Monday

NIHAL MIRAJ / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Education Shafqat Mahmood on Monday said that all schools across the country will remain closed until January 10, 2021, in the wake of the rising coronavirus cases. "All ministers have mutually decided that to keep all educational institutions, including schools, colleges, universities, and tuition centres closed. However, online classes will continue from November 26 to December 24 after which winter break will start. Schools will reopen on January 11, 2021," Shafqat Mahmood said.

- Nov 26 – All students to start studying from home
 - Dec 24 – Last day of online classes
 - Dec 25 to Jan 10, 2021 – Winter holidays
 - Jan 11 – Schools to resume activities after reevaluation of the situation in the first week of January
 - Professional exams including MDCAT 2020 to be held as per schedule
 - Board exams to be pushed to June
- The decision has been made during the Inter-Provincial Education Ministers Conference (IPEMC) convened to discuss school closures. Minister Shafqat Mahmood said

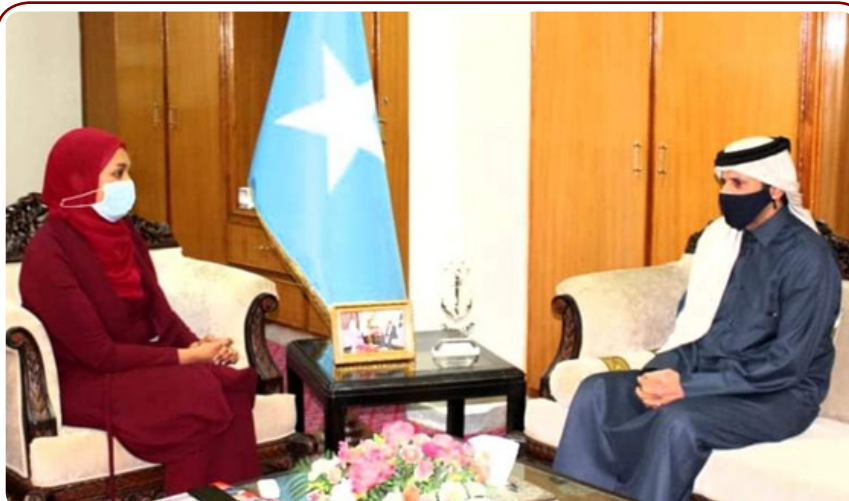
PM for all steps to check spread of virus

ANSAR BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Monday directed to take all possible steps to check the spread of COVID-19 pandemic in the country and protect the lives of common people. He also directed to summon the meeting of National Coordination Committee on COVID-19 for consultation and taking various decisions in that regard. The prime minister was presiding over a high level meeting to review the overall situation of coronavirus in the country.

that children's health and safety is the top-most priority of the government, adding that examinations scheduled to take place in December will be postponed, with the exception of a few professional exams.

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Qatar called on Ambassador of Somalia Khadija Mohammed Almakhoum, on Monday. – DNA

Govt to seek donors' help to buy vaccines

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: The government has decided to approach international donors for financial assistance to purchase COVID-19 vaccines. The government can contact the World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB) and UNICEF for funding for the bulk-buying of doses of the vaccine. The health ministry will approach the multilateral donors through the Economic Affairs Division. It will negotiate with them for financial

Continued on Page 06

PM Imran summons cabinet session

ANSAR BHATTI / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan has summoned a session of the federal cabinet today to discuss a 14-point agenda. The federal cabinet will review the political and economic situation of the country besides discussing the developments of coronavirus pandemic and ongoing political campaign of the opposition parties. The cabinet members are likely to give approval to the recommendations by a relevant committee for institutional reforms. The decision for the appointment of the heads of public sectors and extension in loan payments of G20 countries can be made in the upcoming session. Moreover, the federal can also mull over the issuance of NOC for the payment of dues to the Indian broadcasters.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of China Nong Rong in a meeting with Railway minister Sheikh Rasheed. – DNA

State Bank maintains policy rate at 7%

ATHAR SUFI

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) on Monday announced to maintain the interest rate at 7%, saying it expected inflation to fall within the previously announced range of 7-9% for fiscal year 2021 (FY21). The decision to retain the current policy rate was made in a meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) earlier today, the SBP said in a statement issued Monday.

Since September, "the domestic recovery has gradually gained traction, in line with expectations for growth of slightly above 2% in FY21, and business sentiment has improved further. Nevertheless, there are risks to the outlook", it observed. The SBP's MPC added that although the coronavirus cases were rising both in Pakistan and across the globe, "it could take some time to fully implement worldwide, there has been recent encouraging news on vaccine development".

Indian diplomat summoned

ISLAMABAD: A senior Indian diplomat was summoned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs today to register Pakistan's strong protest over ceasefire violations by the Indian Occupation forces along the LoC on 22nd November 2020, resulting in serious injuries to 11 innocent civilians. The Indian occupation forces along the LoC and the Working Boundary (WB) have been continuously targeting civilian populated areas with artillery fire, heavy-caliber mortars and automatic weapons. This year, India has committed more than 2820 ceasefire violations to date, resulting in 26 shahadats and serious injuries to 245 innocent civilians. – DNA

Pak, China agree for ML-1 early execution

The federal minister thanked the ambassador for Chinese partnership for the ML-1 project

NAVEED MIRAJ

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Railways, Sheikh Rashid Ahmad and Ambassador of China to Pakistan, Nong Rong in a meeting held here Monday agreed to intensify efforts for early completion of Karachi-Peshawar Main Line-1 project of Railways. "The ML-1 project would bring revolution in the railway sector of Pakistan through creating new employment and business op-

portunities for the people", Sheikh Rashid said during the meeting. The federal minister thanked the ambassador for Chinese partnership for the ML-1 project saying, "This would further strengthen the Pak-China relations". He said Pakistan and China had been enjoying everlasting friendship which was based on mutual trust and confidence. The meeting discussed matters of mutual interest, Pakistan-China relations and

rail projects in detail. Earlier, the Railway Minister welcomed the new Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan on his arrival at the Ministry of Railways and presented a bouquet of flowers to him. Speaking on the occasion, the Chinese ambassador expressed his wish for further improvement in Pakistan-China relations. He said the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project was a manifestation of the long-standing relationship between the two countries.

'Taliban rigging drones to drop bombs'

KABUL: The Taliban have deployed small drones to drop bombs on government forces in some recent attacks, Afghanistan's spy chief said Monday, illustrating a new fighting method used by the insurgents. Ahmad Zia Shiraj, who heads the National Directorate of Security (NDS), said Taliban fighters were using hobby drones and rigging them with explosives. "The drones they are using are sold in the market. They are basically camera drones," Shiraj said in an address to parliament, adding the NDS wants to stop the import of the popular devices. In late October, the Taliban reportedly used a drone to bomb the compound of the governor of Kunduz province. Shiraj did not confirm the report, but he noted that the Taliban have used drones in Kunduz and Pakia provinces. While the technique is new to the Taliban, Islamic State (IS) militants operating in Iraq and Syria started using toy planes and hobby drones in 2016 to carry explosives.

NATO to decide Afghan status early next year

DNA

KABUL: NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said that the US is going to reduce military troop levels in Afghanistan but they are not going to leave. No NATO Ally would like to stay in Afghanistan longer than necessary. At the same time, if we leave too early, if we leave too hasty, we may risk losing all the gains we have made; and that's a risky project. Speaking to Halifax International Security Forum, Stoltenberg said that NATO would have to make the decision early next year on whether to stay or to leave Afghanistan.

IS maintain a small but deadly presence in Afghanistan and have resisted years-long efforts by the US and Afghan forces to wipe them out.

Saudi Arabia approves 48-hour, 96-hour transit visit visas

ISLAMABAD: Saudi Arabia has approved issuance of transit visit visas for a validity period of 48 hours (two days) and 96 hours (four days) costing Saudi Riyal 100 and SR300 respectively. The Council of Economic and Development Affairs and the Cabinet's General Committee, as well as the decisions of the Shura Council, local has recommended for the issuance of short-term visit visas for transit passengers. The cabinet decided to amend a paragraph of the Schedule of Visit, Hajj and Transit Visas by land, sea or air in this regard, the Saudi Gazette reported. The cabinet's decision came in the framework of improving and developing the regulations related to the entry visas to the Kingdom. The new move will add fillip to the Saudi tourism sector as the authority expects hundreds of passengers will make use of this. Before suspending international air services due to the COVID-19 pandemic, hundreds of passengers had passed through the kingdom's airports on daily basis. – Agencies

Inside...

NHA striving for up-gradation of road networks in Balochistan – Page 02

Importance of water preservation discussed – Page 03

NAVTTTC, TVET inaugurate centre of excellence in ICT – Page 04

NCHD: A face of human development – Page 05

Oxford AstraZeneca Covid vaccine has up to 90% efficacy, data reveals – Page 06

China rebukes US for 'Open Skies Treaty' withdrawal – Page 07

Facilitating Pakistan-Afghan trade necessary, says Qaiser – Page 08

Secret Israeli PM, Saudi Crown Prince meeting

Israel has long had clandestine ties to Gulf Arab states that have strengthened in recent years as they have confronted a shared threat in Iran

DNA

TEL AVIV: Israeli media reported on Monday that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu flew to Saudi Arabia for a clandestine meeting with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, which would mark the first known encounter between senior Israeli and Saudi officials. Hebrew-language media cited an unnamed Israeli official as saying that Netanyahu and Yossi Cohen, head of Israel's Mossad spy agency, flew to the Saudi city of Neom on Sunday, where they met with the crown

prince. The prince was there for talks with visiting United Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. A Gulfstream IV private jet took off just after 1740 GMT from Ben-Gurion International Airport near Tel Aviv, according to data from website FlightRadar24.com. The flight traveled south along the eastern edge of the Sinai Peninsula before turning toward Neom and landing just after 1830 GMT, according to the data. The flight took off from Neom around 2150 GMT and followed the same route back to Tel Aviv. The Israeli prime minister's office did not respond



to requests for comment. Pompeo traveled with an American press pool on his trip throughout the Mideast, but left them at the Neom airport when he went into his visit with



the crown prince. While Bahrain, Sudan and the United Arab Emirates have reached deals under the Trump administration to normalise ties with Israel, Saudi Arabia so far has

remained out of reach. King Salman long has supported the Palestinians in their effort to secure an independent state. However, analysts and insiders suggest his 35-year-old son, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, is likely more open to the idea of normalising relations without major progress in the moribund peace process. The kingdom approved the use of Saudi airspace for Israeli flights to the UAE, a decision announced the day after Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law and senior adviser, met with Prince Mohammed in Riyadh. Bahrain normalising

ties also suggests at least a Saudi acquiescence to the idea, as the island kingdom relies on Riyadh. Israel has long had clandestine ties to Gulf Arab states that have strengthened in recent years as they have confronted a shared threat in Iran. Pompeo has tried to coax the Gulf powerhouse to follow its neighbours, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain, in establishing formal relations with Israel – a rapprochement built largely on shared concerns over Iran. Saudis have allowed Israeli airliners to overfly their territory to newly available Gulf destinations and to Asia.

Saudi ministry denies report

RIYADH: The spokesperson of the Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia has denied that Prime Minister of Israel visited Saudi Arabia on Sunday and met with the Crown Prince Muhammad bin Suleman. According to monitoring reports, the Saudi foreign ministry on Monday denied that any such visit took place. However the Saudi foreign ministry confirmed that the meeting that took place on Sunday was between Saudi and US officials. The Israeli education minister however sticks to his stand that the his prime minister met with the Crown Prince. – DNA

Briefs

ANF arrest
two drug
peddlers

KARACHI: The Anti Narcotics Force (ANF) Sindh on Monday arrested two drug peddlers, intercepted a parcel at a courier company and seized drugs in three separate actions.

The ANF Police Station Gulshan Iqbal arrested an accused of inter-provincial drug cartel namely Jasif s/o Sufi Muhammad after recovery of 25 kg heroin from a truck at Al-Asif Square Sohrab Goth, Super Highway, said a news release.

In another action at Al-Asif Square Sohrab Goth, Super Highway, the ANF PS Gulshan Iqbal arrested Muhammad Javed s/o Jumma Gul and recovered 750 grams of hashish from his possession. The ANF Clifton PS intercepted a parcel at a courier company office and recovered 250 grams of heroin tactfully concealed in boxes of bangles. The parcel was being sent to Holland. Cases have been registered and further investigations are underway. — APP

ANF destroys
9.487 ton
drugs

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Anti Narcotics Force (ANF) has organized Central Drug Burning Ceremony at DHA Valley in Islamabad on Monday. Muhammad Azam Khan Swati Federal Minister of Narcotics Control graced the occasion as Chief Guest. Other prominent participants were included Federal Secretary Ministry of Narcotics Control, DG ANF Pakistan, Foreign Dignitaries, officials of law enforcement agencies, high ranking military and civil administration, heads of academic institutions, international partners on drug control NGOs civil society, sports organization, celebrities, sports star, media persons and students from different educational institutions.

Addressing the occasion, Director General ANF Major General Muhammad Arif Malik said that menace of narcotics is not only a curse, but is one of the most damaging and life threatening feature for humanity and highlighted that no signal country or organization can fight against drugs independently, it is a shared responsibility both at global and domestic level.

He added that this region produces over 90% of the world's opiates which puts Pakistan in double jeopardy of being a victim as well as a transit country due to efforts of ANF Pakistan is enjoying status of poppy Free State since 2001 as per standards of UNODC.

This aspect has been greatly admitted at various International Forums. He added that this year ANF has launched Nation Wide "Anti Drug Campaigns" in various cities, with special focus on the Educational Institutions. ANF is striving for its absolute elimination to achieve the goal of "Drug Free Society" and vigorously executing its assigned tasks with utmost dedication and determination.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Human Rights, Shireen Mazari met with Special assistant to PM on religious affairs Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi. — DNA

NHA striving for up-gradation of
road networks in Balochistan

About 106 km two-lane Highway from Basima to Khuzdar, has the estimated cost of Rs 19188.435 million with the allocation of Rs 4400 million in the current fiscal year

DNA

ISLAMABAD: National Highway Authority (NHA) has been striving for the realization of the present government's plan of modernization, up-gradation and expansion of nationalized road infrastructure in Balochistan to bring the province at par with the developed areas of the country. Under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) 2020-2021 an amount of Rs 10,000 million has been allocated for Zhob to Kuchlak Road which forms part of China Pakistan Economic Corridor Western alignment. Estimated cost of the project is Rs 63081 mil-

lion. About 106 km two-lane Highway from Basima to Khuzdar, has the estimated cost of Rs 19188.435 million with the allocation of Rs 4400 million in the current fiscal year. For construction of black top road Yakmach-Kharan via Dostain-Wadh-Khurmagai, which has estimated cost of Rs 13758 million, Rs 1500 have been specified in the current PSDP, the document said. Rs 900 million have been allocated for Qila Saifullah Lora Lai Waigum Rud section of N70, out of which Rs 750 million is foreign aid. For 81 km Zhob- Mughal Kot section of N-500, Rs 900 million have been earmarked out of which Rs 750 million is foreign component.

As far as widening and strengthening of National Highway Rakhi Gaj-Bewata section of N-70 was concerned, Rs 1000 million have been allocated which also included Rs Rs 500 million foreign aid. Estimated cost of the project is Rs 22994.660 million, according to the document. For the construction of Dera Murad Jamali Bypass having estimated cost Rs 2105.954, allocation of Rs 1000 million has been made in the current PSDP. Rs 4000 millions have been earmarked for the construction of Hoshab-Awaran Section of M-8 (146 km), with the estimated cost of Rs 25835.893 million. Construction of Ziarat Mor — Kech — Harnai Road (107.2

km) and Harnai-Sanjavi Road (55.1 km) (Deposit Work) would cost Rs 8379.075 million and in the current fiscal year an allocation of Rs 100 million has been made. Dualization and improvement project of 210 km existing N- 50 from Yarik — Sagu — Zhob including Zhob Bypass has estimated cost of Rs 76486.231, million. In the present fiscal year Rs 1000 million have been allocated for the project out of which Rs 500 million is foreign aid. For 82 km Jhal Jaho-Bela Section deposit work which has estimated cost of Rs 12343.400 million, Rs 1000 million have been allocated in current fiscal year. For deposit work of Nokundi-

Mashkhel Road, part of China Pakistan Economic Corridor having estimated cost of Rs 7708.911million, Rs 1000 million have been specified this fiscal year. For 23 km Quetta Western Bypass, which has Rs 6890.569 million, Rs 1500 million have been allocated this year. Rs 500 million have been earmarked for 118 km rehabilitation, upgradation and widening project of Quetta — Dhadhar Section of N-65 which has estimated cost of Rs 7115.760 million. For widening, improvement and rehabilitation of 2m96 km remaining portion of Kararo — Wadh Section of N 70, having estimated cost of Rs 1659.840 million, an allocation of Rs 300 million has been made.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan was given detailed briefing on COVID-19 at Islamabad. — DNA

Huawei
for digital
Pakistan
vision

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is one of the fastest-growing and maturing ICT markets in the region today. The nation's leaders recognize that digital infrastructure forms the building blocks of a more intelligent society, and that the people who work within the sector are helping to spur all local industries forward while contributing to the Digital Pakistan Vision. Nurturing local talents thus essential for Pakistan to reap the full benefits of digitalization, to unlock more opportunities for people and business, and to accelerate national recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic. A talent-focused and "innovation" mindset is the only way to address the requirements of a more digital-centric and sustainable future.

PPP
workers
clash with
police in GB

GILGIT: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) workers burnt the office of Forest Department and four vehicles in protest against alleged rigging in Gilgit-Baltistan elections. Protesters also pelted stones at a fire brigade vehicle. The situation in the area was tense.

A large contingent of police rushed to the spot to control the enraged PPP workers and charged with batons and aerial firing to control the situation. On the other hand, the PPP leadership has strongly condemned the firing and shelling on the protesters. "Our workers have the right to peaceful protest against rigging in Gilgit-Baltistan," said a statement issued by Sherry Rehman. Shelling and firing on peaceful protesters is reprehensible. Sherry Rehman in her statement said that PTI has gone blind in its greed for power. Those kept hostage the whole country for 126 days cannot not tolerate the peaceful protests of the PPP. She alleged that PTI workers conspired to create chaos by burning vehicles. She alleged that the Chief Election Commissioner sides with the PTI. He is not conducting a forensic audit of the votes as per the agreement. She said that those who closed the whole country on the basis of four constituencies were not conducting forensic audit of one constituency on our demand.

'Police
recruitment
process to be
made more
transparent'

DNA

LAHORE: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab Inam Ghani on Monday said that the recruitment process should be made more transparent to make capable and hardworking human resource a part of Punjab Police. Presiding over a meeting on welfare and recruitment of police force at the Central Police Office here Monday, he directed that services of psychologists should also be used for better analysis of the mental abilities of the candidates in the interview session so that highly minded and constructive personnel could be hired. He added that the candidates would undergo the best training process as per modern policing under the supervision of expert trainers in training colleges.

He said that those responsible for deliberate delays in cases related to obtaining leave of employees, GP fund and financial assistance did not deserve any concession against whom strict departmental action would be taken. The IGP said that in view of the growing dangers of Corona, officers and personnel on duty in police offices, units, police stations and field across the province should ensure precautionary measures against Corona while they should be provided with face masks, sanitizers and safety kits.

Inam Ghani said that if any district needed resources or assistance in providing security equipment for protection against Corona, it should immediately contact the Central Police Office.

Pakistan Navy establishes
free medical and eye camp

KARACHI: In continuation to Pakistan Navy efforts to provide standard health facilities along the Coastal areas prominently under COVID-19 scenario, Pakistan Navy in collaboration with Rotary Club International, Al-Mustafa Trust & Sahil Welfare Association established a Free Medical & Eye Camp at Ketu Bandar, Sindh.

A qualified and dedicated team of doctors comprising Medical Specialist, Eye Spe-

cialist and GDMOs examined the patients on modern diagnostic equipment and extended free consultation. The patients were also provided with free medicine and minor surgical and dental procedural treatments. Additionally, Patients were comprehensively briefed and enlightened about various infectious diseases and their preventive measures particularly against COVID-19 pandemic. Beside, patients were also educated

about maintaining personal health & hygiene, child health care and sanitation of living areas. A large number of women and children requiring medical assistance benefited from the Medical/Eye camp. Pakistan Navy as a manifestation of its commitment, provide continued quality medical treatment along Coastal belt. The present medical assistance drive is another demonstration of this Nobel resolve. — DNA



NOVEMBER 2020

Pakistan's Premier News & Diplomatic Affairs Magazine

Find us on:

www.centrelines.com.pk

www.dnanews.com.pk

www.islamabadpost.com.pk

@ Postislamabad / @Editordnanews

A sister concern of

Islamabad POST

11# Block 18-A, Awan Plaza,
G-8 Markaz, ISLAMABAD-PAKISTAN
Ph: 051-2261960, 051-2266165



Briefs

CDA conducts operation against hoarders

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Capital Development Authority (CDA) conducted operation against encroachments at various sites in capital on Monday. According to a press release of CDA, the successful operation of the authority removed encroachments from roads, streets, markets and other places. The department of enforcement of CDA is conducting operation against encroachments for last couple of days. The areas in which operation has been conducted include, I-8, Khhana pul, Tarlai, Pindora Chungi, Bari Imam, G-9, G-12, I-14, and IJP road, the PR added. The citizens were facing a number of difficulties due to encroachments in the city. A number of citizens had registered complaints against the encroachments. The Chairman CDA has directed the department of enforcement to take all the necessary measures against encroachments. The department has removed the illegal stalls, building material from roads, illegal rooms and wash rooms, and a 100 feet illegal wall in Mairabadi during its operation in the city.

RCB issues notices to 70 non license traders

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi Cantonment Board (RCB) has issued notices to seventy shopkeepers running their businesses without trade licenses in the cantonment area. According to details, RCB has decided to take strict action in accordance with the law against non license holder traders. RCB, Food Control Department in this respect conducted operations against non license holders and served warning notices to over 70 bakeries, general stores, dairy shops, medical stores, chicken shops and others in different areas of Dhoke Syedan Road, Kalma Chowk, Bakra Mandi, Afshan Colony, Dhoke Mustakeem Road, Saham Road, Tench Bhatta, Masrial Road and other areas. The department also received a large number of applications and issued new licenses to 50 shopkeepers who had met all the requirements and collected over Rs 100,000 revenue. – APP

Exhibition on ‘AI in healthcare’ starts today

ISLAMABAD: A two-day workshop and exhibition on “Artificial Intelligence in healthcare” will start at COMSTECH on Tuesday with a number of researchers and practitioners deliberating upon use of AI for developing smart healthcare system. The event is being arranged by COMSTECH in collaboration with Sir Syed CASE Institute of Technology. Federal Minister for Science and Technology, Chaudhry Fawad Hussain will grace the occasion as guest of honor. This event is being organized under the kind patronage of Prof. Dr. Atta-ur-Rahman, Chairman Prime Minister Task Force on Information Technology. Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Chaudhary, Coordinator General COMSTECH and Prof. Dr. Shoab A. Khan, founder CARE, Islamabad are the chair and co-chair of the event respectively. The objective of this International workshop and exhibition is to bring together the researchers, industrialists and practitioners interested in the specification, design, and development of AI to cultivate smart healthcare systems that will improve personal healthcare in a better way. Intelligent hospital management, health software architecture, framework, design and engineering, internet of things for healthcare.



ISLAMABAD: Daughter of Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan performs during Islamabad Foreign Women Association Charity Bazaar held at Islamabad Serena Hotel. – DNA

Importance of water preservation discussed

Conference on “Water Security Challenges and Conservation Strategy for Pakistan” was jointly organized by Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad and Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF) Pakistan

STAFF REPORT / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad and Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF) Pakistan jointly organized a Conference on “Water Security Challenges and Conservation Strategy for Pakistan” at Margala Hotel, Islamabad. The discussion commenced with the opening remarks by Major General Hafiz Masroor Ahmed (Retd), Vice President, CGSS who stated that water is not important for life, water is life and has immense significance for life. Dr. Steffen Kudella, Resident Representative, HSF Pakistan in his welcome remarks stated that Pakistan is one of the most naturally arid countries in the world. It has an average of only 240 mm of rainfall per year. Around one fourth of the country’s land area is cultivated, and most of this agriculture is water-intensive and dependent on man-made irrigation systems. These irrigation systems need to be efficiently maintained. Pakistan’s dependence on a single river system is extremely risky. In order to reduce this risk, the country needs to: fight water shortages, promote reforestation, maintain water infrastructure, harvest more rainfall, and strengthen its water management. Water also needs to become a topic of regional dialogue. Regional dialogues on water need to be prepared by discussions on Pakistan’s national level first.

Dr. Yusuf Zaraf, TI, Former Chairman, Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) stated that water security is Pakistan’s most critical development challenge. 95% of water goes to agriculture and major user of field water is agriculture. We have taken 70 years to use water for electricity. It is expected that water scarcity will be much higher by 2025. The latest national water policy was issued by the Government of Pakistan in 2018 and new Federal Ministry for Water Resources was made. We are not making any small dams and are also exposing the population to consistent flooding. Water pricing for all wages must be made and there should be better governance and coordination among the Ministries. Dr. Muhammad Ashraf, Chairman, Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources (PCRWR) stated that no country has made progress without science and technology. Our national security is dependent on food security and food security is dependent on water supply and security. In 1991 and 2005, we touched water scarcity line and it is expected to become worse by 2025. There is a huge pressure on ground water, anyone can install tubewells to pump and sell unlimited ground water.

Mobile phones imports increase 43.60%

Pakistan imported mobile phones worth US \$556.783m during July-October (2020-21) as compared to the imports of US \$387.741m during July-October (2019-20), showing growth of 43.60 percent

ISLAMABAD: The import of mobile phones has witnessed an increase of 43.60 percent during the first four months of current financial year (2020-21) as compared to the corresponding period of last year. Pakistan imported mobile phones worth US \$556.783 million during July-October (2020-21) as compared to the imports of US \$387.741 million during July-October (2019-20), showing growth of 43.60 percent, according to the latest data issued by Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). Meanwhile, year-on year basis, the import of mobile phones however witnessed a decrease of 46.15 per cent in October 2020, compared to the imports of mobile phones in October 2019. Mobile phone imports during October 2020 were recorded at \$63.890 million compared to the imports of \$118.653 million in October 2019. On a month-on-month basis, imports of mobile phones also decreased by 65.75 per cent during October 2020, as compared to the imports of \$186.530 million during September 2020, according to the data. – DNA

Gang involved in looting people at gunpoint busted

ISLAMABAD: Criminal Investigation Agency (CIA) of Islamabad Police has arrested four members of a dacoit gang including his leader and recovered snatched cash, mobile phones, stolen motorbike and weapons from their possession, a police spokesman said. Following directions of Inspector General of Police, Islamabad Muhammad Amir Zulfikar Khan, Deputy Inspector General of Police (Operations) Waqar Uddin Syed assigned special task to SP (Investigation) to ensure arrest of those involved in house burglaries. A special team constituted by SP (Investigation) Malik Naeem Iqbal, under the supervision of CIA Hakim Khan including Sub-Inspector Naeem Tahir and others busted a gang involved in looting people at gunpoint in the areas of Ramana and Noon police station. The accused were identified as Muhammad Tanveer, Muhammad Saeed, Ali Akber resident of district Sahawal and Rana Azam resident of district Sargodha and recovered snatched cash. – APP

Annual Festival 2020 postponed

ISLAMABAD: PNCA has postponed its Annual Festival 2020 in regards with the increasing cases of COVID-19 in Capital. According to an official announcement on Monday, government’s decision of refraining from public gatherings, PNCA had postponed Annual Festival due to serious health risk as the second wave of the pandemic was on the rise in the country. – APP

Stage play “Bhook” presented at PUCAR

DNA

RAWALPINDI: A stage play based on social issues was presented under aegis of Punjab Council of the Arts which was written and directed Zulfikar Ali Awan. Yar Muhammad, Saeed Anwar, Lubna Shahzadi, Anjum Abbasi, Naeem Toota, Shagufta Khan, Arshan Khan and others were among the caste of the play. The main theme of the play was unequal distribution of wealth in society which created disturbance in that ultimately boosts crime. The difference between rich and poor increased in past 70 years. Rich people are getting richer and richer and the poorer are becoming poorer. A large number of people showed up in the auditorium for watching drama. Deputy Director PUCAR Sajjad Hussain was also present on the occasion; he said that stage was a big platform to highlight the social problems of the society. Only by overcoming social divisions we can fulfill the dream of making Pakistan great, he added.

Defunct lights along Monal route pose danger

ISLAMABAD: The majority of the road lights, en-route Monal restaurant, are dysfunctional for since long, posing grave threat to the life and properties of motorists, who swarmed the lovely tourist location especially after sunset to take a glimpse of twinkling lights of the city from hill top. More than half of the lights along the 9km hilly route, having many dangerous sharp curves, require Capital Development Authority’s (CDA) urgent attention for overhauling to ensure tourists’ and locals’ safety. Talking to APP, Ishfaq Ahmed said he narrowly escaped an accident last week after he encountered a drove of pigs en route Monal that appeared suddenly from green areas along the hills. The motorist, who visited the Monal restaurant along with his family, said he was lucky enough to escape the accident, adding the situation needed rectification measures from authorities concerned to save the life and properties of people. Ijaz Ahmed, a motorcyclist from Rawalpindi, said in his opinion, two wheelers were more prone to accidents on the route along Daman-i-Koh as motorists coming from opposite side use high beams, creating more visibility problem due to darkness on the road. He also urged for early restoration of the out-of-order lights for public safety. – APP

Rs 299.7 bln released for social sector uplift projects

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Government has released Rs 299.7 billion for various ongoing and new social sector uplift projects till date under its Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) 2020-21. The released funds include Rs 198.344 billion for federal ministries, Rs 76.46 billion for corporations, Rs 24.15 billion for special areas, and Rs 750 million for the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA), according to the latest data released by the Ministry of Planning, Development and Reform. The total PSDP allocation for ERRA for the year 2020-21 is Rs 1.5 billion. Similarly, Rs 53.4 billion out of PSDP allocation of Rs 118.67 billion has been released for the National Highway Authority, Rs 23 billion out of Rs 158.3 billion for the National Transmission and Dispatch Company (NTDC), and Rs 43.2 billion out of Rs 81.2 billion for the Water Resources Division. Likewise, Rs 14 billion out of allocated fund of Rs 29.4 billion has been disbursed to the Higher Education Commission, Rs 175 million out of Rs 350 million to the Pakistan Nuclear Regulatory Authority. The Railways Division has received development funds of Rs 11.7 billion, the Interior Division Rs 7.38 billion, and the National Health Services, Regulations, and Coordination Division Rs 6.88 billion. Similarly, the Revenue Division has got Rs 2.56 billion, and the Cabinet Division Rs 38.2 billion. Likewise, the government also released Rs 13 billion out of PSDP allocation of Rs 27.24 billion for development projects in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Rs 11.15 billion out of Rs 25 billion for Gilgit Baltistan projects. – APP

Five held for refilling gas cylinders illegally

RAWALPINDI: Police have arrested five accused for illegally refilling gas cylinders and selling petrol openly here on Monday, informed a police spokesman. During course of action, Saddar Barooni police have also confiscated material and instruments from their possession. The arrested accused were identified as Ayaz, Inayatullah, Faizan, Mati-ur-Rehman and Yasir. Police have registered separate cases against all of them. – APP

Briefs

IGP pins badges to four promoted police officials

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Muhammad Aamir Zulfiqar on Monday pinned the badges to four police officials for their promotion in next ranks. A simple ceremony was held at Central Police Office here and IGP formally pinned badges to the four newly promoted officials. DIG (Headquarters) Muhammad Saleem, DIG (Operations) Waqar Uddin Syed, AIGs, SSPs and SPs attended the ceremony.

AIG Haroon Joya has been promoted to Grade-19 while ASPs Rana Abdul Wahab, Hamza Aman Ullah and Usman Tipu have been promoted to Grade-18. The IGP congratulated these police officials and hoped for their best contribution towards effective policing.

Islamabad police chief said that responsibilities of promoted officers have increased and they have to work with more dedication to accomplish their task. He hoped for their better output in future and urged them to work hard for protection to the lives and property of citizens. The feelings on promotion cannot be described in the words, the IGP said and greeted all the officials. He hoped that the officers would observe their professional duties with more honesty in next ranks and would facilitate the general public through their professional attitude as well as hard work.

Collaborative digital ecosystem imperative

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In the wake of Covid-19 pandemic, where Pakistan experienced accelerated digital adoption, there was also a significant boost in the use of digital payments. In a recent dialogue held by the Institute for Policy Reforms, Irfan Wahab Khan, CEO Telenor Pakistan, spoke about the significance and scope of digitizing the payment ecosystem through strategic partnerships and an enabling business environment.

Irfan Wahab Khan spoke about the significance of digital payments in the larger digital ecosystem and shared some policy suggestions to make Pakistan a cashless society. He also mentioned that the potential contribution to GDP of digitizing payments is up to \$45 billion over the next five years and through policy interventions we can encourage our 75 million unbanked population to be financially included.

Karandaaz runs digital experiments program

ISLAMABAD: Karandaaz Pakistan with the support of Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) and UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) is running a Digital Experiments Program to support the digital financial service (DFS) players. This program facilitates the private sector institutions to undertake experiments using the A/B testing research technique to address the barriers related to uptake and active usage of digital accounts, said a press release issued here Monday.

This is an ongoing program and interested DFS providers such as mobile money operators, fintech, and startups working in the realm of DFS can apply at any time through Karandaaz website <https://bit.ly/3e4BKIQ>. A special focus of these experiments is on testing ideas, products, services, and incentive structures that can accelerate the uptake by excluded and underserved segments, especially rural women. The key areas of interest for the experiments are the conversion of inactive/non-users to active users through variation in communication strategies; increase in user's engagement on digital accounts by product level changes; testing of price elasticity on payment transactions by end-users; and promotion of mobile account usage by conducting financial inclusion focused experiments, especially targeting women. — APP



ISLAMABAD: CEO Serena Hotels Aziz Boolani in a group photo with the organisers of Islamabad Foreign Women Association Charity Bazaar held at Islamabad Serena Hotel. — DNA

NAVTTC, TVET inaugurate centre of excellence in ICT

The ceremony was attended by Shafqat Mahmood, Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training as chief guest along with the Ambassadors of the EU, Germany and Norway. Both the dignitaries laid the foundation stone for the CoE

DNA

ISLAMABAD: National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTC) in collaboration with TVET has started establishing the second out of five Centres of Excellence (CoEs) aimed at improving the quality of technical and vocational education and training in the country. The ground breaking ceremony of CoE Islamabad, being established at the National Training Bureau, was held here on Monday.

These centres were being established under the donor-funded TVET Sector Support Programme (TVET SSP). The ceremony was attended by Shafqat Mahmood, Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training as chief guest along with the Ambassadors of the EU, Germany and Norway. Both the dignitaries laid the foundation stone for the CoE. The Centres of Excellence aim to promote excellence in the training delivery for youth and



TVET practitioners, hence supporting the development of a skilled and competitive workforce and improved employment opportunities. The establishment of the CoEs is a very important part of the support being provided by TVET SSP, which is funded by the European Union and the governments of Germany

and Norway. TVET SSP is being implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH in close collaboration with the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTC), Technical Education and Vocational Training Authorities (TEV-TAs) and a number of public and

private sector organizations at national and provincial levels. Speaking at the occasion, Education Minister emphasized the need for such Centres of Excellence, adding that the completion of this Centre will pave the way towards allowing the Pakistani TVET system to sustainably improve delivery of training and as-

essment, career counselling and job placement. The CoEs will be state-of-the-art facilities ready to offer training for TVET practitioners and vocational students alike, he added. The CoEs will be places to both learn and implement TVET and to serve as a hub for communities of practice and private sector engagement. The close linkage to the private sector will ensure the relevance of the training for the economy. It will lead to skilled human resources that meet the needs of the labour market. This will ultimately result in an improved image of the TVET sector in the country. Mr. Mahmood further said that the groundbreaking ceremony testifies the importance the present Government at the Federal level gives to the TVET sector. He added that the involvement of the private sector in all steps of the value chain, from the design of training content to training delivery and assessment is key to ensure that the offered services are market-driven.

Musical ceremony to bid farewell 'Kavaan' held

ISLAMABAD: A musical ceremony to bid farewell to Kavaan an elephant of Islamabad zoo was arranged here on Monday at Marghazar Zoo. In his brief address, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Climate Change (SAPM) Malik Amin Aslam, who was chief guest on the occasion, said Kavaan will be leaving for Cambodia on November 29. He said Sri Lanka had gifted Kavaan to Pakistan around 35 years ago but now Kavaan is near to his retirement age. Normally elephant's living age is between 40-45 years. "Our main purpose to shift Kavaan to other country is that he should live in natural habitat and remain happy in days to come" he said. He said the area where Kavaan was going about 25000 acre as it is a herd animal which faces issues when live alone. Kavaan

got mentally sick when lived alone and had various health issues. But now Kavaan has been declared by the relevant committee to travel to cambodian sanctuary, he added. Minister further said Kavaan was the centre of attraction among people however it is a sad day but he has to go. He said Russian chartered plane would take Kavaan to Cambodia. According to Amir Khalil, a veterinary doctor, "When I came in contact with Kaavan, it was moving head on right and left side for 18 hours in a day due to which it was going through various psychological issues. Now it feels quite better and also developed a positive change in its behavior otherwise it was infamous for its aggression towards the employees of the zoo". — APP



ISLAMABAD: Special assistant to the Prime Minister of Pakistan for climate change, Malik Amin Aslam giving favrewell to Kavaan. — DNA

FPCCI signs MoU with MUSIAD, Turkey

He expressed his gratitude for signing the MOU with MUSIAD because the global economic and trade dynamics are changing due to emerging challenges especially after the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) signed an MOU with MUSIAD, Turkey to facilitate trade and business opportunities between Pakistan and Turkey. The Virtual Signing Ceremony was held by video-link. Sheikh Sultan Rehman, Vice President Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce

and Industry said that this MOU is the first step towards strengthening and revitalizing trade between Pakistan and Turkey. Abdurrahman KAAAN, President MUSIAD said in his introductory remarks that MUS AD EXPO attracts more and more exhibitors and a wider diversity of industries each year, and continues to bolster and enhance trade. The MUSIAD EXPO 2020 Fair is organized at TÜYAP Fair Convention and Congress Center

in Istanbul – Turkey. Embracing innovation and keeping abreast of global trends, MUSIAD EXPO Fair receives support and demand from across the world. MUSIAD Expo welcomes exhibitors from numerous industries and hosts networking events, panel discussions, and B2B business meetings. He said that Signing MOU with the FPCCI Pakistan will provide unique trade opportunities for exhibitors and visitors of both countries.

Sheikh Sultan Rehman stated that FPCCI, being the apex body of trade and industry in Pakistan is engaged in the promotion of Pakistan's global trade. He expressed his gratitude for signing the MOU with MUSIAD because the global economic and trade dynamics are changing due to emerging challenges especially after the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. He hoped that this MOU will remove bottlenecks and barriers that are imped-

ing our economic and trade relations. The holding of exhibitions, B2B meetings, and exchange of trade delegations should be encouraged and would further promote bilateral trade. He hoped that this MOU would help to bring closer the business communities of the two countries for a meaningful and substantial increase in economic activities between Pakistan and Turkey and pave the way for economic prosperity through trade expansion.

CTP organises Mehfil Milad

RAWALPINDI: City Traffic Police Rawalpindi organised Mehfil Milad to pay homage to Holy Prophet (PBUH) in connection with celebration of Rehmat-ul-Alamin week observed on the directives of Chief Minister Punjab Sardar Usman Buzdar here on Monday, informed Police spokesman. Inspector Abdul Shakoor and Inspector Humayun participated as special guests. A number of traffic wardens Athar, Kashif Sabri, Raheel, Abdul Basit and Traffic Assistant Arsalan Azram presented Naat in honor of Rehmat-ul-Alamin. The speakers while addressing on the occasion shed light on Holy Prophet (PBUH) biography and said that he is the source of guidance for the people, his message is a beacon for humanity of every color, every class and every region of the world. Muslims should live their lives according to the Qur'an and Hadith and the teachings of the Holy Prophet so that they can be successful in this world and in the hereafter. At the end of the ceremony, special prayers were offered for peace and national security. — APP

Infinix Note 8 is up For Grab

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Infinix the leading smartphone brand of Pakistan has now opened up pre-orders for the highly-anticipated Note 8 series. The Infinix Note 8 and Note 8i is exclusively available for pre-order from Daraz for Rs. 29,999 with a free sports Bluetooth earphones as a gift from Infinix on every pre-order with Note 8. After the successful launch of the Note 7 series earlier this year, the smartphone company bumped up its predecessor's specs to launch this new addition in the Note family. The Note 8 is equipped with 64MP quad-camera set-up 16 MP Selfie camera and a portrait lens next to it to capture every precious moment anytime, anywhere. Infinix Note 8 series is powered by the MediaTek Helio G80 chipset for smooth gaming experience. Note 8 series is equipped with 6GB of RAM and 128GB of expandable storage to store more ultra HD quality pictures and videos. Not only this, Note 8 is backed by a 5,200 mAh battery that charges at a super-fast speed of 18W with type-C. The phone runs an Android 10 and has a 6.95 HD+ dual infinity-O display with immensely slim bezels to enhance better viewing experience. The second variant from the Note 8 series, the Infinix Note 8i, also powered by the MediaTek Helio G80 chipset. As for the camera set-up, the Note 8i boasts an 8MP primary selfie camera and a quad-camera set-up at the back with a 48MP primary lens.

'449 new COVID-19 cases reported in capital'

ISLAMABAD: National Command and Operation Center (NCOC) on Coronavirus Monday said 449 new COVID-19 cases were reported from the federal capital during the last 24 hours. According to an official of NCOC, as many as 392 cases were reported on Sunday while 458 cases were reported on Saturday which was the second highest number of cases reported in a day during the last one month. He said so far 27,018 cases were reported from the federal capital and 279 deaths were reported from Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) while 21,806 patients had been recovered completely. Meanwhile, on the direction of Ministry of National Health Services, the district administration of Islamabad had continued smart lockdown in different streets of the federal capital to reduce transmission of the infection in the selected streets and other sectors. They also started taking actions on violation of standard operating procedures (SOPs) related to the coronavirus while visiting marriage halls, markets and petrol pumps by its inspection teams. — APP

Restructuring taxation

A NEW report by the IMF, given to the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), highlights the drawbacks and inefficiencies of the Pakistani tax system and proposes changes in policy to counter the problem. Focusing on tax exemptions and a regressive sales tax, the report brings to attention the fact that our taxation system not only goes against international standards but is also highly inequitable—advantaging a certain class at the expense of the others. The FBR itself admitted that the degree of tax exemptions given to industries, businesses and groups have increased throughout the course of the year, but only for the purpose of enhancing productivity. What needs to be understood is the fact that this productivity is one that the debilitating status quo desperately needs. A spurt in production would alleviate the burdened economic system of Pakistan. However, if we continue with policies that aim to provide relief through the readjustment of the next fiscal year, it may as well be too late.

Secondly, not only do these tax concessions play to the benefit of a privileged class but matters are made worse when we get an understanding of the sales tax policies in Pakistan. Traditionally, a sales tax should make up for a small portion of the government's revenue. However, this kind of taxation accounts for the majority of the government's revenue—going against established global standards. Furthermore, it is also debilitating in nature for the masses that seem to have to pay a higher portion of taxes, when taking into consideration their income amounts, than the well-off minority. This inherently prejudiced tax system is one that needs to either be abolished or minimised substantially to cater to the interest of the people.

The IMF report proposes many changes to existing policy that will help organise the system of taxation in Pakistan so long as officials are willing to, and open-minded enough to, incur drastic but needed changes.

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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

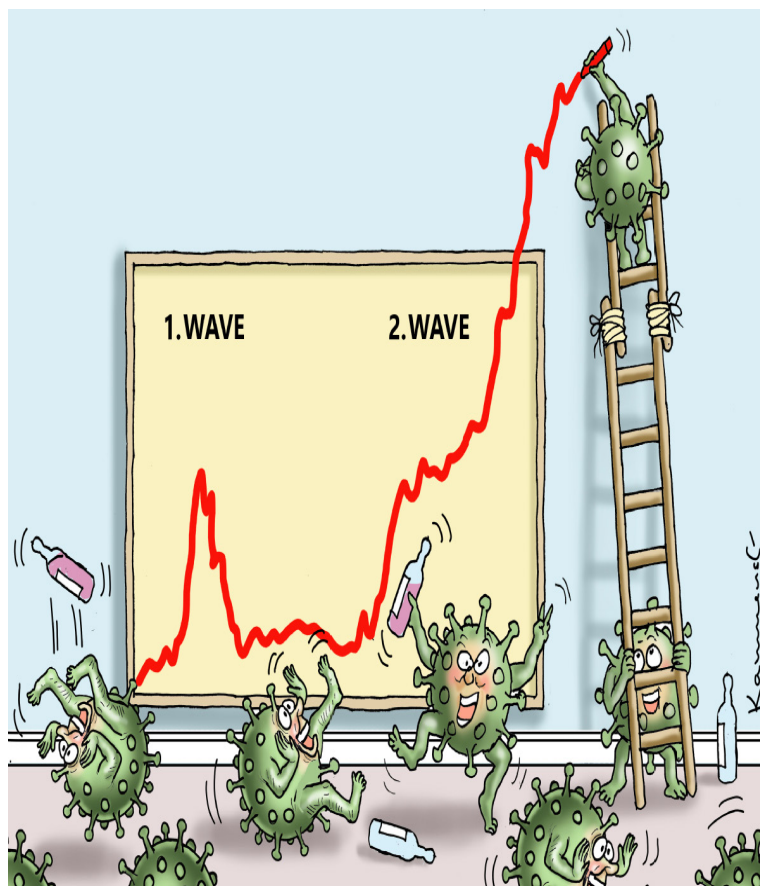
ABC CERTIFIED

Vol: 01 Issue: 206

Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960

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



Unbundling railways

IT was a long time coming. The unbundling of several state-owned enterprises, including Pakistan Railways (PR), PIA and Pakistan Steel Mills (PSM), as announced by Adviser to the Prime Minister on Institutional Reforms Dr Ishrat Husain, must have surprised nobody, as the state-owned institutions' constant inefficiencies and failures had made it clear that some drastic but necessary changes were due.

While the restructuring of PIA and PSM had been announced before, the news about reforms within the PR is new. According to Dr Husain, the restructuring plan of PR had been approved by the federal cabinet and the organisation would be divided into five entities. Where one of the five companies will comprise a regulator, independent of PR and it will regulate safety measures and take action on accidents. The second company will look after ML-1, the third company will take care of the railways track and will be solely supervised by the government, while the fourth and fifth companies have been tasked to deal with freight and passenger issues respectively.

These are a set of reforms planned by the government to transform the state institutions which have had apparent failures, without completely overhauling them. This is the right step forward in reforming the railway system, as improved avenues of better performance and a more structured approach will lead to more efficient service in the long run.

Yet the government must remember that previous governments have announced plans of unbundling before as well, in 2010. Earlier, the government has considered complete privatisation too. Still, despite plans of unbundling, PR has seen financial and management crises. As PR becomes increasingly involved under CPEC, it is clear the inefficient management cannot continue. To make the reforms this time truly have impact, the government, first of all, needs to ensure there is complete transparency with every step, and that the five companies' reports to the regulators are thorough and direct. Only then can these reforms of "unbundling" without complete privatisation be successful.

NCHD: A face of human development

Hassan Baig



NCHD has completed the 'Mainstreaming of Madaris' project in Federal Areas and currently implementing ALP syllabus in 100 Deeni Madaris in the provinces. NCHD is currently supporting Directorate General of Religious Education (DGRE) through all its districts offices and 137 Staff as District Registration & Facilitation Officers. NCHD may be given full responsibility of this important national initiative in future as it is the only Federal organization with an access and mandate to work throughout Pakistan in wake of 18th Constitutional Amendment

HUMAN Development is defined as the process of enlarging people's freedoms & opportunities and improving their well-being. Human Development is about the real freedom, which ordinary people have to decide who to be, what to be and how to be. Now, Health and Education have also been acknowledged & included as the most important drivers of human development. The dismal picture of Human Development in Pakistan as portrayed in UNDP Human Development Index (HDI) Report has indeed raised the eyebrows of many across Pakistan. I being representative of the only National Commission for Human Development (NCHD) am the most effective in the series. Unfortunately, Pakistan's HDI value for 2019 is 0.560 which put the country in the medium human development category, positioning it at 152 out of 189 countries and territories. Following the UN Millennium Summit held in September 2000, where Pakistan became a signatory to the targets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), improvement in the status of human development in Pakistan assumed urgency.

In order to convert this concept into reality, the then President of Pakistan established a Task Force on Human Development (September 2001), with a mandate to find innovative solutions to improve and fill implementation gaps in social service delivery at the grassroots in the sector of Education, Health and Poverty Alleviation. The following deficiencies in delivery of social services in Pakistan were identified by the Task Force:

- Inadequate capacity, competency and managerial

efficiencies within:

- Government line departments
- Elected representatives
- Private sector delivery system (NGOs, CBOs)
- Lack of community participation and decision making rights;
- Lack of integration/coordination in planning and implementation; and,
- Gaps in service delivery, quality and financing.

After extensive research the panel proposed a National Commission to lead the country in a coordinated manner towards human development. Thus, NCHD was established as a Federal Autonomous Body under Cabinet Division by a Presidential Ordinance in 2002, and mandated to support the district line department, elected representatives and Civil Society Organizations, in Education, Health and Capacity building of the Line Departments, launched a phase wise program on Literacy and Universalization of Primary Education (UPE) based on the adapted best practices, in the whole of the country, with the approval of the Federal Government. However from July 29, 2011 NCHD has been placed under the Federal Education and Professional Training Division by amending Rules of Business 1973.

NCHD is an innovative public private partnership (PPP) between the Government of Pakistan and Pakistan Human Development Fund (PHDF) for improving social sector delivery to deal with the challenges of human development in Pakistan. NCHD takes a holistic approach to human development, focusing on people's needs. It works through existing frameworks to leverage human and financial resources, building capacity, raising awareness, promoting community participation and volunteerism, and encouraging public-private partnerships. The Commission successfully overcame the initial challenge of delivering social services on a 'scale' and established outreach nationally in a brief span. NCHD started its operations in 2002 in just two districts, Mardan and Narowal. Since then it has scaled up its network, and its programs are now being implemented in 134 districts/administrative units out of total 150 Districts across Pakistan. The main premise of the human development approach is that expanding peoples' freedoms is both the main aim of, and the principal means for sustainable development. If inequalities in human development persist and grow, the aspirations of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will remain unfulfilled.

Accordingly, NCHD is well poised to assume a pioneering role in reshaping and influencing the movement for social change in Pakistan. NCHD as per its mandate conferred upon through the ordinance and The Decision of the Honorable Supreme Court of Pakistan is a potential organization to support the government in achieving the following Sustainable Development Goals by the year 2030.

- End poverty in all its forms everywhere (Goal #1)
- End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition.(Goal # 2)
- Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all age.(Goal # 3)
- Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. (Goal #4)
- Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.(Goal #5)
- Ensure access to water and sanitation for all. (Goal #6)
- Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.(Goal #8)
- Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts (Goal#13)
- Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies (Goal #16)

NCHD has vast experience of running large scale programmes related to MDGs, EFA i.e. Education, Health, Capacity Development, Poverty Alleviation, Environment Protection etc. There is a responsibility gap at the national level with regards to Govt. of Pakistan's International and regional commitments like SDGs and Vision 2025. NCHD may be given the responsibility to address the responsibility gap. No special legislation will be required to assign the desired role to NCHD and the most important of all no Start-up Cost will be required. It is the only potential organization to achieve the international commitments and SDGs' Targets in Pakistan. One of the Prime mandates of NCHD is to help Pakistan achieve the target of 90% literacy as envisioned in the vision 2025 in order to achieve this goal, the commission has prioritized and a two pronged approach towards this:

a. Dealing with the back log of adult illiterates by implementing Adult literacy programs in the communities.

b. Ensuring that all children should be enrolled and retained in schools for the completion of full primary schooling cycle through its Universal Primary Education Program.

In order to achieve gender equity, equality NCHD launched its mass Literacy initiative in August 2002 to support the Ministry of Education. The goal of the Program is to enhance adult literacy in Pakistan, with special emphasis on female literacy. NCHD realizes that the issue of female literacy is built on sharply differentiated gender roles. Therefore, the issue of planning, gender mainstreaming, programming and matching resources for equitable provision of female education has to be addressed. Over the long run, it is expected that educating females will improve the status of women in Pakistan. NCHD Literacy program has been recognized both internationally and at the national level. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization has conferred the UNESCO International Reading Association Literacy Award for 2006 on the recommendation of the International Literacy Prize Jury on the NCHD for increasing the literacy ratio in Pakistan by implementing a community based and effective intervention design. The Award consists of a medallion, prize of US \$ 20,000 and a certificate. Recognizing the achievement of increasing the literacy ratio and the nation-wide scale (covering all districts and federal agencies) of the NCHD in field of literacy, the President of Pakistan has declared the NCHD as Lead Agency for Literacy in Pakistan. First and foremost, NCHD has been working with the Federal and Provincial Governments through their education departments in primary education to achieve the target of 100% enrolment of children (age group 5-7 years) in schools. Preventing dropout of children from schools and reducing the dropout rate from the current level of 50% to less than 20% and ensuring quality education through teachers training. NCHD is the only organization which has established National Training Institute (NTI) in 2017 for training on the Non-formal and Accelerated Learning Programs. From August 2002 to 2020 in a period of about 18 years, the Commission has made commendable success in all its established programs. Till December 2008, the outreach of NCHD's programs was in 122 districts of Pakistan. NCHD has reached to 134 districts during 2019-20. NCHD has::

- Supported enrolment of 16 million out of school children (5-7 years) under its UPE Program
- Established 10, 939 Community Feeder Schools (CFs) and provided about 15, 000 Feeder Teachers in Govt. Primary School to cater for the increased enrolment
- Trained 296,276 teachers in enrolment, dropout prevention and quality education
- Established over 170,190 Adult Literacy Centers
- Made 3.98 million Adults literate with 92% females
- Trained more than 187,000 teachers on adult literacy teaching techniques, and assessment of learning achievements
- Trained about 2000 professionals of 100 civil society organizations in Implementation of Literacy Program
- Trained 12,000 Literacy Supervisors in Management of literacy centers
- Provided door to door preventive health care to 1.17 million Households
- Trained 16.68 million women in preparation and usage of ORS in 80 districts
- Vaccinated over 669,000 women and children all over Pakistan
- Screened 2.67 million children for eye sight and hearing problems under School Health Program
- Launched Relief Operations for over 3.0 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Swat, Buner, Shangla, Lower Dir of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province and Waziristan.
- Established 620 medical camps, extended treatment to 4,512 patients and distributed medicines worth Rs. 37 million among the IDPs
- Identified and registered 478, 941 volunteers across Pakistan and trained them in community participation techniques in education and health programs at grassroots level
- Trained 11,261 EDOs/Govt. Officials and elected representatives in planning & budgeting
- Trained 4,384 elected representatives on their role in Zilla Management Committees / Citizen Community Boards (CCBs)
- Trained 2,437 EDOs, DOs and TMA officers

on their role in operationalization of CCBs.

- A total of US\$ 27.14 million has been mobilized through global and local resources.

Despite being a relatively young organization, NCHD has already established a niche for itself by becoming an International Best Practice through the positive outcome of its interventions, its contribution for promotion of human development through literacy & volunteerism, and is being promoted as a model public private partnership (PPP) for replication in other developing countries: Pakistan has become the first country in the developing world to set up a National Volunteer Corps for achievement of MDGs through NCHD, whose key role was acknowledged by United Nations (UN) Secretary General in his General Assembly address (2003). NCHD co-hosted the first ever UN-sponsored International Conference on Volunteerism and MDGs held in Pakistan in Dec. 2004 involving participation of experts from over 30 countries, whose findings contributed in enhancing awareness about the role of Volunteerism.

- NCHD has been presented as a Model organization to be emulated for achieving MDGs in developing countries by the UN. This is attested by the high-powered Chinese delegation visit in March 2005, facilitated by UNDP, to study the NCHD's PPP model for replication in China.

- NCHD literacy program was awarded the prestigious UNESCO International Reading Association Literacy Prize in 2006 for increasing the literacy ratio in Pakistan.

- In September 2010, NCHD was declared the Lead Agency for spread of literacy programmes in Pakistan in recognition of its efforts in promoting literacy in the country and the efficacy of its literacy model.

- The findings of three independent Third-Party Evaluations by UNDP (2004 and 2006) and Shell Pakistan Ltd. (2005) have endorsed the NCHD model and recognized the positive contribution made by NCHD in the social sector delivery in its operational districts.

Keeping in view the above track record NCHD may effectively be used by the Present Government and it may play its pivotal future role in paving the ways for achieving the Human Development Targets in Pakistan by supporting and facilitating Provincial Ministries of Education through its unique programs of Universal Primary Education and Adult Literacy by Imparting literacy and numeracy skills to illiterate adults (15+ Years) through;

- i. Basic Literacy Centers
- ii. Post literacy centers
- iii. Quranic Literacy Centers
- iv. Mobile based literacy
- v. Literacy Centers in Jails
- vi. Community Learning centers
- vii. Literacy centers at work places
- viii. Each one Teach one Initiative

Provide basic education to illiterate out-of-school children (10-14 Years) through schools/centers based on Accelerated Learning/condensed syllabus of 32 months. NCHD may act as an Implementing Partner for BISP and different components of EHSAS program through its trained human resource and country wide out reach benefiting from its rich experience in social development sector. Through its vast network of volunteers, NCHD can play a significant role in successful execution of Government initiatives like 'Clean and Green Pakistan'. NCHD has completed the 'Mainstreaming of Madaris' project in Federal Areas and currently implementing ALP syllabus in 100 Deeni Madaris in the provinces. NCHD is currently supporting Directorate General of Religious Education (DGRE) through all its districts offices and 137 Staff as District Registration & Facilitation Officers. NCHD may be given full responsibility of this important national initiative in future as it is the only Federal organization with an access and mandate to work throughout Pakistan in wake of 18th Constitutional Amendment. However, the unforeseen financial constraints have always restrained it partially from delivering vital services to the nation. After giving valuable services to government line departments, ministries, district and local governments for about 18 years, it is now high time for NCHD to move from project to a complete program for the uninterrupted delivery of its most needed services in the field of Human Development which will help the government to achieve its international commitments on SDGs and Vision 2025 through its unique programs in the next 10 years.

– *The writer is an Analyst and Economic Expert. He can be reached at hassanbaig2009@gmail.com*

Briefs

Nobel winner Turk donates for orphaned Azeri girl

FOREIGN DESK

BAKU: Turkey's Nobel chemistry laureate Aziz Sancar donated money for education of Hatice Shah-nezerova, who lost her parents in an attack by the Armenian forces on the Azerbaijani city of Ganja. Sancar was moved to hear about the attack and suggested to launch a fund for the education of children who were the victims of the war, according to Azerbaijan's state-run news agency Azertac. It was noted that Sancar made donations to a bank account opened for Hatice's education. Three-year-old Hatice lost both of her parents and toddler sister in a ballistic missile attack of Armenian forces on Ganja on Oct. 17. At least 26 civilians were killed in two attacks on Ganja during the conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh. Aziz Sancar is a Turkish scientist living in the US. He was awarded the 2015 Nobel Prize in Chemistry, along with Tomas Lindahl and Paul Modrich for their mechanistic studies of DNA repair. Relations between the former Soviet republics of Azerbaijan and Armenia have been tense since 1991 when the Armenian military occupied Nagorno-Karabakh, also known as Upper Karabakh, a territory recognized as part of Azerbaijan, and seven adjacent regions. New clashes erupted Sept. 27 and the Armenian army continued attacks on civilians and Azerbaijani forces, even violating humanitarian cease-fire agreements for 44 days. Baku liberated several cities and nearly 300 settlements and villages from Armenian occupation during this time.

World's top surgical glove maker shuts factories

KUALA LUMPUR: A Malaysian company, world's biggest manufacturer of surgical gloves, will close over half of its factories after a surge in coronavirus cases among workers, authorities said Monday. Top Glove has seen a huge jump in demand since the start of the pandemic as countries scrambled to stock up on protective equipment, pushing up both its profits and share price. But there has been a cluster of virus outbreaks among Top Glove employees – many of whom are low-paid migrant workers – at factories in an industrial area near the capital, Kuala Lumpur. More than 1,000 cases were recorded Monday, prompting the government to order the plants to close. He did not say when the closures would begin. The company operates 47 factories – 41 in Malaysia – and many of its workers are from Nepal and live in crowded dormitory complexes. Top Glove did not immediately respond to requests for comment, and it was not clear how the closures would affect its operations. The company can produce more than 70 billion gloves a year and is a major global supplier. – APP

FIFA ban African football chief for 5 years

LAUSANNE: The head of African football Ahmad Ahmad has been suspended by FIFA for five years for corruption, the global governing body announced on Monday. Ahmad, from Madagascar, has been president of the Confederation of African Football (CAF) since March 2017 and was standing for re-election in 2021 when FIFA banned him for "governance issues". In their statement, FIFA said Ahmad had "breached his duty of loyalty, offered gifts and other benefits, mismanaged funds and abused his position as the CAF President". Ahmad has also been fined 200,000 Swiss francs (\$220,000) by FIFA for the misdeeds, which related to "the organisation and financing of an Umrah pilgrimage to Mecca" and his involvement in CAF's dealings with a sports equipment company. – APP



ANKARA: On behalf of Prime Minister Imran Khan & Kashmir Affairs minister Ali Amin Gandapur, ambassador of Pakistan to Turkey Syrus Qazi presented merit certificate to Nesibe Yavaş for securing 2nd position in Virtual Declamation Contest "Humanity at Stake: Indian Illegally Occupied J& Kashmir- Impact on World Peace". – DNA

Oxford AstraZeneca Covid vaccine has up to 90% efficacy, data reveals

Oxford University and AstraZeneca have announced their jab is effective in preventing many people getting ill and it has been shown to work in different age groups, including the elderly. There are early indications it might also help stop the spread of the disease

FOREIGN DESK

LONDON: A coronavirus vaccine developed in the UK can prevent 70.4% of people from getting Covid-19 and up to 90% if a lower dose is used, according to data. Oxford University and AstraZeneca have announced their jab is effective in preventing many people getting ill and it has been shown to work in different age groups, including the elderly. There are early indications it might also help stop the spread of the disease. Sarah Gilbert, professor of vaccinology at the University of Oxford, said: "The announcement today takes us another step closer to the time when we can use vaccines to bring an end to the devastation caused by [Covid-19]. "We will continue to work to provide the detailed information to regulators. It has been a privilege to be part of this multi-national effort, which will reap benefits for the whole world." Oxford University said interim analysis from its phase 3 vaccine trial showed that the efficacy of their vaccine is 70%. But that came from combining the results of two different dosing regimens, one of which was 90% and the other was 62%. The 90% regime involved a half-dose first and then a full dose of the vaccine later. The interim analysis was based on 131 infections among participants who received the vaccine and those

Oxford seek corona vaccine approval

FOREIGN DESK

LONDON: British drugs group AstraZeneca and the University of Oxford said on Monday they will seek regulatory approval for their coronavirus vaccine after "effective" trials, in the latest potential boost to curbing the global outbreak. The partners announced that while the vaccine showed an average 70-percent effectiveness, the level jumped to 90 percent depending on dosage. Manufacturers Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna last week said trials of their vaccines showed

effectiveness above 90 percent in what was hailed as a breakthrough in stopping the spread of the virus. Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson called the announcement "incredibly exciting". "There are still further safety checks ahead but these are fantastic results," he said. Despite varying outcomes, AstraZeneca chief executive Pascal Soriot insisted his firm's vaccine would have an "immediate impact". "AstraZeneca will now immediately prepare regulatory submission of the data to authorities around the world that have a framework in place for conditional or early

approval," he said. The firm said it would look to develop up to three billion doses of the vaccine in 2021 after passing regulatory hurdles. Pfizer/BioNTech's vaccine has to be stored at -70 degrees Celsius (-94 degrees Fahrenheit) – much colder than temperatures of a standard freezer. That has prompted questions about distribution and storage, as well as higher costs, particularly for lower-income countries. But the AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine could be stored, transported and handled "at normal refrigerated conditions" of between two and eight degrees Celsius for at least six months.

He said that if people were first given a half-dose of the Oxford vaccine followed by a full dose a month later, they had 90% protection. "There is just a hint in the data at the moment that those who got that regime with higher protection, there is a suggestion that it was also able to reduce asymptomatic infection," he told the BBC Radio 4 Today programme. "If that is right, we might be able to halt the virus in its tracks and stop transmitting between people." His colleague, Prof Sarah Gilbert, professor of Vaccinology at the University of Oxford, said: "The announcement today takes us another step closer to the time when we can

use vaccines to bring an end to the devastation caused by Sars-CoV-2. We will continue to work to provide the detailed information to regulators. It has been a privilege to be part of this multi-national effort which will reap benefits for the whole world." AstraZeneca's chief executive, Pascal Soriot, said: "Today marks an important milestone in our fight against the pandemic. This vaccine's efficacy and safety confirm that it will be highly effective against Covid-19 and will have an immediate impact on this public health emergency. "Furthermore, the vaccine's simple supply chain and our no-profit pledge and commitment to broad, equitable and timely access means it will be affordable and globally available, supplying hundreds of millions of doses on approval." The UK has placed orders for 100m doses of the Oxford vaccine – enough to vaccinate most of the population – with rollout expected in the coming weeks if the jab is approved. It also has orders for 40m doses of a jab from Pfizer and BioNTech, which has been shown to have 95% efficacy. Another jab from Moderna has 95% efficacy, according to trial data. Australia has ordered 33.8m doses of the vaccine. The UK health secretary, Matt Hancock, called the data "really encouraging news", but stressed that vaccines needed to be approved by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA). "This is really encouraging news on the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine, that obviously we've been backing since the start," he told Sky News. "And I'm really very pleased, really welcome these figures, this data, that show that the vaccine in the right dosage can be up to 90% effective. "Of course, it's vital that the independent regulator, the MHRA, will need to look at the data, will need to check to make sure that it's effective and safe of course. But we've got 100m doses on order and should all that go well, the bulk of the rollout will be in the new year."

Wapda honours its hockey team with 1M cash award

LAHORE: Wapda honoured its hockey team for winning the National Hockey Championship title by awarding a cash prize of one million rupees at a ceremony, hosted by Wapda Sports Board here at Wapda House on Monday. Chairman Wapda and WSB Patron-in-Chief Lt Gen (ret'd) Muzammil Hussain was the chief guest at the ceremony, who presented the cash award to players and the management. Wapda Member (Finance), Member (Power), Member (Water), MD (Admn)/ WSB President, Secretary Wapda and WSB senior officers were also present. With emphatic win in 66th National Hockey Championship, Wapda now holds the rare honour of being Men's, Women's and Jr. National Champion simultaneously. Addressing the ceremony,

Wapda chairman congratulated organisation's hockey team on their brilliant performance in the recently concluded National Championship, as the team managed to win the men's title after nine years. He said that Wapda, as an organization, has been promoting sports in Pakistan by providing facilities to its players and taking measures for their well being. Highlighting the significance of sports, he said that the lesson for struggle in life can best be learnt from sports. He further said that sports is a virtue, essential for any country, organization or individual to overcome the challenges. Together with enthusiasm and commitment, we can excel in all walks of life including sports, he added. – APP



LAHORE: National Champion WAPDA hockey team photographed with WAPDA Chairman and WAPDA sports board patron-in-chief Lt Gen Muzammil Hussain (Retd). – DNA

Brussels warns on press freedom in France

"The commission does not comment on draft laws, but it goes without saying that in a period of crisis it is more important than ever that journalists must be able to do their jobs freely and in complete safety," EU spokesman Christian Wigand told media

BRUSSELS: The European Commission on Monday responded to a question about France's draft security law by warning that news media must be able to "work freely". French journalists and press freedom advocates have protested against the planned law, which would limit the right to film or photograph on-duty police officers. "The commission does not comment on draft laws, but it goes without saying that in a period of crisis it is more important than ever that journalists must be able to do their jobs freely and in

complete safety," EU spokesman Christian Wigand told AFP. "As is always the case, the commission reserves the right to examine the final legislation in order to verify that it conforms to EU law," he added. On Fridays, the French parliament approved an amended security law, one clause of which would criminalise the publication of images of police officers with the intent of harming their "physical or psychological integrity". In practice, this law would restrict the publication of photos or videos taken of police of-

ficers' faces while carrying out their duties in public spaces, and in many cases an officer's face would have to be blurred. Media unions say this could give police a green light to prevent journalists from doing their work and potentially documenting abuses by security forces. Members of protest movements such as the "Yellow Vests" – who faced a robust police response to street demonstrations – have also denounced the draft law. Article 24 of the draft law fore-

sees a one-year prison term and a 45,000-euro (\$54,000) fine for publishing images that officers object to, but officials insist their target is not press freedom. Instead, police are concerned about social media campaigns that expose individual officers. Police say they risk great personal threat in the line of duty, and dozens have been injured in clashes with protesters in recent years. An attack on a police station outside Paris last month by dozens of people armed with fireworks and steel bars spurred the govern-

ment into taking measures. "Ensuring the security of all those living in Europe is a key priority for the Commission and we are working hand-in-hand with the member states," Wigand said. "When drafting their security legislation, member states must respect the principle of proportionality and strike the right balance between guaranteeing public security and protecting citizens' rights and freedoms, including freedom of expression, media freedom, freedom of association, privacy and access to information." – APP

7 dead after drinking hand sanitiser in Russia

DNA

MOSCOW: Seven people in Russia's Far East republic of Yakutia have died and two were in a coma on Monday after consuming diluted hand sanitiser widely available during the pandemic. A statement published by Russian investigators on Saturday said a group of nine locals fell violently ill in the village of Tomtor after consuming diluted hand sanitiser that they had purchased at a local shop. Investigators said they found an unlabelled five-litre canister at the scene. Tests of its contents revealed that it contained 69% methanol, an industrial non-drinking type of alcohol. The first three victims died on the spot, while six others were flown by medical aircraft to the regional capital Yakutsk. Four died in hospital. Doctors are currently fighting to save the lives of the remaining two – a 48-year-old woman and a 32-year-old man, both of whom are in a coma and on ventilators, health authorities said Monday. Yakutia's health authorities on Sunday banned the sale of the methanol-based hand sanitiser. A criminal case has been launched over the "infliction of death by negligence".

Pakistani squad leaves to lock horns against Kiwis

SPORTS DESK

LAHORE: The Pakistan cricket team left Lahore on Monday for New Zealand ahead of a series between both countries starting on December 18. The national squad team will quarantine for 14 days at the Lincoln University as per the New Zealand government's COVID-19 protocols. Left-arm opener Fakhar Zaman was ruled out of the tour a few hours before departure due to fever. Pakistan announced its tour to New Zealand in September this year. The two teams will play three T20Is and two Tests from December 18 to January 7. The 54-member squad for New Zealand includes 34 players and 20 officials from Pakistan.

Govt to seek donors' help to buy vaccines

From Page 01 assistance or a loan with no strings attached, the sources said, adding the health ministry has begun working on a coherent plan for the purpose. On November 20, the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) had approved a technical supplementary grant worth \$150 million for the advance purchase of coronavirus vaccines. Advisor to the Prime Minister on Finance Dr. Abdul Hafeez Shaikh approved the grant while chairing a session of the ECC where-in a six-point agenda, including funds allocation for the purchase of COVID-19 vaccines, came under discussion. Earlier on Friday, the federal government had conditionally approved \$150 million funds to procure the coronavirus vaccine for 5% of the country's population. It had also decided to request G-20 countries for additional debt relief of \$915 million. The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the cabinet "approved, in principle, the provision of technical supplementary grant of \$150 million for the purchase of the Covid-19 vaccine," said a hand-out issued by the Ministry of Finance on Friday.

Educational institutions shut till Jan 10

From Page 01 During the meeting, it was decided that micro-decisions regarding examinations and other matters will be taken by the respective provinces. Meanwhile, Punjab Education Minister Murad Raas said that schoolchildren in Punjab will be promoted to the next classes based on their homework. He also added that Punjab Board exams, which are held in March, will now be conducted in May and June 2021.

Briefs

Pakistan's improvement in trade facilitation list hailed

LAHORE: Pakistan's improvement by 31 points in the list regarding trade facilitation agreement of World Trade Organization (WTO) is very welcoming development for its overall economic uplift. Better position in the list than that of India and Bangladesh will definitely help give boost to Pakistan's industrial sector as well. Talking to various delegations of industrialists here Monday, Lahore Township Industries Association Lahore (LTIA) Chairman Azam Chaudhry mentioned that with implementation of the agreement, Pakistan enhanced its trade facilitation from 34 per cent in June 2018 to 79 per cent in November 2020. By implementing the agreement, he added, Pakistan managed to improve its position by 31 points in the foreign trade facilitation list. According to international trade facilitation report 2020, Pakistan now positioned at 106 from its previous number of 136 with regard to foreign trade facilitation, he maintained. Azam Chaudhry expressed the optimism that better trade facilitation measures will help improve trade activities; promote foreign direct investment; enhance exports volume; and create ample employment opportunities, and ultimately usher in a new era of development and prosperity in the country. On this occasion, TIAL Senior Vice Chairman Waseem Chawla said that as per Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) report, Pakistan's pace on implementation of WTO trade facilitation agreement is even faster than India and Bangladesh. — APP

France ex-president goes on trial for corruption

PARIS: Former French president Nicolas Sarkozy goes on trial on Monday for attempted bribery of a judge, a potentially humiliating postscript to a career tainted by legal woes. Though he is not the first modern French head of state in the dock his predecessor and political mentor Jacques Chirac was convicted of embezzlement Sarkozy is the first to face corruption charges. The inquiry also saw Sarkozy taken into police custody for questioning in 2014, another first for a former president. He fought furiously for six years to have the case thrown out, denouncing "a scandal that will go down in history". — APP

Syria names Faisal Mekdad new FM

FOREIGN DESK

DEMASCUS: Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has appointed Faisal Mekdad as new foreign minister, replacing Walid al-Moallem who died almost one week ago, according to a statement by the presidency. Mekdad will be replaced as deputy foreign minister by Syria's ambassador to the United Nations, Bashar Jaafari, who in turn, will be replaced by ambassador to Vienna Bassam al-Sabbagh, the statement said on Sunday. Moallem, a stalwart of the al-Assad government who held his job through a decade of conflict and several reshuffles, died on Monday at the age of 79. The government announcement did not specify the cause of his death, but his health was understood to have been deteriorating for some time. His 66-year-old successor, Mekdad, started a career at the Syrian foreign ministry in 1994 and has been deputy foreign minister since 2006. He accompanied Moallem to most meetings and conferences, and stepped in to make statements when the latter's health started to deteriorate. Mekdad, who holds a doctorate in English literature from Charles University in Prague, was born in 1956 in Ghasam village in the southern province of Deraa. In 1995 he joined the Syrian delegation to the UN, and was his country's permanent representative to the UN from 2003 to 2006 before he became deputy foreign minister.



ISLAMABAD: Umar Khan Regional Manager Turkish Airlines giving air ticket to a winner during a contest. — DNA

China rebukes US for 'Open Skies Treaty' withdrawal

This move by the US undermines military mutual trust and transparency among relevant countries, is not conducive to maintaining security and stability in relevant regions and will also have a negative impact on the international arms control and disarmament process

FOREIGN DESK

BEIJING: China has lashed out at the US over its withdrawal from the "Open Skies Treaty" with Russia, saying the move undermined military trust and transparency and imperiled future attempts at arms control. "This move by the US undermines military mutual trust and transparency among relevant countries, is not conducive to maintaining security and stability in relevant regions and will also have a negative impact on the international arms control and disarmament process," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said at a daily briefing on Monday. The treaty, to which China is not a signatory, had allowed each country overflight rights to inspect military facilities. That leaves only one arms-control pact still in force between the former Cold War foes, the New START treaty, which limits the number of nuclear warheads each may have. That treaty will expire in February and the US had said it wasn't interested in extending it unless China also joined, something Beijing says it will not do.

Critics complain that Beijing has urged other major countries to reach arms control agreements while refusing to take part in any such arrangements, including the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, or INF, that expired last year. China has taken advantage of limitations set by Russia and the US on each other to keep itself safe and engage in unrestricted development of weapons such as intermediate-range ballistic missiles, bolstering its military's capabilities in the event of a conflict over Taiwan, the Indian border, the

South China Sea and other Asian hotspots, critics say. The INF Treaty "acted as a security guarantee for China: Beijing successfully made use of the mutual limitations imposed by the treaty on Russia and the United States to minimise the military threat to itself," Russian consultant Andrey Baklitskiy wrote in a commentary for the Carnegie Moscow Center last year. Meanwhile, the US has given precision-guided missiles and other weapons for what it said to help the Philippines battle Daesh-aligned militants and renewed a

pledge to defend its treaty ally if it comes under attack in the disputed South China Sea. US National Security Adviser Robert O'Brien attended Monday's ceremony at the Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila, where he announced the delivery of the missiles and bombs to the Philippine military. US President Donald Trump pledged to provide the \$18 million worth of missiles in a phone conversation with Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte in April, Foreign Secretary Teodoro Locsin Jr said.

World must not turn away from Afghanistan: UNHCR

GENEVA: The international community must continue aiding Afghanistan or risk "disastrous consequences," UN refugee chief Filippo Grandi urged Monday as a donors conference kicked off in Geneva. Grandi's appeal comes after his visit to the war-torn nation that remains beset by violence and corruption, and is grappling with the imminent withdrawal of thousands of US troops. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Grandi said the future of millions of Afghans depends on the outcome of peace talks taking place in Qatar and on international commitment to develop the country, including at the two-day donors conference in Geneva. "Failure on either account would see Afghanistan slide backwards with disastrous consequences, including further displacement possibly on a large scale," Grandi warned in a statement. Donor nations meet every four years to pledge aid for impoverished Afghanistan, which remains almost entirely reliant on foreign assistance despite 19 years of promised reforms and attempts to grow the economy. Grandi said the nearly 300,000 Afghans, who have been displaced inside Afghanistan because of conflict, this year remain in "acute need" of humanitarian support. The same goes for the nearly three million previously displaced and the nine million people who have lost their livelihoods due to the Covid-19 crisis. Grandi also said it was urgent to conclude peace negotiations between the Afghan government and the Taliban, pushing to retake power in Afghanistan after their ouster during the US-led invasion in 2001. — APP

their displacement possibly on a large scale," Grandi warned in a statement. Donor nations meet every four years to pledge aid for impoverished Afghanistan, which remains almost entirely reliant on foreign assistance despite 19 years of promised reforms and attempts to grow the economy. Grandi said the nearly 300,000 Afghans, who have been displaced inside Afghanistan because of conflict, this year remain in "acute need" of humanitarian support. The same goes for the nearly three million previously displaced and the nine million people who have lost their livelihoods due to the Covid-19 crisis. Grandi also said it was urgent to conclude peace negotiations between the Afghan government and the Taliban, pushing to retake power in Afghanistan after their ouster during the US-led invasion in 2001. — APP



The High Commissioner for Pakistan in Australia, Babar Amin met David Van, a senator for Victoria in the Australian Parliament. Senator Van is a member of the recently re-constituted Pakistan-Australia parliamentary friendship group. — DNA

'Fuzuli to become host town of prosperity soon'

Symbolic end to our visit with the diplomatic community to see ISIS alike pillage and destruction of Fuzuli city by Armenia during three-decades-long occupation

FOREIGN DESK

BAKU: Azerbaijan presidential aide Hikmat Hacıyev has said that newly-liberated Fuzuli region will be host town of prosperity and happiness soon. "We are in front of the vandalized Cultural Center of Fuzuli city by Armenia. With the power of music, we are sending our message of peace and tolerance to the world. Ghost town Fuzuli will be host town of prosperity and happiness soon," Hikmat Hacıyev wrote on his Twitter account on 22 November. The presidential aide posted on his account the video of a female violinist playing Vivaldi's Four Seasons Summer. Hacıyev later added: "Vivaldi's Four Seasons Summer gives hope and inspiration to the ruined city of Fuzuli. Symbolic end to our visit with the diplomatic community to see ISIS alike pillage and destruction of Fuzuli city by Armenia during three-decades-long occupation".

The presidential aide noted that "diplomatic corps visiting one of the strongest military positions of Armenia in liberated Fuzuli". "From this position mainly they attacked civilian population of Azerbaijan. Armenia hugely invested in building this unnecessary military infrastructure to maintain the occupation" he added. Hacıyev posted the video of the area in question on his Twitter. The representatives of the diplomatic corps in Azerbaijan, including ambassadors, military attachés, as well as heads of representative offices of international organizations in Azerbaijan, made a trip to Azerbaijan's Fuzuli region on November 22, liberated from the Armenian occupation. The visit was aimed at familiarizing foreign diplomats and military attaches with the barbarity committed by the Armenian troops in Fuzuli city and the



consequences of their crimes. The diplomats and military attachés were accompanied by Hikmat Hacıyev and Elchin Amirbayov, assistant to Azerbaijan First Vice-President Mehriban Aliyeva, and other officials. During the visit, the diplomats witnessed the grave consequences of the war crimes and vandalism committed by Armenia in Fuzuli in the past 27 years. The diplomats were informed that the Armenians barbarously destroyed settlements, cemeteries, historical, cultural monuments in Fuzuli.

As a result of the barbaric actions of the Armenian occupiers in Fuzuli, one of the most developed cities of Azerbaijan once, no building was left intact. Everything has been destroyed, plundered. Armenian vandalism also affected historical, cultural and architectural monuments, ancient burial mounds and caves, as well as tombs and grave-stones in the district. All this was razed to the ground. On November 10, Baku and Yerevan signed a Moscow-brokered agreement to end fighting and work towards a comprehensive Nagorno-Karabakh solution. Under the agreement, Armenians vacated Aghdam on November 20. They have to vacate Kalbajar by November 25 and Lachin by December 1. Ninety-four Azerbaijani civilians were killed and hundreds of others injured in Armenia's

armed attacks between September 27 - November 10. The Azerbaijani army liberated several cities and nearly 300 of its settlements and villages as well as some strategic heights from the occupation of Armenian forces during 44 days. About 20 per cent of Azerbaijan's territory - including Nagorno-Karabakh and seven adjacent regions - had been under Armenian occupation for nearly three decades. Armenia failed to implement four UN Security Council resolutions that urged the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the invading forces from the occupied territories. Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev hailed the trilateral agreement as a victory for his country and a defeat for Armenia, saying Baku's military success enabled it to gain an upper hand to end the three-decade occupation of its territory.

Ice Bucket Challenge activist Patrick dies

WEB DESK

NEW YORK: A man from the United States who helped drive the global phenomenon known as the Ice Bucket Challenge to tackle a deadly neurodegenerative disease has died at the age of 37. Patrick Quinn, from the US state of New York, was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), also known as Lou Gehrig's disease, in 2013. "It is with great sadness that we must share the passing of Patrick early this morning," his team wrote on Sunday in a post in Quinn's ALS advocacy Facebook group, Quinn for the Win. "We will always remember him for his inspiration and courage in his tireless fight against ALS." Quinn did not start the Ice Bucket Challenge, which took social media by storm in 2014, but he and his family and friends helped it become a global phenomenon. Millions took up the challenge, which involved dousing themselves with a bucket of ice-cold water and posting the video online, before making a donation to medical research and daring others to do the same. A galaxy of celebrities, high-profile personalities and entire sports teams took part in the challenge, including Tom Cruise, Steven Spielberg, Bill Gates and even former US President George W Bush.

UN calls for continued Afghan aid

FOREIGN DESK

NEW YORK: UN refugee chief Filippo Grandi has urged the international community to remain committed to Afghanistan, calling for greater support for refugees and internally displaced people ahead of the opening of a two-day international donor conference. The UNHCR chief said on Monday that the future of millions of Afghans depends on the outcome of peace negotiations between the Kabul government and the Taliban being held in the Qatari capital Doha and on the international community's commitment to developing the war-torn country. "Failure on either account would see Afghanistan slide backwards with disastrous consequences, including further displacement possibly on a large scale," Grandi warned in a statement before the 2020 Afghanistan Conference. Grandi's appeal comes after his visit to the South Asian nation, which is struggling with growing violence, a US troop withdrawal and flagging peace talks pushed by the outgoing Trump administration. Analysts say the partial US troop withdrawal the Trump administration announced this week is further weakening the Kabul government during the ongoing peace talks in Doha. Despite a February agreement signed between Taliban and the US, violence has risen in the country, with Grandi saying nearly 300,000 Afghans who have been displaced inside the country by conflict this year remain in "acute need" of humanitarian support.

India's top court slams states for COVID surge

FOREIGN DESK

DELHI: India's Supreme Court has exoriated regional governments, including Delhi's, over the surge in COVID-19 cases and warned the situation could worsen further if authorities did not effectively deal with the pandemic. The court, which took up the issue on its own, is seeking status reports from New Delhi, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Assam, which have recorded a spike in cases, about the management of patients and steps taken to ease the situation. "We are hearing of a huge spike in the current month. We want a latest status report from all states. Worse things may happen in December if states aren't well prepared," the three-judge bench said, according to Indian media. The judges were particularly concerned about Delhi, which has been topping India in the number of infections and deaths. "What extra efforts are you taking? ... Delhi has to answer a lot of things," the judges told Delhi government lawyers in court. India is currently the world's second-worst-hit country by the pandemic after the US, with more than 9.1 million infections, including 133,738 deaths.

Briefs

Chinese learning continues in Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chinese learning continues during epidemic in Pakistan, Gwadar Pro reported on Monday. The risk of a second Covid-19 epidemic has not extinguished the enthusiasm of the country's students to learn Chinese and take HSK/HSKK test. China-Pak Educational Cultural Institute (CEPCI) held its first offline HSK test this Saturday since the outbreak. A total of more than 100 Pakistani students took the HSK test at five levels. According to the report, tests originally scheduled for March and May had to be cancelled due to the severe epidemic situation. However, in response to the strong request of the candidates, CEPCI has applied to Hankao International for approval and formulated a detailed epidemic prevention and control plan specifically for the examination. Prevention and control of the epidemic and ensuring the safety of personnel are the top priority of this test. The faculty and staff have made adequate preparations, including measuring body temperature at the entrance, spraying disinfectant alcohol, and distributing medical masks; disinfect the examination room and open windows for ventilation. "We were moved by the candidates' spirit of studying diligently and taking the exam actively during the difficult time. This test encouraged Pakistani students for learning Chinese and promoted cultural exchanges between China and Pakistan."

PM, CM KP discuss development projects

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mehmoond Khan called on Prime Minister Imran Khan on Monday to discuss development projects of the province and other matters of mutual interest. According to details, the two discussed coronavirus second wave and steps to curb the spread of the virus in the province. Political situation of the province also came under discussion. Earlier on Sunday, Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) conducted public gathering at Peshawar's Kabootar Chowk despite government's ban on rallies due to increasing cases of coronavirus. Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief and PDM chairman Maulana Fazlur Rahman Pakistan People's Party (PPP) chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari addressed the rally.

Govt taking serious steps for Aafia's return: Babar

ABID RAZA

ISLAMABAD, Advisor to Prime Minister on Parliamentary Affairs Babar Awan has said that the federal government is taking serious steps for the return of Dr Aafia Siddiqui, the sister of Dr Fauzia Siddiqui, Dr Fauzia Siddiqui, met Dr Babar Awan where they discussed the progress of the government's efforts for the return of the Pakistani scientist, Dr Aafia Siddiqui, from the United States (US). Babar Awan told Dr Fauzia Siddiqui that the government is willing to bring back all Pakistanis who are imprisoned in different countries.

He said that 5,000 Pakistani prisoners have been brought back to Pakistan by the personal efforts of Prime Minister Imran Khan. Awan said that the federal government is taking serious steps for the return of Dr Aafia Siddiqui and a review session was organised by the foreign ministry at the Upper House over the efforts for her return on a humanitarian basis.



ISLAMABAD: Guests enjoying delicious Turkish ice cream during Islamabad Foreign Women Association Charity Bazaar held at Islamabad Serena Hotel. – DNA

Facilitating Pakistan-Afghan trade necessary, says Qaiser

Advisor to Prime Minister on Commerce and Investment Razzaq Dawood briefed the Executive Committee regarding his visit of Afghanistan where issues Preferential Trade Agreement, Free movement of trucks, custom issues and signing the MOUs between both countries in this regard was deliberated upon

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaiser has said that further removing trade bottlenecks between Pakistan and Afghanistan would ensure bright future for our next generation. He said that recent conference organized by National Assembly of Pakistan for finding new avenues of trade and investment between both countries have been possible due to consistent efforts of this Committee of Pak-Afghan Parliamentary Friendship Group. He informed that it is the first time that 23 Afghan

Parliamentarians along with their traders and investors visited Pakistan. He said that follow up of the implementation of the recommendations of the conference would be top priority of this Committee. He expressed these views while chairing the 5th meeting of Executive Committee of Pak-Afghan Parliamentary Friendship Group in the Parliament House, today. While reviewing the progress of the previous recommendations of the Committee, the Speaker Asad Qaiser expressed his satisfaction on the pace of implementation by the Executive. He said that on the recom-



mendation of the Committee, Torkham border is now open for 7 days for pedestrian instead of 4 days. The Speaker asked the SAPM

Arbab Shahzad to visit Chaman Border along with Committee Members and Special Envoy of PM to Afghanistan Sadiq Khan. The

Speaker decided to call next meeting soon to further review the recommendation of the Conference on trade and investment. He also asked the Advisor to PM on Commerce to pursue the negotiation on Afghan Pakistan Preferential Trade Agreement on fast pace so that the trade activities could take place more vigorously. Advisor to Prime Minister on Commerce and Investment Razzaq Dawood briefed the Executive Committee regarding his visit of Afghanistan where issues Preferential Trade Agreement, Free movement of trucks, custom issues and

signing the MOUs between both countries in this regard was deliberated upon. He informed that after due deliberation the MoUs will be signed and resultantly the volume of trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan will increase. The Executive Committee meeting was attended by MNAs Ms. Shanadana Gulzar, Mr. Moshin Darwar, Mr. Salahudin Ayubi, Mr. Yaqoob Sheikh, SAPM Mr. Arbab Shahzad through video link and the officers of M/o Railway, Commerce, Foreign Affairs, FBR, NLC and the senior officers from Baluchistan and KPK provincial government.

Pak records highest positivity ratio 7.46%

It was briefed that in Punjab, the major positive cases are recorded in Rawalpindi, Multan, Lahore and Faisalabad, while in Sindh Karachi and Hyderabad have more cases



DNA

ISLAMABAD: National Command and Operation Center (NCOC) on Monday apprised that Pakistan records highest positivity ratio during last 24 hours which is 7.46 percent. The current COVID-19 situation reviewed in the NCOC session held here Monday. The session was attended by the Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Shafqat Mehmood while provincial representatives joined through video link. It was informed during the meeting that positivity ratio in other federating units

including Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) 11.45 percent, Balochistan 7.73 percent, Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) 5.23 percent, Islamabad 8.09 percent, KP 9.85 percent, Punjab 3.95 percent and Sindh 9.63 percent. It was briefed during the forum that in Punjab, the major positive cases are recorded in Rawalpindi, Multan, Lahore and Faisalabad, while in Sindh Karachi and Hyderabad have more cases. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) the cities including Peshawar, Abbottabad and Swat have more number of cases. Similarly Mirpur in AJK, Gilgit and Islamabad are having more cases.

It was told in the meeting that 2155 COVID-19 patients currently admitted in the hospitals. However, the number of critical patients have increased two folds since last two weeks. On average 35 people lost lives during last week.

It was informed that 19 percent cases are from education sector. The positivity ratio in educational institutions increase from 1.8 percent to 3.3 percent during last one week which is actually 82 percent increase in educational institutions. The Forum deliberately discussed the situation in length for decisions about educational institutions.

7th Session of Pak-Oman Bilateral Political Consultations

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The 7th Session of Pakistan-Oman Bilateral Political Consultations (BPC) was virtually held on Monday. The Pakistan delegation was led by Foreign Secretary Sohail Mahmood, while the Omani side was led by Under-Secretary Sheikh Khalifa bin Ali bin Isa Al Harthy. The Consultations encompassed the entire spectrum of bilateral relations, including political, economic, commercial, defense and people-to-people ties. The importance of regular exchanges at the highest level was emphasized, along with optimal utilization of institutional mechanisms such as Joint Ministerial Commission and Joint Business Council. Matters related to mutual cooperation in multilateral fora were discussed. Pakistan conveyed appreciation for Oman's support at the United Nations, OIC and other international forums.

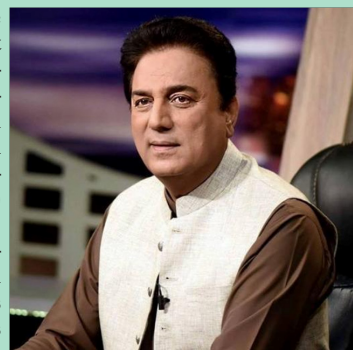
Naeem Bokhari appointed as PTV chairman

The federal govt has approved the nomination of Naeem Bokhari as Chairman, PTV Board in line with the PTV Corporation's Memorandum and Article of Association (Article 95/95A)

ISLAMABAD: The federal government on Monday appointed prominent lawyer Naeem Bokhari as the new Pakistan Television Corporation Board (PTVC) chairman.

According to a notification issued here, Bokhari has been appointed as PTV chairman for the next three years. "The federal government has approved the nomination of Naeem Bokhari as Chairman, PTV Board in line with the Pakistan Television Corporation's Memorandum and Article of Association (Article 95/95A). The chairman shall, unless he resigns earlier, hold office for a period of three years," reads the notification.

The federal cabinet in its last sitting had approved the appointment of prominent lawyer Naeem Bokhari as the chairman PTV Board. The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting had recommended the appointment of Bokhari as the new chairman. – DNA



Putin denies to recognize Biden win

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Russian President Vladimir Putin said Russia is willing to work with any US leader, but still isn't ready to recognise the election victory of Joe Biden until the winner is formally decided, media reported, citing foreign media on Monday. Affirming that Russia is ready to work with anyone who has the confidence of the American people, Putin, while speaking on Russian state TV, said: "But that confidence can only be given to a candidate whose victory has been recognised by the opposing party, or after the results are confirmed in a legitimate, legal way."

Putin's remarks come as one of the most detailed comments from him since the US elections, as he is one of a few leaders who haven't acknowledged Biden as the next US head of state. When asked if the move could damage US-Russia relations, he said: "there's nothing to damage, they're already ruined."

Russia, accused by the US intelligence agencies of intervening in 2016 to help get Trump elected, has been circumspect of Biden as the country fears an increase in sanctions pressure and clashes over human rights. Putin described the Kremlin's decision not to congratulate Biden as "a formality" with no ulterior motives.

Gold prices fall in domestic market

ATHAR SUFI

KARACHI: The per tola gold price on Monday registered a decline in the domestic market after some gain last week, media reported. According to Chairman All Pakistan Jewelers Manufacturers Association, Muhammad Arshad, the per told gold price witnessed a decline of Rs500 in the domestic market. The new price of per tola gold now stands at 112,750, he said.

Likewise, the rate of 10 grams of the precious metal decreased by Rs428 to Rs96,664. Meanwhile, the prices of the precious yellow metal in the international market remained stable and was traded at \$1870. According to Reuters, gold eased on Monday as AstraZeneca injected fresh optimism into the race for a COVID-19 vaccine, bolstering appetite for riskier assets and overshadowing support for bullion from a weaker dollar Spot gold edged 0.1% lower to \$1,868.26 per ounce by 0952 GMT and US gold futures fell 0.3% to \$1,866.80. Silver fell 0.3% to \$24.07 an ounce, while platinum rose 0.4% to \$949.31 and palladium was 0.2% higher at \$2,331.31.

50% of staff in Punjab offices to work from home

DNA

LAHORE: The Punjab government has directed public and private offices throughout the province to ensure that 50% of the staff works from home, as a measure to stem the spread of the coronavirus. Read more: Punjab's Murad Raas says students to be promoted on basis of homework as schools close down

According to a notification issued by the Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department on Monday, the new order comes into effect immediately and will remain applicable till January 31, 2020. The decision by the Punjab government came a few hours after Education Minister Shafqat Mahmood announced that educational institutions will remain closed throughout the country till January 11.

The minister, after a meeting with education ministers of all four provinces, decided that students will take classes from home till December 24. From December 24 to January 10, they will be on a winter break. Mahmood had said that children's health and safety is the top-most priority of the government, adding that examinations scheduled to take place in December will be postponed, with the exception of a few professional exams.

Film Parwaaz Hai Junoon a symbol of Sino-Pak unity

The ambassador further said that next year, Pak-China are celebrating 70 years of diplomatic relations, a very important milestone in this journey of friendship between our two countries

DNA

BEIJING: Pakistani film Parwaaz Hai Junoon is a symbol of friendship between China and Pakistan, said the Pakistani ambassador to China and spectators after watching the movie, Gwadar Pro reported on Monday.

The embassy of Pakistan organized a special screening of the film where the ambassador Moin ul Haque addressed the audience and said the Pakistani movie has been in China for almost 45 years. The film was released

across the Chinese cinemas on 13 November 2020.

"This film has everything, action, drama, romance, emotions, values of friendship and, of course, feeling of patriotism which is very important, and these are values that the people of Pakistan and China share", he stated.

He further said that this film is a tribute to Pakistan Air Force and its really brilliant pilots, while these cultural exchanges will help in fostering a better understanding of each other.

"I do hope that this auspicious start that we have made this

week, this momentum we carry on becomes something very lasting, very permanent, an area of cooperation between the two countries. We hope to have more movies, screenings in China and additional Pakistani movies and dramas as well.

We are also going to look at joint ventures and joint production of movies between Pakistan and China", Haque mentioned. The ambassador further said that next year, Pakistan and China are celebrating 70 years of diplomatic relations, a very important milestone in this journey of friendship between our two countries.

After watching the movie, Hina Sheikh said that a strong friendship can give us support for good and hard times and JF-17 is the best example of the friendship be-

ne of friendship between our two countries. So next year we are also organizing and planning more than 100 events.

The cooperation and the screening of films and dramas next year will be performed as a very important part of these activities. He further said that in the future he would try to bring more Pakistani films and dramas for the Chinese audience.

After watching the movie, Hina Sheikh said that a strong friendship can give us support for good and hard times and JF-17 is the best example of the friendship be-

tween Pakistan and China. She really likes the scene in the film when an instructor at the air force training academy asked newly joined cadets to compare JF-17 with Mirage 2000 in class.

A female cadet proudly answered that JF-17 has many advantages, including flexibility and safety, and is praised by the instructor.

It may be mentioned here that Pakistan and China would celebrate the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations next year and such kinds of events would help build relationship in the entertainment sector as well.