



# Islamabad POST

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Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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**State of protections for freedom of expression poor**

Detailed News On Page-08

**Accountability court summons Murad Ali Shah**

Detailed News On Page-08

**E-Katchery held with Pakistani community**

Detailed News On Page-06



## Briefs

**Mosques to remain open**

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Special Representative of the Prime Minister on Religious Harmony Maulana Tahir Ashrafi has said that the mosques will remain open during the holy month of Ramadan as per the coronavirus related SOPs. Talking to the media persons in Islamabad on Wednesday, he termed statements against coronavirus as idiosyncrasy and said that there is decree of religious scholars that the people should get themselves vaccinated against COVID-19. Tahir Ashrafi further announced that Prime Minister Imran Khan will soon visit Saudi Arabia on the invitation extended by the Saudi Crown Prince.

**Shaukat Tareen likely to be SAPM**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani banker and former finance minister Shaukat Tareen is likely to be made Prime Minister Imran Khan's aide on finance and revenue, sources informed media on Wednesday. According to the sources, Tareen - who attends important meetings of PM Imran Khan's finance and economic team - would likely be appointed special assistant to the premier or his finance adviser. However, the final decision on whether he would be appointed as a special assistant or adviser would be made by the premier himself, the sources added.

**First tranche vaccines arrive from China**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan received first tranche of 0.5 million anti-corona vaccine purchased from China at the Nur Khan Airbase in Rawalpindi on Wednesday. Speaking on the occasion, Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Health Dr Faisal Sultan said another consignment of 0.5 million vaccines will be received tomorrow. Dr Faisal Sultan said China has always extended a helping hand to Pakistan in the hour of need.

## Govt to resume trade relations with India

Sugar import from India allowed; the price of petrol and diesel will also be reduced, says Hammad Azhar

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Finance Minister Hammad Azhar announced Wednesday the government's decision to decrease the prices of petrol and diesel. "This decision is not related to the ECC [meeting that took place] but the first decision we have taken, after consultations with the prime minister, we will reduce the prices of petrol and diesel," said Hammad Azhar during a news conference. "The price of petrol will be slashed by Rs1.5 per litre while the price of diesel will be slashed by Rs3 per litre. We took this decision because now, we have some room due to a change in prices at the international market," he said.

Continued on Page 06

**LPG price reduced by Rs 14**

SHAHEEN HANIF

ISLAMABAD: The Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (Ogra) has reduced the price of LPG by Rs14 per kilo. Announcing the decision on Wednesday, the Ogra fixed the LPG price at Rs146, decreasing the price of domestic LPG cylinder by Rs166 and commercial cylinder by Rs640. The domestic cylinder will now be available for Rs1,719 and the commercial cylinder at Rs6,612. The consumers, however, said that the LPG is available for Rs110 in open market and the Ogra should the price which is available in the market right now.

## PM rejects complete lockdown proposal

Directs to launch awareness drive for implementation of SOPs to contain third wave of Covid-19

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan has reiterated his position that despite the third wave of coronavirus being very dangerous, Pakistan cannot afford to have a complete lockdown and businesses will continue on a limited scale. According to details, Prime Minister Imran Khan said this at Wednesday's National Coordination Committee (NCC) meeting for corona, chaired by the PM himself via video link after

Continued on Page 06

## PM Imran, Bahrain Prince hold talks

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan received a telephone call on Wednesday from His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister of Bahrain. The Crown Prince enquired about the Prime Minister's health and wished him a speedy recovery. Prime Minister thanked the Crown Prince for his call and conveyed warm greetings for His Majesty Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa, King of Bahrain. The two leaders discussed the latest Covid-19 situation. Reaffirming the strong bonds of amity that always existed between the leadership and people of the two countries, Prime Minister Imran Khan invited the Crown Prince to visit Pakistan, and hoped that the brotherly ties between Pakistan and the Kingdom of Bahrain will continue to prosper and strengthen in the years ahead. - DNA

## Ukrainian envoy meets COAS

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Markian Chuchuk, Ukrainian Ambassador to Pakistan called on General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) at GHQ, on Wednesday. During the meeting matters of mutual interest, regional security and enhanced bilateral & defence cooperation came under discussion. Chief of Army Staff said that Pakistan attaches great importance to further-



ing bilateral relations with Ukraine in all domains. Visiting dignitary appreciated Pakistan's sincere efforts

Continued on Page 06



DUSHANBE: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi meeting with President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon during his visit to Tajikistan. - DNA

## Pak for early completion of CASA-1000 project

Qureshi says CASA-1000 project would improve electricity access, integrate and expand markets

DNA

DUSHANBE: Pakistan on Wednesday assured Tajikistan to make utmost efforts for the early completion of CASA-1000 project as an effective plan for management of energy and water resources. Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi in a joint press conference with his Tajik counterpart Sirojiddin Muhriddin in Dushanbe said Pakistan believed that CASA-1000

## FM Qureshi meets Tajik President

NEWS DESK

DUSHANBE: Tajik President Emomali Rahmon has expressed the commitment to further strengthen relations with Pakistan. He was talking to Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi in Dushanbe on Wednesday. The Tajik President expressed satisfaction over the nature of bilateral cooperation between the two countries. Shah Mahmood Qureshi said there are lot of opportunities of expanding relations between the two countries in different fields including trade. The FM noted that the early completion of CASA 1000 project will prove to be instrumental.

would not only benefit the two countries, but the entire region. Launched in 2016, the under-construction Central Asia-South Asia (CASA-1000) power project, will allow the export of surplus hydroelectricity from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to Afghanistan and finally to Pakistan. Qureshi said CASA-1000 project would improve electricity access, integrate and

Continued on Page 06

## 'Sugar mafia won't escape justice'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: PTI leader Senator Shibli Faraz Wednesday said that the sugar mafia can't escape accountability, even if they belong to any party, including the ruling (PTI) Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf. In a tweet, he blamed speculators and mafias for creating uncertainty in the market which led to the surge in the prices of sweetener. He said that Prime Minister Imran Khan always kept the interest of the people of Pakistan supreme. The law will take its course indiscriminately against those who create hurdles in the ongoing relief efforts to public.

## CGSS, Indonesian embassy plan online event

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Indonesia Adam Tugio met with the Vice Chancellor of Quaid-e-Azam University and explored various avenues of cooperation in the education sector. Both parties agreed to design an interesting program together to allow Pakistani youth and millennials to know more about Indonesia and ASEAN. The first introduction of a similar program - Indonesian Contemporary Study - will be launched next month with collaboration of CGSS. As many as 13 Indonesian experts from universities and think tanks lend their support to speak on a wide range of topics from political history, foreign policy and economic development to climate change and promoting interfaith harmony. The Indonesia embassy has planned extensive activities for the coming period. The CGSS will co-host the upcoming event along with the Indonesian embassy. The CGSS has already started preparations for the mega event, which is expected to draw huge interest from all and sundry. - DNA



## COVID-19 claims 78 more lives

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The national tally on Wednesday of total active COVID-19 cases recorded was 50,397 with 4,757 more people tested positive for the deadly virus and 2,848 people recovered from the disease during the last 24 hours. Seventy-eight corona patients have died during past 24 hours, 73 of whom were under treatment in hospital and five out of the hospital in their respective quarantines or homes, according to the latest update issued by the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC).

## Azerbaijan indebted to Pakistan for support: Col Mehman

The Azerbaijan defence attaché especially thanked the government of Pakistan that took a bold stand on the issue thus sending a loud and clear message to Armenia that Pakistan was with Azerbaijan and will extend all possible support

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Col. Mehman Novruzlu the Defence Attaché of the Azerbaijan has said his country was greatly indebted to Pakistan and people of Pakistan for extending whole-hearted support during 40-days war

with aggressor Armenia. He expressed these views during a dinner he hosted for friends from media and think tank CGSS. Col. Mehman further said that the Armenian aggression had left for them with no option but to respond to the aggression adding by the grace of God and with the help of friends, Azerbaijan suc-

cessfully liberated the occupied territories from the aggressor. The Azerbaijan defence attaché especially thanked the government of Pakistan that took a bold stand on the issue thus sending a loud and clear message to Armenia that Pakistan was with Azerbaijan and will extend all possible support. Col. Mehman

also thanked people of Pakistan saying Pakistani people have a unique love and affection for their Azerbaijani brothers and sisters and vice versa. He said Azerbaijani people keep Pakistanis in very high esteem. It may be mentioned here that relations between Pakistan and Azerbaijan have touched new heights.

The Azerbaijan embassy spearheaded by Ambassador Ali Alizade is actively taking part in various humanitarian as well other social and welfare projects in Pakistan. Besides, various high level delegations from Pakistan have visited Azerbaijan in recent days. The Pakistan Air Force delegation is still in Azerbaijan to explore dif-

ference avenues of cooperation. The Azerbaijan government has invited Pakistani companies to take part in the rebuilding of the newly liberated areas. The Azerbaijan leadership on a number of occasions expressed its earnest desire to engage Pakistani companies in order to further strengthen bilateral relationship.

## Inside...

- PRCS holds EGM to elect new Managing Body - Page 02
- 'NAB's strategy yielding results as per law' - Page 03
- ICCI asks FBR to defer tax collection from businesses - Page 04
- The Day of genocide of Azerbaijani people - Page 05
- Azerbaijan commemorates 103 anniversary of 1918 genocide - Page 06
- China commits 'genocide' against Uighurs: DOS report - Page 07
- State of protections for freedom of expression poor - Page 08



Col Mehman presenting a souvenir to Lt. Col Khalid Taimur



Defence Attaché of Azerbaijan Embassy Col. Mehman Novruzlu, Dy DA Lt. Col Emin, Chief Editor Islamabad Post, CENTRELINE and DNA Ansar M Bhatti, Col Khalid Taimur CGSS and Haji Riaz from NHT



Col Mehman presenting a souvenir to Ansar Mahmood Bhatti



## Briefs

## Samadhi temple's construction from April 5

SHAHEEN HANIF

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court (SC) on Wednesday ordered the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) chief secretary to complete reconstruction of century old Hindu temple in six months that was vandalized and set on fire by a mob in Karak district. A three-member SC bench comprising Chief Justice Gulzar Ahmed, Justice Ijaz Ul Ahsan and Justice Sayyed Mazhar Ali Akbar Naqvi heard the case. During the course of proceedings, the apex court restrained the Hindu community from interfering in the construction of the Karak temple Samadhi. The court directed the provincial government to ensure early completion of the temple. The KP advocate general informed the court that the construction work was about to start when Hindu Council chairman and Member of the National Assembly Ramesh Kumar stopped the contractor to commence the construction work. Ramesh Kumar said the contractor did not have the capacity for the construction of the temple. The KP government had approved a budget of Rs35 million for the construction of Samadhi, while the construction work was worth Rs55 million, he added. He said the contractor did not even have the money to start the construction. Justice Ijaz-ul-Ahsan remarked that the construction work of Samadhi was to start from April 5, and its construction was to be completed in six months. Chief Justice Gulzar Ahmed remarked that the construction of Samadhi was the responsibility of the state. The apex court directed KP chief secretary to start work on Samadhi soon and adjourned the hearing for an indefinite period.

## DC directs to complete target of polio drive

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Muhammad Ali has said that during catch-up days of anti-polio campaign, health teams should go door to door and complete target of children vaccination. He was reviewing the anti polio campaign on Wednesday and directed the health teams to perform their duties diligently and in case the children are not at home, they should inquire about them and ensure administration of polio drops to them. He said that the guest children should also have 100 percent coverage even though they belong to any area. He urged the Assistant Commissioner Sadar and Secretary RTA to visit General Bus Stand regularly and closely monitor the campaign. CEO Health Dr Bilal Ahmed, Secretary DRTA Zameer Hussain and other officers were also present on the occasion.

## Commissioner instructs to implement Covid SOPs

STAFF REPORT

SARGODHA: The Commissioner Sargodha division Dr. Farah Masood said, due to the pandemic situation is worsen 9, he warned that there will be no compromise on the safety of public health. In her statement, on Wednesday, Dr. Farah Masood asked concern authorities that should be no negligence while complying with the instructions of the Punjab government. Commissioner Sargodha division, Dr. Farah Masood further instructed that implementation on the Standard Operating Procedure (SOPs) should be ensured at any cost, because it is the matter of citizens' lives.

## PRCS holds EGM to elect new Managing Body

Punjab Governor Ch Muhammad Sarwar, Sindh Governor Imran Ismail and Gilgit-Baltistan Governor Raja Jalal Hussain Maqpoon virtually attended the EGM as president of respective provincial branches of the PRCS

SHUJAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: The new Managing Body of the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) was unanimously elected at an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) held here at the National Headquarters on Wednesday. Punjab Governor Ch Muhammad Sarwar, Sindh Governor Imran Ismail and Gilgit-Baltistan Governor Raja Jalal Hussain Maqpoon virtually attended the EGM as president of respective provincial branches of the PRCS. PRCS Balochistan Branch Chairman Akram Shah Advocate, erstwhile FATA Branch Chairman Asif Khan, AJK State Branch Administrator Lt Col (r) Tahir Younas, representatives of Ministry of National Health Services, Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Information and Broadcasting as well as ICT Commissioner Office also attended the meeting. President Arif Alvi was



scheduled to chair the EGM, however he could not attend for having caught Covid-19 and delegated the responsibility to PRCS Chairman Abrar ul Haq, who chaired the meeting as President of the Society. The meeting was held in

line with the provisions of the constitution of the PRCS after necessary permissions from the President's Secretariat and as per past precedence. Dr Irshad Muhammad, Asif Bajwa, Syed Hashim A Hassan, Dr Parvez Ghaf-

far Rajwani, Brig (r) Abdul Hadi and Brig (r) Dr Mowad Hussain Rana were elected unopposed as new members of the PRCS Managing Body through show of hands process for a period of two years. Safety precautions in the wake

of Covid-19 pandemic were strictly observed during the meeting. Speaking on the occasion, Governors of Punjab, Sindh and GB appreciated the services rendered by PRCS Chairman Abrar ul Haq for strengthening the Socie-

ty. They said Abrar ul Haq has injected a new life to the PRCS, and also assured their all-out support to the organization in delivery of humanitarian services. In the end, special prayers were offered for fast recovery of President Arif Alvi.

## Buzdar to continue action against land grabbers

DNA

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar on Wednesday said that indiscriminate action against the land grabbers would continue till retrieving every inch of the state land from squatters. While giving details during a presser at his office, the CM said 155,000 acres of land had been retrieved in different parts of the province having a value of Rs. 450 billion. It was the largest operation in the history of the province and the task would be brought to its logical end, he indicated. During the last seven days, 12,318-acre land of Rs. 22.32 billion value had been recovered from illegal occupants in 31 districts, he said. As many as 403 FIRs had been registered and 97 accused had also been arrested, he added. Similarly, the CM pointed out that indiscriminate action was also underway against sugar and price-hike mafias.



The PTI govt was actively working to curb every sort of mafia and public interest was being fully protected under the leadership of PM Imran. He said the land had been retrieved in Sargodha, Sheikhupura, Rawalpindi, Rajanpur, DG Khan, Multan, Narowal and other cities and the recovered state land would be utilized for public welfare purposes. The govt would also recover damages from the influential involved in illegal occupation of state lands, he continued and indicated that action was not person or

party-specific but indiscriminate that would continue. It was intolerable to occupy the state land for personal use and no political discrimination had been shown in this action, the CM stressed. Similarly, no one was politically targeted. The government wanted to protect the state lands and the political affiliation of land grabbers was simply irrelevant, he added. The CM told that a strategy had been devised to best use the recovered lands while the data bank would also be set up in the board of revenue

and steps would be taken so that no one could dare to re-occupy such lands. Action against the land grabbers in 31 districts had yielded positive results during the last 7 days and the operation would continue till the complete recovery of state lands in the province, he added. He said the PTI government had waged a war against every sort of mafia. While replying to the questions, CM Buzdar said the anti-corruption establishment took action if a government employee was found involved in the occupation of state land but the government had started indiscriminate action without caring for any political affiliation. Indiscriminate action would be continued against all; whether it was his (CM) relative or an office-bearer of the party, the CM emphasized and added that the government was active against the land grabbers while setting aside the politics and the crackdown would be continued.

## FPCCI and SAARC Chambers greet Hammad Azhar

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry and SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry Wednesday congratulated Hammad Azhar for assuming the portfolio of federal finance minister and hoped will restore the confidence of business community. In a joint statement President SAARC Chamber Iftikhar Ali Malik, FPCCI Vice Presidents FPCCI Raja Muhammad Anwar, Muhammad Nawaz, Adeel Siddiqui and Muhammad Asif Yousaf Jeewa urged Prime Minister now to focus on his party manifesto and live up the aspirations of the people who voted him to power besides special focus on economic growth with specific direction for pursuing export oriented policies. He said

what business community badly needed is peaceful atmosphere, business friendly environment and export oriented policies coupled with judicious and prudent economic policies for strengthening the national economy on sound footings. Iftikhar Ali Malik said Hammad Azhar is highly educated politician having spark to deliver the goods. He said it's good omen that Prime Minister selected a right politician for right job and he will help steer the country out of economic crunch. He said his father former Governor Punjab and Lord Mayor Lahore Mian Muhammad Azhar is a one of the seasoned and polished politician. He hoped that Hammad Azhar will follow the footprints of his illustrious father by becoming the most successful and highly competent finance minister.

## CDA conducts operation against encroachments

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) administration is conducting operations against illegal constructions and encroachments. In this regard, according to details, CDA has launched a large-scale operation against illegal constructions in Newmal villages and Mouza Riyadh by occupying very valuable government lands worth billions of rupees. The land mafia first established illegal encroachments on government lands through mud constructions, then started occupying government lands. However, a mega operation was carried out by enforcement department in a timely and immediate. During the operation, 60 huts, 45 mud houses, 5 buffalo pens, four walls and other illegal structures were demolished on a large scale. During the operation, more than 200 kanals of government land worth billions of rupees have been relinquished. Meanwhile, in an operation against an illegal two-room house in G-8/4 it was demolished, and in I-9/4 a fruit and vegetable stall has also been demolished while conducting operation against encroachments by enforcement department of CDA. - DNA



HYDERABAD: Models walking on ramp during a bridal show. - DNA Photo by Jan Ali Laghari

## 10 private hospitals to vaccinate health workers

DC strongly urged to implement the SoPs and said that people should not go out of their houses unnecessarily to ensure their health. The DC said that the district admin has taken precautionary measures to protect the citizens from Corona virus

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: University of Health Sciences (UHS) has allowed 10 private hospitals of Punjab to vaccinate frontline health workers and other interested persons against coronavirus. Among these hospitals also include Aziz Fatima Hospital Faisalabad (AFHF), said Mian Muhammad Adrees former President FPCCI. Addressing a function in Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI), he said that Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) has provided Chinese vaccine while 26 persons were given corona shot on the first day of this drive in AFHF. He said that efforts have already been initiated to issue certificates to the vaccinated person so that they could freely travel abroad for their scheduled business trips. About FCCI related matters, he said that devoted office bearers and executive members would be encouraged in order to motivate the others to follow their footprints. "Committed

members would get FCCI awards in recognition of their selfless services for this prestigious trade body", he added. He further said that President FCCI Engineer Hafiz Ihtasham Javed had informed him that the entire hardware of FCCI has become old and hence he has allowed purchasing the latest hardware.



"New software will also be provided which will help FCCI to improve its overall performance", he added. He said that we must share our successes with colleagues as it will not only encourage team work but also inspire others to work with you with full confidence and commitment.

DC checks implementation of anti-corona SOPs

Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ali suddenly went different busiest chowks and checked the implementation on wearing face mask and punish the people those were travelling without face mask and stood them with the walls for few minutes. He emphasized on the use of masks to avoid the dangers of corona virus and directed that precautions be taken seriously. The Deputy Commissioner strongly urged to implement the SoPs and said that people should not go out of their houses unnecessarily to ensure their health. The Deputy Commissioner said that the district administration has taken precautionary measures to protect the citizens from Corona virus but social co-operation is essential to be safe from the virus. ACS Umar Maqbool and Syed Ayub Bukhari were also with him. He directed the Assistant Commissioners to implement the corona SoPs in the markets and bazars and submitted FIRs for non wearing face masks.

## Justice is our priority: Police

MAHBOOB AHIR

SARGODHA: Providing justice is one of our sole duties. We are doing our best to wipe out all sorts of crime and we will make peaceful our society at any cost, said by police officers of here on Wednesday. While talking with Islamabad Post, different Station House officers, including Fawad Sherazi, Muhammad Razaq and Tariq Khan Gondal, said that crimes from our society cannot be eradicated until the police, journalist fraternity and nation do not come at one page. "Our doors are always open for public and justice will be provided on merit", assured by the officers. In response to a question SHO of Urban Area Tariq Gondal concluded that touts are the main obstacles in the way of fair and speedy justice and such persons will never be allowed to create their space in our localities.

## 6,890 senior citizens vaccinated in Faisalabad

NEWS DESK

FAISALABAD: As many as 6,890 senior citizens have so far been vaccinated against COVID-19 in Faisalabad district. District Health Officer Dr Ata Al-Moenu said on Wednesday that vaccination process continued at five vaccination centers, established in the district, from 8 a.m to 8 p.m daily. He said that the centers had been established at Sports Complex Samanabad, Rural Health Centre Khurrianwala new building, Sports Complex Chak Jhumra, Tehsil Headquarters Hospital Tandlianwala new building and Tehsil Headquarters Hospital Samundari new building. He further said that registration process for citizens between the age of 50 and 60 years was also started and the people falling within this age limit could register themselves by sending their identity card number to 1166. The vaccination process for this age group would start after a week, he added.

## Violation of rules cannot be tolerated

STAFF REPORT

SARGODHA: The DSP Traffic Police Muhammad Kashif, here on Wednesday, said that traffic police are doing their duty in polite and amicably environment. While talking with the Islamabad Post, he said officers and staff, under his supervision, do not allow anyone to violate the prescribed rules and regulations. He further claimed that overloading and One-Wheeling is, in his jurisdiction, strictly being prevented. Instead of insulting anyone, we compel citizens to obey the traffic rules. He concluded that violation of traffic rules cannot be allowed.

Two drug peddlers arrested

At least eight offenders, in different localities of the metropolitan, have been arrested and illegal firearms and drugs have also been recovered from their possession on Wednesday. On the strict directions of District Police officer (DPO) Zulfqar Ahmad, police of different police stations have arrested two drug peddlers, recognized as Saleem and Altaf, and recovered 1kg and 310 gram hashish. Similarly, personnel belong to Silanwali and other police stations also arrested six habitual offenders from their jurisdiction respectively and recovered an illegal rifle and some pistols. Subsequently, separate cases against the detainees have been lodged respectively and further investigation is being carried. While talking with Islamabad Post, the DPO said that every necessary action, to complete wipe-out, is being taken against the offenders.



## Briefs

### ECC approves formation of NEDB: Razak

RAJA PERVAIZ

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to Prime Minister for Commerce and Investment, Abdul Razak Dawood on Wednesday said the Economic Coordination Committee of the Cabinet (ECC) had approved the formation of a National Export Development Board (NEDB). The Board will be chaired by the Prime Minister Imran Khan and will also include ministers, exporters, investors and the business community, the adviser said this on his official twitter account. He said the National Export Development Board (NEDB) became the main forum to discuss the strategy, incentives and removal of business hurdles. To keep the momentum of our value-added exports, Economic Coordination Committee of the Cabinet (ECC) in its meeting held today approved import of Cotton and Cotton Yarn from India, including land route, he said. The adviser said this would now be placed before the Cabinet for approval, after which it would be notified.

### Met office forecast dry weather

IBRAR KHAN

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) Wednesday forecast dry weather likely to persist in Capital during next 24 hours. Continental air is prevailing over most parts of the country, Met office reported. Districts of Sindh, Balochistan and south Punjab will remain under the grip of Heat wave conditions. Dust raising winds/gusty winds are likely to be prevailed. Dry weather is expected in other parts of the country. Maximum temperature's recorded in (°C): Mithi, Karachi 42, Sibbi, Lasbella, Thatta 41, Shaheed Benazirabad, Chhor, Tando Jam and Jacobabad 40.

### USC to launch Ramzan package from April 10

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Utility Stores Corporation (USC) will initiate 'Ramzan Relief Package' from April 10 at all of its outlets to provide 19 essential items at subsidized rate, 10 to 15 percent lesser than the market. On the instruction and vision of Prime Minister Imran Khan, the subsidy under Ramzan Relief Package has been increased this year comparing the previous years to provide relief to the masses. Utility Stores Corporation (USC) spokesman said in a press release. The spokesman said Prime Minister Imran Khan has advised the management of all stores to devise an effective price control mechanism and ensure availability of essential daily use items during Ramzan. The package would be applicable on 19 essential items including sugar, wheat flour, pulses, dry dates, rice, tea, cooking oil, Ghee, Baisan, beverages and tetra pack milk. Utility Stores Corporation (USC) will facilitate the people from April 10 till end of Holy Ramzan. The spokesman urged the people to observe anti-COVID-19 precautionary measures and cooperate with the staff during the shopping. The Corporation will also increase the number of mobile stores for maximum facilitation of the people by providing them essential items at their doorstep at the discounted rates.

# 'NAB's strategy yielding results as per law'

It was informed that NAB's Anti-Corruption Strategy starts yielding excellent results. It was informed that logical conclusion of mega corruption cases is top most priority of NAB, mega corruption are not being kept in files

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: Justice Javed Iqbal Chairman NAB chaired a meeting to review overall performance of NAB in nabbing corrupt elements and to recover looted money in order to deposit it in national exchequer as per law. The meeting was attended by Deputy Chairman NAB, Prosecutor General Accountability NAB, DG Operations and other senior officers of NAB at NAB Headquarters. During the meeting, it was informed that NAB's Anti-Corruption Strategy starts yielding excellent results. It was informed that logical conclusion of mega corruption cases is top most priority of NAB, mega corruption are not being kept in files. Out of 179 mega corruption cases, 63 mega corruption cases have been brought to logical conclusion while 95

mega corruption cases are under trial in the learned Accountability Courts and early hearing pleas are being filed in the learned Accountability Courts as per clause 16 (a) of NAB Ordinance, 1999. During the meeting, it was informed that according to details, Rs 4.364 billion fine had been imposed on corrupt elements in 12 mega corruption cases; various accused including Abdul Qadir Tawakal and others had been fined Rs 613 million; Ishtiaq Hussain; messers Bariq Syndicate, Rawalpindi and others were fined Rs 200 million, management of Pakistan Medical Cooperative Housing Society and land suppliers Rs 70 million; Haris Afzal son of Sher Muhammad and others Rs 1 billion; Seth Nisar Ahmed and others Rs 179.069 million; Sheikh Muhammad Afzal, chief Executive/Director Haris Steel Industry, private limited and others



Rs 331 million; Raza Habib, Chief Executive officer, Mrs Shumaila, Messers Jannat Apparel, private limited Faisalabad Rs174 million; Sheikh Muhammad Afzal, Rs. 435 million; management of Galaxy City Rawalpindi and others Rs 213 million; Ayaz Khan Niazi, former chairman NICL and others Rs 900 million; Syed Murid Kazim, former Provincial Minister for Revenue, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Ahsanullah; former Senior Member Board of Revenue and others Rs 200

million; Saeed Akhtar, Pakistan Railways and others Rs 3.78 million US dollars. Also the NAB had recovered Rs 7.859 billion through voluntary return in six cases and deposited in national exchequer. Of which Rs. 1.902 billion had been recovered from Alhamra Hills and Eden Builders Management through voluntary return, Rs. 80 million had been recovered from management of Manzar Kohsar Ahab Housing Society Mauza Jhand and others, Rs 313.308 million had been recovered from M Amjad Aziz, Chief Executive Officer, Divine Developers Private limited and others through plea bargain, Rs. 60 million recovered from Khushal Associates, Naushera and others; Rs 14 million has been recovered from Shah Nawaz Marri, former Provincial Minister for Sports, Balochistan, Rs 5.5 billion was recovered in voluntary return from former

Project Director Police Department, Balochistan Riaz Ahmed and the recovered amount has been deposited in the national exchequer. The meeting was told that overall Rs 1.256 billion had been recovered from the culprits involved in four mega corruption cases through plea bargain and the recovered amount has been deposited into national exchequer. Of which Rs 300 had been recovered from Syed Masoom Shah, former special assistant to former chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and others; Rs440 million from messrs capital builders, private (new Islamabad Garden, Islamabad) and others; Rs 311 million from the management of messers Tele Town private limited and land suppliers and others; Rs 205 million from Rao Faheem Yasinn, Rao Naveed Yasinn and messrs Wind Mills Restaurant, Lahore, partners and others.

## Traders asked to observe businesses timings

SHAHEEN HANIF

RAWALPINDI: Deputy Commissioner Capt (Retd) Anwar Ul Haq Wednesday urged the business community to strictly follow coronavirus preventive Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) related to business activities to ensure safe working conditions as the third wave of the virus was more dangerous compared to previous ones. Talking to a delegation of Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) led by its President Nasir Mirza here at his office, the DC said that all possible steps were being taken to provide a conducive environment for boosting the business activities. He asked the traders to observe the timings related to the businesses and close their shops at 6:00 p.m. that were included in the Punjab government notification. Anwar urged the traders to play their role for the prosperity of the country, adding, the traders would be taken onboard regarding development works including the ring road project.

## 2 car & bike lifters arrested

DNA

RAWALPINDI: In a crackdown against criminal elements, Rawalpindi Police have arrested two car and motorcycle lifters and recovered a Mehran car and Honda 125 motorcycle from their possession. According to a police spokesman, Westridge and Kahuta police in separate raids rounded up two accused namely Asim Habib and Akram Aqeel, involved in car and bike lifting cases and recovered a Mehran car and 125 Honda motorcycle from their possession. As per preliminary police record, the criminals were also involved in other crimes, he added. He stated that other members and facilitators of the car and motorcycle lifters would also be arrested following preliminary investigations with the detainee culprits. Divisional Superintendents of Police (SP) lauded endeavour of police teams for netting the accused.

## 216 raids conducted to check SOPs violations

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The District Administration on the special directives of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rawalpindi Capt. (r) Anwar ul Haq has accelerated ongoing campaign launched to check the violations of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) issued by the Punjab Government to contain spread of coronavirus. According to a District Administration spokesman, 216 raids were conducted on Wednesday in different areas of the district to check implementation of the SOPs and the authorities took action in accordance with the law against the violators. He informed that the administration conducted 51 raids at Public Service Vehicles (PSVs) at different routes and on the violation of the SOPs, 80 vehicles were impounded besides imposing fines amounting to 96,000. 42 public places and parks were also inspected and Rs 3500 fines were imposed on the violators. Similarly, the officers visited 100 different shopping malls, markets and plazas while 12 on breach of the SOPs were sealed and fines amounting to Rs 81,000 were imposed. 23 marriage halls and 59 restaurants were also inspected and on violation of coronavirus SOPs, one hall and eight restaurants were sealed besides imposing fines amounting to Rs 88,000 on the violators. He informed that the DC had urged the citizens to wear face masks saying, the marks help stop the spread of coronavirus.

## Two arrested for running illegal LPG agencies

Police confiscated LPG cylinders, refilling gadgets and petrol from their possession

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi District Police under an ongoing operation against illegal Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) and Petrol agencies conducted raids and arrested two accused. According to a Police spokesman, Ratta Amral police netted Abdul Wahab for operating an illegal LPG agency. In another raid, an accused namely Muhammad Bilal was sent behind the bars for running an illegal petrol agency. Police confiscated LPG cylinders, refilling gadgets and petrol from their possession and registered separate cases against both the accused, he added. He said, police would continue their operation against the rules violators and the illegal petrol and LPG agencies would be sealed. Superintendent Police, Rawal warned the violators to stop the illegal business otherwise strict action in accordance with the law would be taken.

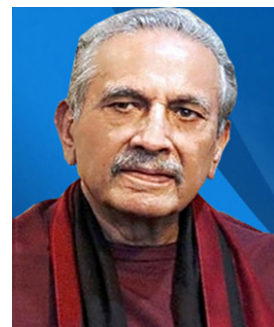
## Strict measures for anti-polio drive

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Strict security measures have been put in place for the teams taking part in the ongoing five-day anti-polio vaccination drive. According to a police spokesman, over 1000 police personnel were deployed to ensure security of 663 polio teams. Senior police officer had also been directed to brief the cops, performing security duties of the polio workers, he said. Police mobiles had also been directed to ensure security of the polio workers and remain in the field, he said adding, as many as 1,000 police personnel were deployed on the security duty of anti-polio teams in Rawalpindi district.

## PM directives to ease housing loans lauded

KHAYAM ABBASI



ISLAMABAD: Former President ICCI Shahid Rasheed Butt on Wednesday lauded Prime Minister Imran Khan for taking steps aimed at facilitating the masses to get bank loans for their houses. Masses were facing problems due to the reluctance of some banks to provide housing loans therefore the PM has directed the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) and National Bank to take steps to provide relief to the masses, he said. SBP has been asked to push commercial banks to lend, as the pace of advances is not satisfactory due to risk factor, he added. Shahid Rasheed Butt said that one reason behind the

reluctance of banks is the weak legal mechanism to recover the loans given to masses for the construction of their houses. He noted that banks have informed the government about their reservations while the government has promised to sort out the issue but nothing concrete has been done so far. The business leader noted that presently there is

a shortage of ten million houses while the need is increasing by three hundred and fifty thousand units per annum. Improving the foreclosure laws will trigger construction activities across the country supporting some forty allied industries reducing unemployment and increasing revenue to boosting the GDP. Despite measures taken by the central bank, commercial banks will remain reluctant to support the Naya Pakistan Housing Programme, a flagship project of the Government, unless its laws are improved to their satisfaction, he said. He demanded urgent steps to resolve all the issues confronting the PM's initiative otherwise low-cost housing will remain a dream, he observed.



ISLAMABAD: A view of heavy machinery working at the site of a road expansion near PWD on Expressway. DNA

## ADC orders crackdown on substandard sellers

RAWALPINDI: Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) General, Rawalpindi, Qasim Ijaz has directed the authorities concerned to launch a crackdown against sellers of substandard fertilizers and pesticides. He said, the regional officers should take strict action against profiteers and hoarders of the fertilizers and pesticides. ADC asked the officers to make all out efforts to ensure quality of the fertilizers and pesticides and their availability at the rates fixed by the government. He said, Punjab government was taking solid steps for agricultural reforms and to ensure availability of agricultural commodities at prices fixed by the government. He said, efforts were being made to transform agriculture on modern technologies aimed at increasing per acre crop yield so that the national economy could be strengthened. All the officers concerned will have to play more active role to implement the policies being formulated by the government, he added. He said, Pakistan is an agricultural country and the growers will have to leave traditional methods and adopt modern techniques to make agriculture truly profitable. He informed that the authorities concerned had been directed to make all possible efforts to provide technical assistance to the growers. - DNA

# Adaption of new tech by NHMP a milestone

The minister emphasized the need to create technology wings in police initially in Karachi, Islamabad and Lahore. "Ultimately we have to see how far constables have the ability to adapt to the new technologies, not how fast they can run"

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Science and Technology, Chaudhry Fawad Hussain Wednesday said new drone based surveillance system on motorway and adaptation of latest technology by motorway police were big milestones to bring progress in the country. He was speaking at the launching event of 'Drone Patrolling, Body Worn cameras and PSV Management System' held here at Motorway (M-2) Islamabad Toll Plaza. Speaking on the occasion, the federal minister said the drone technology would facilitate the monitoring of vehicles at the toll plaza, facilitate travelers through eliminating long queues, increase the revenue of motorway police and decrease accidents on motorways. Earlier, the speed of vehicles was being monitored at the spe-

cific places where cameras were installed but now the drone technology will make the surveillance system more effective. The minister emphasized the need to create technology wings in police initially in Karachi, Islamabad and Lahore. "Ultimately we have to see how far constables have the ability to adapt to the new technologies, not how fast they can run."

Fawad said Islamabad motorway may be the first police to adapt the latest technology and Lahore and Karachi motorway police need to study these technologies closely. The minister observed that Islamabad Police spends Rs20 million annually on patrolling and this cost would be significantly lowered through shifting to drone based surveillance system. This would also

reduce environmental pollution, he added. He pointed out that Karachi city had been facing the issue of street crimes and drone was the best technology to end such crimes. Mentioning the figures, he said the drone industry which was of 22.34 billion in the year 2020 would grow up to 70 billion during the next seven years. While Pakistan's minimum share in this industry should

be 2.8 percent, he added. Pakistan should have been exporting billion dollar drone at this time but unfortunately it could not happen due to ban on drone technology on civilian side, he lamented. He said drones were used for the first time in the tribal areas of Pakistan while this technology was introduced in our defense sector in the year 2005. However, ban on drones on civilian side hindered the progress in this field, he added. Chaudhry Fawad said drone technology would be the integral part of our agriculture sector in the next three to five years and transform this entire sector. The minister said since assuming charge of Ministry of Science and Technology, he had been emphasizing on the importance of drone technology. He said Prime Minister Imran Khan had always supported this technology led endeavors and extended special cooperation in implementation of drone technology.





## Briefs

## IHC forms bench to hear 'Aurat March' case

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday formed another bench to hear a petition seeking legal actions against the organizers of 'Aurat March' in the federal capital. Justice Aamer Farooq would take up the case for hearing on April 26. Earlier, Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb had expressed excuse from hearing this case and sent the case file to the IHC chief justice for the formation of a new bench. The petition was filed by 'Shuhada Foundation' through Tariq Asad Advocate. It had prayed the court to impose ban on celebrations of events like 'Aurat March' and 'Valentine's Day' etcetera. It also prayed the court to send the matter to Council of Islamic Ideology and seek record of international funding to the local and international non-governmental organisations.

## IESCO issues power suspension schedule

DNA

ISLAMABAD: According to Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO)'s spokesman, System Maintenance is in process. Therefore power supply of below mentioned feeders/areas will be temporary suspended as per given schedule: On 1st April from 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM, Nogazi, Fazuya, Tarlai, H-8, Highway, Iqbal Town, NPCC II, Navy I&II, Sohan Garden I&II, River Garden Feeders from 09:00 AM to 04:00 PM, Syed Kasran Feeder, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., Multi Orchard, Brahma Feeders, On 2nd April, from 7:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., Captain Nisar Shaheed, MES & Bhaini, Mangla Cantt, Gadari Feeders and surrounding areas will remain without power. IESCO management apologizes to its esteemed customers for the power outage. If the work is completed ahead of time, the power supply can be restored even before the scheduled time.

## ED notifies transfers, postings of officers

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Establishment Division on Wednesday issued a notification of transfers and postings of various officers of Pakistan Administrative Service (PAS). According to the notification, flt Lt (Retd) Qurat-ul-Ain Fatima, a BS-18 officer of PAS, presently posted as Deputy Secretary, Establishment Division, under Section 10 of the Civil Servants Act, 1973, is appointed to BS-19, on Acting Charge Basis, in that service, with immediate effect. On appointment, Qurat-ul-Ain Fatima will remain posted as Deputy Secretary, Establishment Division, until further orders. Similarly, Ms. Adeela Hafeez, a BS-20 officer of PAS, presently posted under Government of Punjab, is appointed to BS-19, on Acting Charge Basis, in that Service with immediate effect. On appointment, the services of Ms. Adeela Hafeez will remain at the disposal of Government of the Punjab until further orders. While Tarique Manzoor, a BS-18 officer of PAS, presently posted under Government of Sindh, is appointed to BS-19, on Acting Charge Basis, in that Service with immediate effect. On appointment, the services of Tarique Manzoor will remain at the disposal of Government of the Sindh until further orders. Muhammad Khizer Afzal, a BS-18 officer of PAS, presently posted under Government of Punjab, is appointed to BS-19, on Acting Charge Basis, in that Service with immediate effect. On appointment, the services of Muhammad Khizer Afzal will remain at the disposal of Government of the Punjab until further orders, the notification said.

## ICCI asks FBR to defer tax collection from businesses

Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan said that the business community has been demanding of the FBR since long for developing a simplified and easy taxation system to enhance tax compliance as the current complicated tax system was a major hurdle for many potential taxpayers to come into the tax net

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) lauded the decision of FBR for extending the deadline to furnish the taxpayer profile up to 30th June 2021 as it would reduce pressures on taxpayers by giving them more time for preparation of their profiles. However, he urged that FBR should simplify the taxpayer profile as it required extensive information including mandatory submission of bank account detail, business premises detail and utility connections detail that would be a very cumbersome exercise for the taxpayers and would consume a lot of their time in its completion. He said this while presiding over a meeting of the business community at ICCI. Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan said that the business community has been demanding of the FBR since long for developing a simplified and easy taxation system to enhance tax compliance



as the current complicated tax system was a major hurdle for many potential taxpayers to come into the tax net. However, instead of focusing on simplifying the tax regime, FBR has developed a tax profiling system, which has made the tax payment obligation more difficult for taxpayers. He said that many members of the business community were already finding it very

difficult to complete the filing of online income tax returns and were demanding for the development of a one pager tax return form in Urdu to facilitate them. He said that instead of making things easy for taxpayers, FBR has come up with the requirement of taxpayer profile that would make their job more difficult to complete. He stressed that FBR should revise its decision

and focus on a simple and short version of taxpayer profile for promoting ease of doing business. ICCI President said that due to the 3rd wave of Covid-19, the government has banned the operation of many businesses including weddings halls, marquees, indoor dining in restaurants, besides reducing business days for retail and timings that have caused great losses for the business community.

Therefore, he urged that FBR should defer the collection of taxes from the business class during the 3rd wave of coronavirus or allow them to pay income and other taxes of current financial year in easy instalments that would provide them some relief in these turbulent business conditions. Fatma Azim Senior Vice President and Abdul Reh-

man Khan Vice President ICCI said that the GST rate was quite high in Pakistan and was an important source of high cost of doing business and high inflation. Therefore, they emphasized that the government should bring down the GST rate to a single digit level in the upcoming budget that would reduce production cost and inflation and facilitate the growth of business and industrial activities.

## AIOU commences online examinations in Middle East today

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) is commencing online examinations today for its students settled in various countries of the Middle East including KSA, Kuwait, Qatar, UAE, Oman and Bahrain for the programs offered in autumn 2020 semester including matriculation and intermediate. Roll number slips and date sheet have been dispatched to the students as well these are uploaded on the university website (www.aiou.edu.pk) for quick access and downloading. It is pertinent to mention here that AIOU, as a prestigious national institution, is offering educational services, ranging from matriculation to bachelor level, to the Pakistanis settled in Middle East so that they can empower themselves through education and training to explore better employment opportunities. AIOU is striving hard to extend these educational services to other countries too. Conducting online examinations in Middle East is, undoubtedly, a significant milestone achieved by AIOU as a result of untiring efforts of Prof Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum in digitalizing key administrative and academic operations of the university since he assumed the charge of his office as the Vice Chancellor, AIOU. - DNA

## Pre-bid meeting for RRRP to be held on April 5

SHUJAAT HAMZA

RAWALPINDI: Commissioner Rawalpindi Capt. (Retd) Muhammad Mehmood has said that a pre-bid meeting for Rawalpindi Ring Road Project (RRRP) will be held on Monday, April 5. According to a Commissioner Office spokesman, two representatives of each company submitting tenders for RRRP have been invited and in view of the Coronavirus Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) the companies would also be allowed to attend the meeting via video link.

He said, the notification of the committee for reviewing the tenders of RRRP would be issued this week and the Communications and Works Department, UET Taxila, NUST and CDA have sent their nominations for this committee. A committee comprising officers of various departments would be set up to review grievances if any of the companies participating in the tenders. He said that a detailed tour of the track of Rawalpindi Ring Road project would also be arranged for the companies participating in the bidding process. The process of payment to the owners of land ac-

quired for Rawalpindi Ring Road was also underway which has been accelerated, he added. He said that 52 percent payment had been made for the land acquired within the limits of Attock district while 32 percent amount had been paid for the land acquired within the limits of Rawalpindi district and efforts were being made to expedite the process in the coming days. The tenders of RRRP would be opened on April 12, he said. He said that various government departments and agencies including Rawalpindi Development Au-

thority, Finance Department, National University of Science and Technology and University of Engineering and Technology Taxila, Capital Development Authority, National Highway Authority, Public Private Partnership Authority and Lahore Ring Road Authority had been requested to nominate the experts to open the bids and evaluate them. No Objection Certificates (NOCs) for Rawalpindi Ring Road were required from 30 departments and agencies, out of which, 26 had been obtained and efforts were being made to get NOCs from four other departments.



ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia met the Director-General of the East Asia & Pacific, MOFA, Aamer Ahmed Atozai. During the meeting, they discussed bilateral relations between Indonesia and Pakistan as well as issues of common interest. - DNA

## Vaccination in full swing; 24,068 inoculated

RAWALPINDI: The COVID-19 vaccines have been administered to 24,068 recipients in the district since the inoculation started on March 10. District Health Coordinator for COVID-19 Dr Jawad Khalid told APP that 11631 health workers while 12437 other people including senior citizens have received their first dose of Chinese Sinopharm vaccine so far. He informed that the district health authority has registered total 18119 positive cases till date out of which 16605 belonged to Rawalpindi while 1514 to other districts. The health officer told that 258 confirmed cases were

reported during the last 24 hours including 247 of Rawalpindi and 11 from outside the district. Dr. Jawad said that 15316 patients were discharged after recovery while 4487 were quarantined at homes and 1848 in isolation. "Presently 214 confirmed patients were admitted to various facilities of the city including 32 in Holy Family Hospital, 44 in Benazir Bhutto Hospital, 113 in Institute of Urology, 20 in Fauji Foundation Hospital, three in Rukhsana Memorial Hospital and one each in Hearts International Hospital and Red Crescent hospital," he added. - APP

## Experts call for global partnership cooperation

The conference commenced with the opening remarks of Dr. Mehmood Ul Hassan Khan, Member Board of Experts, CGSS, Islamabad & Regional Geopolitical Analyst

DNA

ISLAMABAD: An Online International Conference on "Evolving Global Security Challenges in the Post-COVID World" was organized by the Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad. The conference commenced with the opening remarks of Dr. Mehmood Ul Hassan Khan, Member Board of Experts, Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad & Regional Geopolitical Analyst. He stated that the COVID 19 pandemic has further disorganized existing global challenges, further exposing the underlying causes of insecurity, social and economic inequality with overtones of racial tension and nationalism. Furthermore, it is the knowledge that must be provided to decision-makers in-charge of internal and civil security to shift from forecasts to informed actions. Mr. Tolga Sakman, Chairman, Center for Diplomatic

Affairs and Political Studies (DIPAM), Istanbul, Turkey discussed re-evaluating the international security architecture in the Post-Covid-19 era, potential areas, and policy options for Eurasia. He further highlighted that the post-covid era has altered the security architecture. In recent years central Asia, East Asia, and the Baltic Sea have become crucial as Russia and China work on post-liberal political and economic arenas. Post covid security architecture has resulted in new consequences as the global supply chains have high effects on how democratic establishments can rescale peoples' employment. He mentioned the idea of Global Partnership Cooperation to be the most essential ingredient for this new change. Prof. Dr. Iram Khalid, Chairperson, Department of Political Science & IR, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan emphasized the impact of COVID-19 on the security dynamics of Asia. According to Dr. Iram, there are three major com-

ponents to security dynamics that first and foremost include compartment reservation of Asia. It has become challenging to practice nontraditional security power. She emphasized the contemporary concepts

where national security depends greatly upon the tangible and non-tangible interests and elements. Furthermore, keeping in view the concept of commonality on an international scale, paradigms of new

discussions have opened for foreign policymakers. She also mentioned that interconnectivity has altered the designs of traditional security into non-traditional security. Therefore, orthodox paradigms need revision to

facilitate the worldwide new connections. Dr. Adam Saud, Dean, Faculty of Humanities & Social Sciences, Bahria University, Islamabad, Pakistan discussed the shifting of focus from the War on terror towards the strategic competition between the US, China, and Russia. He further commented that the post-cold war political scenario changed as the US wanted to establish its global might. War on terrorism dominated global politics previously but post 2008, as the US underwent an economic crisis China began to revitalize the geo-economic realm. He emphasized that on the creation of geopolitical capital there is a gap to know who the great power coefficient of the future is. According to Dr. Adam Saud, the economic crisis and problems arising from lack of consensus can be tackled if the US recognizes China's strategic competitiveness. Furthermore, in the contemporary era, the position holders will be visible as per their posi-

tion. Dr. Shafiah F Muhibat, Director of International Relations, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Jakarta, Indonesia discussed the Security Challenges and Alignments in East Asia. She further elaborated some major areas to illustrate the regional security challenges; maritime security, great power politics, humanitarian challenges, and challenges posed by Covid-19. She believed that further assistance and cooperation of regional states can enhance Maritime security. Dr. Shafiah further added to the discussion by signifying the cooperative role of hyper-potential countries like Korea in peacefully settling clashes. She also emphasized that despite the great power politics and tensions South Asia carries huge potential to smoothen the scenario by setting regional order as the top priority. This can be done by establishing trust and covering relations by efficiently responding to the challenges.



## Soomro for completing privatization

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Privatization Muhammad Mian Soomro here on Wednesday directed that the work on the Public Sector Enterprises (PSEs) included in the active privatization list should be completed on priority. He asked for completing all legal and administrative issues related to the privatization of these PSEs, says a press release. The minister chaired Progress Review Meeting and weekly progress review meeting about the privatization of entities in active list was also held under the chairmanship of Federal Minister and Chairman Privatization, Muhammad Mian Soomro. Federal Secretary Privatization, DGs, Transaction Managers, Financial advisors and others attended the important meeting. Muhammad Mian Soomro sought the progress in the privatization of various PSEs. The matter relating to the two power plants of National Power Parks Management Company Limited (NPPM-CL), First Women Bank, SME Bank, Jinnah Convention Center, Services International Hotel, Sindh Engineering Company and various other entities were discussed in detail.

## E-Kachehri held for Ehsaas beneficiaries

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The first-ever Ehsaas e-Kachehri Wednesday held at the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) head office in pursuance of the Prime Minister Imran Khan vision of resolving public issues. The purpose of this e-Kachehri was to provide direct answers to the queries of the beneficiaries of the Ehsaas Programme by the concerned officials of Benazir Income Support Programme and Ehsaas Programme and provide guidance for possible solutions to their problems. The time for Ehsaas e-Kachehri was fixed on March 31 (Wednesday) from 12:00 pm to 1:00 pm during which the beneficiaries were directed to call 0519246334 and ask questions. However, due to the full participation of the people, the e-Kachehri lasted for about an hour and a half. Most of the questions asked by Ehsaas beneficiaries during the e-Kachehri were related to the procedure of applying for the different programmes of Ehsaas, eligibility criteria, problems in biometric identification at ATMs and other payment centers, next payment of Ehsaas Kafalat, Ehsaas survey and policies regarding deceased beneficiaries and those with special needs. In addition to the questions asked during the Ehsaas e-Kachehri, the responsible authorities also shared useful information to guide the beneficiaries so that they can join the program and benefit from other initiatives and schemes.



## Students at risk

EDUCATION has been one of the biggest casualties of the pandemic and the woes of students continue onto 2021. It seems that last year's dilemma, of whether in-person examinations will be held or not will be repeated this year as well, as Education Minister Shafqat Mahmood announced, to mixed reactions, that O Level exams previously due to start on May 15, would now begin from May 10. There are some credible reasons behind holding examinations. Last year's process of awarding grades based on teachers' assessment prompted a huge backlash, as arbitrary grades without a clear grading formula were estimated to have been handed out. The grades were later reversed after a barrage of complaints from many countries. However, the failure to assess students' all-year performance is the responsibility of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE). It does not justify bearing the enormous risks associated with examinations. Doctors investigate mysterious brain disease cluster in Canada. The students have reasonable grievances. Students across the globe, including Pakistan, have taken to social media to voice their discontent with the update, demanding governments and the examination board review the decision and cancel exams. Apart from the obvious health risks posed to students, many of whom may suffer from pre-existing vulnerabilities, it is also unfair to expect the same standard of performance considering the unextraordinary circumstances. Education has been highly disrupted this year, with schools being closed, then opened, then closed again because of off and on again lockdowns, which has hit lower-income students the most. In-person examinations will no doubt reproduce class and geographical disparities. CIE has cancelled examinations in some countries, which shows that the body is capable of conducting assessments without in-person examinations. The government needs to make sure it has exhausted every option which prioritises the students' safety and educational well-being.

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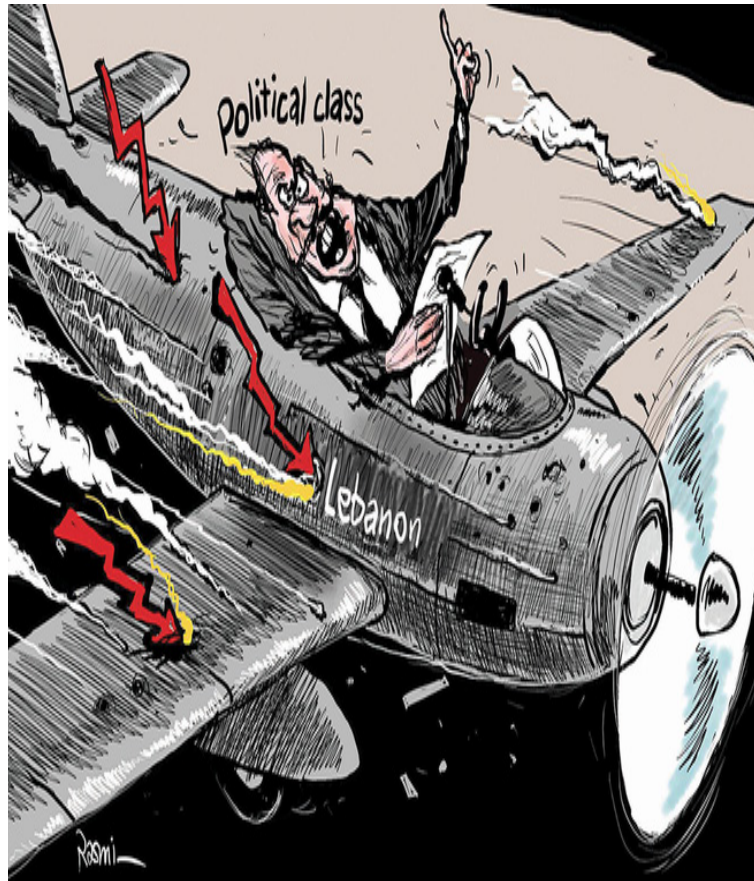
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Email: [dailyisbpost@gmail.com](mailto:dailyisbpost@gmail.com)

Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960

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



## New appointments

THE process of shuffling members of the federal cabinet seems to have begun with the sudden appointment of Hammad Azhar as the new Finance Minister. Under the leadership of Minister Azhar, the hope is that a fresh approach will tackle existing pertinent issues like inflation. The replacement of Hafeez Shaikh comes from the PM's initiative to promote young and fresh faces within politics to improve the standard of governance within the country. Given that such individuals are the future of our country, it bodes well for us to trust their unique perspective and adopt new strategies that are more in line with modern values and trends. There is no denying that in the current climate, the Finance Ministry is one of the most important factions of the government. Not only has it been tasked with the responsibility of creating solutions to losses incurred because of the pandemic but it also has to create a plan of action that boosts national revenue. The rate of inflation has gone up to a daunting 8.7 percent due to various shortages in domestic production and non-food related inflation continues to rise steadily in light of the high energy prices across the world. Slowly but surely, a basic standard of life is going beyond the reach of the masses that are now struggling to make ends meet—often succumbing to crippling poverty. It is hoped Minister Azhar can formulate policies to steer us out of this mess. Nevertheless, this strategy of the PM is one that will surely be put to the test immediately with public demands for their struggles to end. The hope is that the situation will be maneuvered through and that instant relief will be provided to the people of Pakistan.

# The Day of genocide of Azerbaijani people

Sabina Aliyeva



The UNGA Resolution 96 (I) of December 11, 1946 states that genocide is denial of the right to existence of entire human groups, as homicide is the denial of the right to live of individual human beings. According to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, adopted by UNGA Resolution 260 (III), genocide means any act committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group

ONE of the bloodiest pages of the policy of ethnic cleansing pursued by the Armenian nationalists against our people at different stages of history is the genocide committed against the Azerbaijanis in March-April, 1918. The genocide against the Azerbaijani people committed by the armed groups of dashnak Armenians and their supporters had resulted in mass killing of tens of thousands of civilians due to their ethnicity and religion in Baku city and different regions of Baku governorate, and other cities, including Shamakhi, Guba, Khachmaz, Lankaran, Hajigabul, Salyan, Kurdamir and other districts. The residential areas, cultural monuments, mosques and cemeteries were brutally destroyed. Many ancient buildings, including "Ismailiyya" Building, one of the most beautiful architectural monuments in Baku, the offices of "AchigSoz", "Kaspi" and "Baku" Newspapers, and shrines were destroyed by artillery fire, the minarets of the "Tazapir" Mosque were severely damaged, and the ancient "Juma" Mosque in Shamakhi was set on fire. The mass annihilation and pillaging started in Baku province later continued in Karabakh, Zangazur, Nakhchivan, Iravan, Goycha and other regions. Tens of thousands of Azerbaijanis became victims of mass atrocities committed by the Armenians. The dashnaks had destroyed, burned and plundered 110 villages in Shamakhi, 167 in Guba, over 150 in Karabakh, 115 in Zangazur Provinces, and 98 in Kars Oblast; innocent people, including women, children and the elderly, were brutally murdered. Furthermore, 199 villages in and around Iravan city, which was a historical territory of Azerbaijan, have been

ruined and 132,000 Azerbaijanis have been mercilessly murdered. Based on the Presidential Decree of March 26, 1998, "On the Genocide of Azerbaijanis", the genocide of the Azerbaijanis perpetrated by the Armenians was made a political and legal assessment. So, March 31 is marked annually as "The Day of Genocide of Azerbaijanis". Within past years, many new facts and evidential documents have been collected as a result of investigations carried out in recent years, and a mass grave was discovered in Guba city. GubaGenocide Memorial Complex, which has been established in this site, visually reflects the vandalism of Armenians against innocent Azerbaijanis. The massacre of tens of thousands of civilians in 1918 on ethnic and religious grounds, the planned and gradual manner of these criminal acts, as well as commitment of such crimes in various parts of Azerbaijan must be interpreted as a crime of genocide. The UN General Assembly Resolution 96 (I) of December 11, 1946 states that genocide is denial of the right to existence of entire human groups, as homicide is the denial of the right to live of individual human beings. According to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, adopted by UN General Assembly Resolution 260 (III) of December 9, 1948, genocide means any act committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group. Unfortunately, the genocide committed against Azerbaijanis in 1918, has not yet received its political and legal assessment at the international level. The indifference demonstrated by the international community to the crimes of

genocide against one nation committed as a result of hatred speech policy pursued for centuries, as well as the failure to bring the perpetrators to justice may cause the development of impunity syndrome, provoking new crimes and widespread human rights violations. We call on the world community and international organizations not to remain silent about the genocide committed against the Azerbaijanis in 1918, which is a crime against humanity, to recognize this heinous crime as an act of genocide at the international level, and to show determination and justice, without double standards, being guided by the norms and principles of international law. (NOTE)- This Statement is addressed to the UN Secretary-General, UN Security Council, UN Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights, UN Office of High Commissioner for Refugees, UN Human Rights Council, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, European Union, Council of Europe, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, International and European Ombudsman Institutions, Asian Ombudsman Association, Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Ombudsman Association of its member states, Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, European Network of Ombudspersons for Children, International Peace Bureau, different ombudsmen and national human rights institutions, embassies of the Republic of Azerbaijan in foreign countries and the foreign embassies in Azerbaijan, as well as to the Azerbaijani Diasporas.

- Sabina Aliyeva is the Commissioner for Human Rights (Ombudsman) of the Republic of Azerbaijan

# Iran-China accord ushers in major geopolitical shift

Osama Al-Sharif



The Iran-China deal has been attacked by the Iranian opposition for violating the country's sovereignty. It is not clear whether Iran will allow China to have a permanent military base on its territory. Beijing has shown an interest in getting involved in regional issues, such as by offering to host preliminary talks between Israel and the Palestinians

THE 25-year comprehensive strategic cooperation agreement between China and Iran, which was signed in Tehran on Saturday, is a major breakthrough for the two countries and will have long-term effects on the geopolitical balance of the Gulf and the region as a whole. After five years of negotiations, the inking of the deal, which covers various economic, political and security issues, comes at a time when relations between Beijing and Washington are at their worst. It also puts Tehran in a strong bargaining position in relation to the shaky nuclear deal and the West's attempt to renegotiate and expand it. The agreement, parts of which remain undisclosed, will release \$400 billion of Chinese investments over 25 years in return for a regular supply of low-cost Iranian oil. The impact of the deal on the struggling Iranian economy will be enormous and will lessen the effects of US-imposed economic sanctions. The proposal for a strategic alliance between China and Iran was made by Chinese leader Xi Jinping in 2016, but Iranian leaders hesitated to embrace it for fear that it would affect the newly signed nuclear deal. But this week's signing of what amounts to a treaty testifies to the failure of the Trump administration's policy of "maximum pressure" on Iran. It leaves Donald Trump's successor, Joe Biden, in a difficult position vis-a-vis rejoining the nuclear agreement unconditionally, as Tehran demands. The pact, which will allow China to put 5,000 security and military personnel on Iranian soil, is a regional game changer. Before China, Tehran had signed a 10-year cooperation agreement, especially in the nuclear

field, with Moscow in 2001 that has since been extended by five years twice. Two years ago, Iran joined naval exercises with Russia and China. The latest accord will allow China to have a presence in the Gulf region, as well as Central Asia. In return, Iran will have access to Chinese technology and investments in its poor infrastructure. The two parties will invest in a free industrial zone close to the Strait of Hormuz. The Chinese have been strengthening their economic ties with other Gulf countries for years. Beijing has signed cooperation agreements with the UAE and Kuwait and has good working relations with Saudi Arabia. The latest accord will raise red flags in Arab Gulf capitals. Iran continues to be a major source of instability in the region and its alliance with Beijing will only embolden the hard-liners in Tehran and Qom. Israel too will be feeling uneasy about the Chinese move. Both Russia and China, co-signatories to the nuclear deal, have supported Tehran's position and openly violated US sanctions. The deal is a major step in China's ambitious multibillion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative, which is expected to allow it to become the largest global economy in a few years. So far there has been no reaction from Washington. The signing of the accord will put the Americans and Europeans in a difficult position diplomatically. The Iranians are likely to stay firm in their rejection of any proposal to renegotiate the nuclear deal or expand it to cover Tehran's long-range missile program and its regional behavior. The signing of the deal came just days after

a failed US-China meeting in Alaska, which saw a bitter war of words break out between the two nations. Biden appears to be following in Trump's footsteps by taking a hard stand against Beijing. The Iran-China deal has been attacked by the Iranian opposition for violating the country's sovereignty. It is not clear whether Iran will allow China to have a permanent military base on its territory. Beijing has shown an interest in getting involved in regional issues, such as by offering to host preliminary talks between Israel and the Palestinians. The recent accord will be seen as another attempt by a foreign nation to fill the vacuum left by the US in the region. Already, Russia has established a number of military and naval bases in Syria and is active in Libya. Turkey, which has a military base in Qatar, is also not shy about its territorial ambitions in northern Syria and Iraqi Kurdistan. Unlike the US, China continues to be dependent on Gulf oil. It is certain we will see increasing Chinese activity in the region as America reduces its presence. Beijing has made it clear that its alliance with Iran will not affect its ties with the Gulf countries. Countries in the region will be under pressure, primarily from the US, not to get closer to China. The region, like in the 1950s, will be caught in a new cold war between China and Russia on the one hand and the US and its European allies on the other. This requires a careful diplomatic balancing act by countries in the region as we witness major geopolitical aftershocks.

- Courtesy Arab News



## Briefs

Asif Zaman  
appoints  
DG of PSB

SHAHEEN HANIF

ISLAMABAD: Retired colonel Mohammad Asif Zaman on Tuesday was appointed the new Director-General of Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) on a contract basis for three years. The federal government has also issued a notification, however, the appointment of Asif Zaman is subjected to the order of the Islamabad High Court (IHC). A writ petition has been filed in the Islamabad High Court regarding the appointment of DG Sports Board. PSB's official told this correspondent that the appointment of a new DG Pakistan Sports Board is against the law. According to Article 2 (ia) of the PSB Rules 1981 made by the Federal Government (Cabinet), the Director-General of Pakistan Sports Board can be appointed only by the Federal Government. The new Director-General of the Pakistan Sports Board has been appointed by the Prime Minister under the DGPSB Appointment Rules 2020. The DG Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) Appointment Rules 2020 are made by the PSB Board while the PSB Rules 1981 are made by the Federal Government. "The status of Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) Rules 1981 is greater than that of DGP PSB Appointment Rules 2020," Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) official told this correspondent. "Until the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) Rules 1981, Rule 2 (ia) is amended, the Prime Minister does not have the power to appoint a DGPSB," Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) sources. The court order is expected to be announced in the coming week in which the legality of Asif Zaman's appointment will be confirmed.

PM rejects  
complete  
lockdown...

From Page 01 recovering from Corona pandemic. During the meeting, the situation of coronavirus in the country was discussed in detail. The Prime Minister directed strict implementation of SOPs and said that business would continue on a limited scale. The Prime Minister said that the first wave was successfully countered due to our better strategy and once again, circumstances require the nation to show responsibility. A nationwide campaign should be launched to ensure the use of masks and full implementation of SOPs, he added. The meeting was also briefed on vaccine procurement and the ongoing vaccination drive across the country. The Prime Minister directed that merit and transparency be ensured in the vaccination process. The meeting endorsed the decision to immediately ban all indoor and outdoor activities across the country. Restrictions will apply to districts and cities with more than 8% positive cases. The meeting also considered the option of reducing inter-provincial transport.

Ukrainian  
envoy meets  
COAS

From Page 01 for bringing peace and stability in the region, especially the Afghan Peace Process. Both sides reiterated the commitment for expanding bilateral engagements through structured forums and regular exchanges, particularly with respect to defence cooperation.

Record of  
Rashid Naseem  
approved

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Rashid Naseem attempted a record in the memory of late Pakistani mountaineer Ali Sadpara and it has now been approved by the Guinness World Records. Rashid surpassed China's record of removing most playing cards between two balanced bottles with a nunchaku in one minute. The previous record was 14, achieved by Xie Desheng of China.

## Azerbaijan commemorates 103 anniversary of 1918 genocide

103 years ago in March-April 1918, massacres were committed in the city of Baku and other towns and districts of the Baku Province by the Armenian dashnak - bolshevik armed groups operating under the mandate of the Baku Council (Baku Soviet)

DNA

BAKU: Baku has once again condemned Armenia's deliberate policy of genocide and ethnic cleansing on the 103rd anniversary of the mass killings of Azerbaijanis on ethnic and religious grounds on March 31, 1918. In a statement issued on March 31, 2021, to commemorate the Day of Genocide of Azerbaijanis, the Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry said: "While remembering the innocent victims of the March tragedy, we strongly condemn the deliberate policy of genocide, crimes against humanity, racial discrimination and ethnic cleansing by Armenia committed against the people of Azerbaijan until now and reiterate the importance of ceasing impunity of Armenia to prevent the reoccurrence of such inhumane crimes." The ministry stressed that Azerbaijan calls on "Armenia to uphold its international legal obligations. Azerbaijan from its side will take all available and necessary legal measures to ensure peace and uphold accountability." March 31 marks the Day of Genocide of Azerbaijanis, commemorating the victims of the bloody massacre perpetrated by Armenians against Azerbaijanis in March 1918. 103 years ago in March-April 1918, massacres were committed in the city of Baku and other towns and



districts of the Baku Province by the Armenian dashnak - bolshevik armed groups operating under the mandate of the Baku Council (Baku Soviet), and tens of thousands of civilians were killed only for their ethnic and religious affiliation. It is important that we continue to honour the victims and ensure that the memory of these events prevents their recurrence. Ethnic Armenian Stepan Shaumian, the Commissar Extraordinary for the Caucasus, admitted that 6,000 armed soldiers of the Baku Soviet and 4,000 from the Dashnakstuyun party participated in the massacres against the

Azerbaijani people. The genocide carried out against the Azerbaijanis along with Baku covered also Shamakhi, Guba, Irvan, Zangezur, Garabagh, Nakhchivan and Kars regions. During the first five months of 1918, more than 16,000 people were murdered with utmost cruelty in Guba province alone; a total of 167 villages were destroyed. Mass graves discovered in Guba region in 2007 constitute clear evidence of the inhumane acts committed by Armenians. The ministry said that "March massacres of 1918 were well prepared and ruthlessly implemented

act by radical nationalist Armenians against Azerbaijanis on the grounds of racial discrimination and ethnic cleansing". "The Government of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic established in 1918 the Extraordinary Investigation Commission in order to investigate the serious crimes perpetrated by Armenians and has taken a number of measures to preserve the true facts revealed by the Commission in the memory of the people and to inform the world community about these atrocities. The Extraordinary Investigation Commission which was comprised of the best

lawyers of that time representing different nationalities - Russians, Jewish, Polish, Georgians and even Armenians, based on the evidence launched criminal cases against 194 individuals accused of different crimes against the peaceful population; 24 individuals in Baku and about 100 individuals in Shamakhi had been arrested for perpetrated crimes," said the statement. However, this process had been suspended after the demise of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, a full investigation of the tragic events and its political-legal assessment had been prevented. Only after 80 years - on March 26, 1998, the adequate political assessment was given to these horrific events by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On the Genocide of Azerbaijanis", signed by National Leader Heydar Aliyev and 31 March was declared the Day of Genocide of Azerbaijanis. The commemoration of the Day of Genocide of Azerbaijanis raises the awareness of the world community to the facts of the massacre and ethnic cleansing of Azerbaijanis in the past and present. Even after more than a century has passed, Armenia has continued its policy of committing crimes against Azerbaijanis on ethnic grounds, keeping Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding seven regions under occupation nearly for three decades.

Protesters  
shut oil  
refinery  
in Iraq

WEB DESK

BAGHDAD: Protesters on Wednesday shut down the Dhi Qar oil refinery in southern Iraq amid protests over the lack of job opportunities for local residents, according to eyewitnesses. Dozens of university graduates gathered in front of the Dhi Qar oil refinery in the center of the provincial capital Nasiriyah to demand employment. An eyewitness told Anadolu Agency that demonstrators vowed not to back down from closing oil institutions in the province until their demands are met. "This government is a liar," was among slogans chanted by the demonstrators. In addition to the oil refinery, which has a capacity of 30,000 barrels/day, the predominantly Shia province has the Nassiriya and Al Gharraf oil fields, which produce some 290,000 barrels of oil per day and about 60 million cubic feet of gas. Unemployment in the oil-rich country is estimated at 27%, and the poverty rate at 25%, according to the latest statistics of the Iraqi Planning Ministry.

Govt to  
resume  
trade...

From Page 01

The minister spoke about the high prices of sugar in Pakistan, saying the government had allowed sugar to be imported from other countries, however, the price of the commodity in other countries was also high. "However, in our neighbouring country India, the price of sugar is quite cheap," he said. "Hence, we have decided to resume sugar trade with India". He said the measure would help bring down sugar prices in Pakistan and will provide relief to the poor. Azhar said the demand for cotton in Pakistan was also increasing with the passing time and the country needed the product in a large amount. He said Pakistan had not produced quality cotton last year hence it had given the green signal for the product to be imported from other countries around the globe. "However, the import of cotton from India was banned and this had a direct effect on our SMEs," he said. "However, at the recommendation of the Ministry of Commerce, we have also decided to resume the trade of cotton with India," he said.

Pakistan  
for early  
completion..

From Page 01

expand markets to increase trade, and find sustainable solutions to water resources management. Qureshi said he was pleased to learn through his Foreign Minister Mehruddin that Tajik President Emomali Rahmon in a meeting with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani "stressed the need for a tripartite transit trade agreement among Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan". He said Pakistan on its part would pursue the matter of tripartite agreement with the Afghan leadership for the benefit of three countries. He expressed satisfaction that bilateral relations with Tajikistan had strengthened with time in line with the two joint declarations of 2017 and 2018 to promote cooperation. He said in a meeting with his Tajik counterpart, it was agreed to renew the spirit of the existing roadmap for bilateral co-operation and also decided to activate the Joint Working Groups and the Intergovernmental Commission. Qureshi invited the influential businessmen from both countries to strengthen trade relations and offered to facilitate the Tajik investors. He said both Pakistan and Tajikistan had fought the menace of terrorism and expressed satisfaction over the defence cooperation. He expressed pleasure that about 200 Tajik military officers had received military training in Pakistan and offered assistance on more capacity-building defence and diplomatic courses. Tajik Foreign Minister Sirojiddin Mohriiddin terming the meeting with Qureshi a "meaningful dialogue" said it focused on important global and regional issues.

PTF expresses grief  
at Saeed Hai's death

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF) has expressed profound grief over the demise of Khwaja Saeed Hai, a former Pakistan tennis great. Saeed Hai passed away in Karachi after a protracted illness. He was 91. President of PTF Salim Saifullah Khan and the other office-bearers in a condolence message extended their heartfelt condolences to Saeed Hai's family. They prayed to Allah Almighty to bless the departed soul with eternal peace and grant courage to his family members to bear the irreparable loss with fortitude. Born on 5th March 1930 in British India, Saeed was a former Pakistan No. 1 tennis player, and the first Pakistani to reach the main draw of a Grand Slam through qualifying matches. He featured in the main draw of the Wimbledon Championships in 1955 and 1956 and reached the second round of the French Open. He also played in the U.S. Open in 1964 and played in the Davis Cup for Pakistan. He studied at the Aligarh Muslim University where he honed his skills. In Wimbledon, he played men's singles, men's doubles, and mixed doubles. Apart from playing in the Davis Cup, he captained Pakistan's Davis Cup team 32 times. When the French Tennis Federation celebrated 100 years of the French Championship at Roland Garros, they built a commemorative wall, displaying the names of players who had done well during the championship which also included the name of Saeed Hai. Saeed Hai was also the founder President of the International Club, whose Head Office is in England. Membership is only open for Grand Slam and Davis Cup players. The International Tennis Federation (ITF) awarded him with a gold medal at their Annual General Meeting held in Lausanne (Switzerland) before 300 delegates from 198 affiliated associations of ITF including Pakistan. - DNA

E-Katchery held with Pakistani  
community in Belgium, Luxembourg

Ambassador Janjua informed the participants that the suggestions and inputs received from the community members during the previous two Khuli Katchery sessions, have been implemented. He underlined that the Embassy will continue to remain closely engaged with the community to extend best possible services

FOREIGN DESK

BRUSSELS: The Ambassador of Pakistan to the European Union, Belgium and Luxembourg, Zaheer A. Janjua, held the 3rd monthly Khuli Katchery in virtual format with Pakistani diaspora in Belgium and Luxembourg. The event was organized by the Embassy of Pakistan, Brussels, in line with the vision of Prime Minister Imran Khan, to maintain close engagement with Pakistani diaspora and to provide seamless services. The virtual interaction was attended by diaspora members from different walks of life, including academia, professionals, business, social services and media. Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador Janjua informed the participants that the suggestions and inputs re-



ceived from the community members during the previous two Khuli Katchery sessions, have been implemented. He underlined that the Embassy will continue to remain closely engaged with the community to extend best possible services and incorporate their inputs to improve service delivery.

The Ambassador appreciated the community members for participating in the webinar on Roshan Digital Account on 6th March 2021, and urged them to take full benefits of the scheme. The Ambassador also thanked the diaspora for the record increase in flow of remittances and hoped that this trend would continue in future. In order to overcome the challenges posed by the 3rd wave of COVID-19, the Ambassador urged the community members to exercise extreme caution and comply with the instructions of the Belgium and Luxembourg governments. He also encouraged them to avoid all unnecessary travel, and get vaccinated as soon as their turn comes up. The community members appreciated the Embassy's outreach efforts and provision of efficient consular services.



ANKARA: Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee of Pakistan, General Nadeem Raza, visits Turkish Aerospace Industries (TUSAS) in Ankara. TUSAS CEO Temel Kotil briefed him about various projects. - DNA

Italy expels two  
Russian diplomats

FOREIGN DESK

ROME: Italian Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio on Wednesday said his country has expelled two Russian diplomats after an Italian Navy officer was caught while allegedly handing over classified documents to a Russian official. Elisabetta Belloni, the Foreign Ministry secretary general, also summoned Russian ambassador to Italy Sergey Razov on Wednesday over the incident. "When the Russian ambassador to Italy was summoned to the Foreign Ministry, we expressed the Italian government's resolute protest and gave notice of the immediate expulsion of the two Russian officials involved in this extremely serious affair," Di Maio wrote in a Facebook post. "I thank the intelligence service and all the State agencies that work for the security of our country every day," he added. On Tuesday, an Italian navy officer was arrested on charges of spying for Russia after he allegedly passed top secret documents to a Russian military official in exchange for money. The Italian navy officer and the military official at the Russian Embassy in Rome were caught during a clandestine meeting in an operation by the Italian carabinieri police.

## FIFA should give us some time: Dr Fehmida

The minister said that sports were being damaged in Pakistan due to the personal interests of some individuals. "The mandate of the Normalization Committee is till June 30, this year

RAJA PERVAIZ

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Inter Provincial Coordination Dr Fehmida Mirza Wednesday sought time from FIFA to resolve the issue of the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) in an amicable way. The world's football governing body on Tuesday had issued a stern warning to PFF president Syed Ashfaq Hussain and his group, asking them to hand back the Federation's headquarters to the PFF Normalisation Committee or else the country will face a suspension. Ashfaq was elected PFF president in 2018 in elections held under the apex court's decision. However, he along with his body handed the charge to the FIFA-installed NC in September 2019 on the condition that it would hold fair and

transparent elections. Pakistan's Canada-based Haroon Malik is Chairman of the NC. Ashfaq along with his group on Saturday took over the control of the PFF headquarters from the NC, stating that it was not serious in holding elections as mandated by FIFA. "The government has nothing to do with the incident that took place on Saturday at the PFF headquarters. It wants the FIFA Normalization Committee should be given full time," the minister told a news briefing here at Press Information Department. "We've written a letter to FIFA to send its fact finding commission to Pakistan. We do not want the game of football to be ruined in Pakistan. "We've told it [FIFA] that we want to resolve the issues of Pakistan Football Federation. The immediate ban [on Pakistan] is not a solu-

tion to the problem," she added. The minister said that sports were being damaged in Pakistan due to the personal interests of some individuals. "The mandate of the Normalization Committee is till June 30, this year. The govern-



ment's position is very much clear that the issue can be resolved in accordance with the mandate given by FIFA. "I want the PFF and the Normalization Committee to sit together and resolve this issue amicably," she maintained. Fehmida noted that there was a tussle between personalities in football in Pakistan, which was putting a very bad impact on the game. Parliamentary Secretary Saima Nadeem, Secretary IPC Mohsin Mushtaq, and DG PSB Col (ret'd) Muhammad Asif Zaman were also present on the occasion. The minister said that the centre and the provinces would have to work together to revive sports activities at the grassroots level. "Grounds and gyms should be an essential part of the new housing projects to promote a healthy culture in the country,"

she emphasized. "Federations should also showcase their performance and ensure merit in the selection," she said. Replying to a question, she said that the appointment of DG PSB had been made in accordance with the law and rules. "There is no politics involved in it. His appointment has been made keeping in view the merit." She said those not meeting the merit had moved the courts. Secretary IPC while seconding the minister said that the appointment of DG PSB had been made purely on merit in accordance with the rules. DG PSB said that he himself had been a sportsperson and served in Pakistan Army for 32 years. "I have been in the field of sports for 12 years. I have accepted my appointment as a challenge and will do my best to promote sports in the country," he said.



## Briefs

## Gaza sees spike in coronavirus cases

DNA

GAZA: Gaza's health ministry said on Wednesday that more than a thousand cases of coronavirus were recorded during the previous day, the highest daily infection toll in several months.

The spike in the coastal Palestinian enclave, governed by Hamas since 2007, stands in contrast to the slowdown in infections in Israel, which maintains an air, land and sea blockade on Gaza - home to two million people.

"The epidemiological situation in the Gaza Strip is dangerous," said Magdy Dahir, deputy director of primary care at the Gaza health ministry. "There is a clear increase in hospitalisations." At least 65,500 people have been infected with the coronavirus and 610 deaths recorded since the start of the pandemic in the besieged Palestinian enclave. The Hamas-run government, which imposed a 9pm (18:00 GMT) curfew on Saturday to curb transmission, has ordered new restrictions on gatherings beginning Wednesday, the Gaza Hotels and Restaurants Association said.

## Indonesia retrieves crashed jet's voice recorder

FOREIGN DESK

JAKARTA: The cockpit voice recorder from a crashed Indonesian jet has been retrieved in "good condition", officials said Wednesday, more than two months after the airliner plunged into the sea killing all 62 passengers and crew. The CVR records flight crew conversations and could offer critical clues about why the Sriwijaya Air Boeing 737-500 dived around 3,000 metres (10,000 feet) into waters off Jakarta just minutes after takeoff on January 9. The jet's flight data recorder, which holds information about the speed, altitude and direction of the plane, was earlier plucked from the wreckage-littered Java Sea. Authorities said Wednesday that the voice recorder unit was in good condition, despite having been in the water for months.

"So we're confident that we will be able to download its data," said Soerjanto Tjahjono, head of Indonesia's National Transportation Safety Committee. Investigators want to mine the recorder in the hopes of learning what the crew was saying when the flight from the capital to Pontianak in Borneo went down. Cockpit voice and flight data recorders are known as black boxes and help explain nearly 90 percent of all crashes, according to aviation experts.

## Russia registers vaccine for animals

MOSCOW: Russia registered the first coronavirus vaccine for animals in the world, the country's veterinary regulator said on Wednesday.

The vaccine was developed for carnivorous animals, said Konstantin Savenkov, deputy head of the Federal Service for Veterinary and Phytosanitary Supervision (Rosselkhozadzor).

The trials of the vaccine, named CarnivacCov, started last October, and it was tested on dogs, cats, arctic foxes, minks, foxes, and other animals, Savenkov said.

The results of the studies showed that the vaccine is harmless and 100% effective, he explained, adding that all the vaccinated animals developed antibodies to the coronavirus.

"The CarnivacCov vaccine against coronavirus infection (COVID-19) in carnivorous animals, developed by the Federal Center for Animal Health Protection, subordinated to the Rosselkhozadzor, is registered in Russia. It is the first and, to date, the only COVID-19 prophylactic drug in the world for animals," he said.

According to Savenkov, Greece, Poland, Austria, the US, Canada, and Singapore showed their interest in the vaccine. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Federal minister for finance Muhammad Hammad Azhar addressing a press conference at PID Media Center. - DNA

## China commits 'genocide' against Uighurs: DOS report

China has rejected accusations of abuses in Xinjiang, accusing countries and human rights groups of launching "slandorous attacks" about conditions for Muslim Uighurs and other minorities in the far western region

FOREIGN DESK

WASHINGTON: China is committing "genocide and crimes against humanity" against its mostly Muslim Uighur minority in the western region of Xinjiang, the US State Department said in its annual report on human rights globally. Released on Tuesday, the report found that "genocide and crimes against humanity occurred during the year against the predominantly Muslim Uighurs and other ethnic and religious minority groups in Xinjiang". It said the alleged crimes included the arbitrary imprisonment of more than one million civilians, forced sterilisation, rape, torture,

forced labour and "draconian restrictions" on freedom of religion, freedom of expression and freedom of movement.

The report, required annually by the United States Congress, provides the State Department's assessment on human rights practices in more than 180 countries.

At a news conference in Washington, DC, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the findings for 2020 demonstrate that in every region of the world, human rights "continue to move in the wrong direction".

"We will bring to bear all the tools of our diplomacy to defend human rights and hold accountable perpetrators of abuse," the



country's top diplomat said, pointing to travel and financial sanctions under the US's Global Magnitsky Act, among other mechanisms. China has rejected accusations of abuses in Xinjiang, accusing countries and human rights groups of launching "slandorous at-

tacks" about conditions for Muslim Uighurs and other minorities in the far western region. Foreign Minister Wang Yi, addressing the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva last month, said "basic facts show that there has never been so-called

genocide, forced labour or religious oppression in Xinjiang".

China has acknowledged the existence of the camps in Xinjiang, but has said they are vocational skills training centres necessary to tackle "extremism". Western countries have increasingly spoken out against Beijing's treatment of the Uighurs, amid mounting tensions between the US and its allies, and China. Blinken's predecessor, former US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, declared on January 19 that China had committed "genocide and crimes against humanity" against Uighurs and other religious minorities in Xinjiang. The State Department's

report also found that autocratic governments around the world have used the COVID-19 pandemic as a pretext to go after critics and repress freedoms. It cites the alleged August 20 poisoning attack on Alexey Navalny, an opposition leader and staunch critic of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Navalny was arrested earlier this year and imprisoned in a notorious penal camp outside Moscow. Among other cases, Blinken cited "arbitrary arrests, beatings and other violence against protesters in Belarus" and "violations and abuses" by parties to the ongoing conflict in Yemen, which has led to the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

## Yemen receives first batch of vaccines: UN

WEB DESK

SANAA: War-torn Yemen has received its first shipment of COVID-19 vaccines, the United Nations children's agency said, a week after the country's coronavirus committee warned of a public health "emergency". The AstraZeneca vaccines "will enable health workers and other priority populations vulnerable to COVID-19 to be protected against the virus," UNICEF said in a statement on Wednesday.

UN and government officials received the doses in the southern city of Aden, which has been the temporary capital for the past six years due to the conflict between the government and Houthi rebels, who control Sanaa.

This first batch is part of 1.9 million doses that Yemen will receive throughout 2021, UNICEF added.

Last week Yemen's coronavirus committee urged the government to declare a public health "state of emergency" amid a surge in infections.

It called for the implementation of a "partial curfew" and for the closure of wedding halls, shopping centres and mosques outside of prayer times.

## Australia to build own missiles

NEWS DESK

SYDNEY: Australia will build its own missiles through a AU\$1 billion (\$760 million) project in close collaboration with the United States, Prime Minister Scott Morrison said Wednesday. The project called the Sovereign Guided Weapons Enterprise would support missile and guided weapons manufacturing for use "across the Australian Defence Force," as a part of the government's 10-year investment into the nation's defense industry. "As the COVID-19 pandemic has shown, having the ability for self-reliance, be it vaccine development or the defence of Australia, is vital to meeting our own requirements in a changing global environment," Morrison said in a statement. "It's an imperative we now proceed with the creation of a sovereign guided weapons capability as a priority," he also said. It has been decades since Australia last manufactured its own missiles, relying on imported ones from the United States and other allies. Australia currently builds a decoy rocket aimed at seducing incoming missiles away from their targets.

## Ukraine reports record virus deaths

KIEV: Ukraine reported on Wednesday a record number of new coronavirus deaths and daily hospitalizations as authorities struggled to accelerate a vaccine rollout. "The situation with coronavirus disease remains quite tense," Health Minister Maksym Stepanov told a daily briefing.

On Wednesday, the ex-Soviet state reported 11,226 new coronavirus cases and 407 deaths, a new daily high.

The number of people hospitalised was also set a daily record, at 5,558, a major burden for Ukraine's ageing healthcare system.

The country of 40 million launched a nationwide vaccination campaign in late February, later than most European countries, following delays that sparked criticism of President Volodymyr Zelensky's policies. More than 230,000 people have so far received a first dose.

Ukraine has received 500,000 doses of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine marketed under the name Covishield and produced in India.

Many Ukrainians, including healthcare workers who are first in line to receive the vaccine, are sceptical of Covishield, which has been criticised on social media for being produced in India rather than the West.

Ukraine has also received 215,000 doses of China's CoronaVac vaccine but its rollout is not expected to begin before next week. Since the start of the pandemic Ukraine has recorded over 1.6 million coronavirus infections and more than 32,000 deaths. - APP



DUSHANBE: Foreign minister of Pakistan Shah Mehmood Quraishi met with Tajik counterpart, Sirojiddin Muhridin and discussed spectrum of bilateral ties. - DNA

## UK-PBC delegation to visit Pakistan

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: A delegation of the UK-Pakistan Business Council (UK-PBC) will visit Pakistan in May to explore new opportunities of investment, said Atta-Ul-Haq Chairman UK-PBC. During a meeting with President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) Engineer Hafiz Ihtasham Javed in his office, he said that Faisalabad had a key position in national economy and hence the UK-PBC delegation will also visit Faisalabad during its scheduled visit to discuss with local industrialist about matters of mutual interest.

He said that leading business companies were included in this delegation while CEO of leading international brand "Marks Spencer" was also visiting Pakistan for the first time in history.

## 'Dreams come true because of CPEC'

MONITORING DESK

BEIJING: Baluch leader Ahmed Iqbal Baloch, who is chairman of Pakistan's Visionary Group appreciated the closeness brought by CPEC and the Belt & Road Initiative (BRI) a lot. "The Chinese President Xi Jinping gave an excellent road map not only for China and Pakistan but also for the whole world. His idea establishes a good platform to the world regarding economy, trade, cultural exchanges, etc.," Baloch praised the great initiative put forward by Xi Jinping in an interview with China Economic Net (CEN).

Recording impression of his long association with China and the deep commitment of the Baluch people with the CPEC, Ahmed Iqbal said, he was very happy see-

ing that their Prime Minister Imran Khan is working hard to lead Pakistan into a powerful country and bring more development to Pakistan.

In the coming days, he hoped China-Pakistan ties will definitely deepen because of more connectivity in various areas.

The 70th anniversary of China-Pakistan diplomatic ties is around the corner. Ahmed Iqbal Baloch who is working in many areas to cement Sino-Pak friendship, shared his China-Pakistan stories with CEN.

When it comes to the stories of China-Pakistani friendship, Baloch displayed a precious photo, in which then Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai is shaking hands with his father Haji Muhammad Iqbal Baloch, adviser to then Pakistani President Muhammad Ayub Khan.

## Sino-Pak comm networks urged to deepen co-op

MARIAM RAHEEM

ISLAMABAD: China and Pakistan should bridge the gap in information, knowledge and communication capacity between the two countries and promote sustainable development by deepening co-operation in think tanks, culture, tourism and media.

Historically, the relationship between Pakistan and China has been very good. In today's world, building a mutually beneficial and win-win partnership is the key to promoting coordinated development. Therefore, two-way communication and cooperation are of great significance.

The above views were expressed by Mr. Munir Ahmed, Executive Director of Development Communications Network (DEVCOM-Pakistan) in an interview with Gwadar Pro recently. He further mentioned that twenty years ago, communication played a critical role in social development and its impact is ongoing. "Communication skills and tools enable stakeholders to stimulate scale, potential and resources to connect more closely to achieve specific goals. In today's information age,

it is all the more imperative to develop the network to provide information to the public in order to get more support and credence." Referring to the necessity of developing networks in Pakistan, Mr. Munir Ahmed stated that Pakistan is a pluralistic country with different philosophies, languages, etc. It is vital for the whole nation to have a vibrant network, communicate with vision and power, and connect society and people.

"Unlike the lingua franca, packaging information into the language of common people is a two-way communication, one is to communicate with the people and the other is to convey the voice of the community to decision makers, national and international stakeholders, while the network is of great benefit to communicate in both ways."

Mr. Munir Ahmed affirmed that significant progress had been made in the connectivity of communication network infrastructure between both countries. "In this regard, think tanks can promote strategic communication and assist in implementation." He said, "Through the exchange of visits by experts and holding seminars,

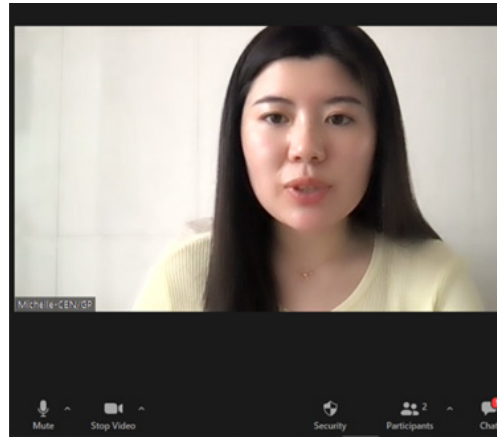
discussions and exchanges on the current situation and development prospects of political, economic and cultural relations between the two countries are greatly conducive to in-depth understanding of Pakistan and China."

Chinese culture has a long broad and profound history, and Pakistan also has a very diverse and dynamic culture. "Activities on Chinese culture organized in Pakistan need to go deep into different cities. The security situation in Pakistan has improved in recent years, and such initiatives should be more promoted.

I have put forward the concept of 'Friends of China' in 2011, and now is the time to revive it. We normally seek Chinese companies, organizations or enterprises to help us develop the concept in Pakistan," he underscored.

As a huge infrastructure and economic project, CPEC can also promote the development of tourism. Mr. Munir Ahmed stressed that Pakistan and China both have beautiful lakes, majestic mountains and wonderful music to explore. "Especially in the context of CPEC, more interactive activities and cultural exploration can be carried out in various cities, and the use of ICT can expand the scope of such initiatives and contribute to sustainable development."

"Media cooperation is not very dynamic or comprehensive at present, and there is a need to increase media interaction. More and more Chinese newspapers have come to Pakistan." Mr. Munir said if more Pakistani newspapers could be printed in China and spread to different cities, it can help Chinese people understand the Pakistani media and the background of Pakistan.





**Briefs**

**'PPP should not have sought BAP's votes'**

**SUJUAAT HAMZA**

ISLAMABAD: PPP's Senator Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar on Wednesday said that the party "should not have obtained votes from BAP (Balochistan Awami Party) to have Yousef Raza Gillani be appointed as the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate. Khokhar said that the move to take votes from a government-aligned party, in his view, "harmed the PPP's ideological foundations". The PPP leader went on to say that the recent decisions taken by the Pakistan Democratic Movement alliance of the Opposition "did not leave a good impression on the inflation-weary public". He said that the "in-fighting" within PDM strengthened the position of the "highly unpopular government". Khokhar further said that the PDM parties are "weak" in their narrative regarding mass resignations from assemblies and should not have laid "unnecessary emphasis" on such a move, whereas the PPP is "weak" in its stance regarding the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate position. He said that if the party is looking to regain its voter base from other provinces, it will have to focus on "politics for the people" rather than "power politics". The PPP Senator expressed the hope that in the upcoming meeting of the party's Central Executive Committee (CEC), there will be priority given to reviewing these observations and formulating a plan of action.

**Sindh govt bans wedding functions from April 6**

**ATHAR SUFI**

KARACHI: The Sindh government has banned all marriage functions – both indoors and outdoors – with effect from April 6, and introduced a new set of coronavirus restrictions till April 11. The provincial government has sprung into action as the third wave of the coronavirus intensifies and over four thousands cases are being reported on a daily basis across the country. A notification from the Home Department announced that broader lockdowns will be imposed in areas with 8% coronavirus positivity ratios. The provincial government announced that indoor dining in restaurants will not be allowed while outdoor dining will only be permitted till 10pm. Takeaway and home delivery options will be available for restaurants. The notification said markets, shopping malls and marriage halls will operate from 6am to 8pm for business and commercial activities "with two safe days observance per week as applicable to that area concerned (except essential services i.e. medical stores, clinics, hospitals as well as petrol pumps, bakeries, milk shops and restaurants etc.)".

**SHC orders govt to fix vaccine price**

**DNA**

KARACHI: Sindh High Court (SHC) on Wednesday gave federal government one week to fix price for coronavirus vaccine imported by private sector. During the hearing of the case regarding import of one million doses of the coronavirus vaccine, the counsel of the private company asked the court to allow them to release consignments of the imported jabs. Government mislead the company in importing the vaccine and now it is not allowing sale of jabs, he added. The court asked lawyers of DRAP that why price of the vaccine has not been fixed and how the jabs were imported if price was not set by the authorities. The court granted one week's time to government to decide the price of the jabs.

**State of protections for freedom of expression poor**

Pakistan scored only 30 out of 100 points on the Freedom of Expression Assessment Index, which monitored the country's performance with 60 indicators for the year 2020

**STAFF REPORT**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan performed poorly with respect to legal and practical protections for the right to freedom of expression of its citizens during 2020, according to a new assessment report published by Media Matters for Democracy. The Pakistan Freedom of Expression Report 2020 was launched through a webinar on Wednesday. Speaking at the report launch, the European Union (EU) Ambassador to Pakistan Androulla Kaminara said, "Today's report provides a comprehensive analysis of the state of freedom of expression in Pakistan and highlights some concerning trends. Freedom of Expression is enshrined in the European Charter of Fundamental Rights. It is also one of the important aspects of Pakistan's GSP+ commitment to

uphold international Human Rights Conventions and a key priority in the Strategic Engagement Plan between EU and Pakistan." Ambassador Kaminara said, "As this report confirms, the situation of journalists and documentation of threats they face through attacks, intimidation and harassment is particularly concerning. Disinformation is another area of concern, and one, which the European Union is working to address both at home and abroad. Misleading or false information can put lives in danger. It is crucial to resolutely counter disinformation with transparent, timely and fact-based communication and thus reinforce the resilience of societies." The report documents the situation of freedom of expression in Pakistan with a new index based on six dimensions namely the legal environment, press freedom, digital expression,



pluralism, the socioeconomic and political situation, and protection from threats to expression. The indicators for these dimensions were measured through a survey of a panel of experts from the fields of politics, media, academia, law, and human rights advocacy, as well as statistics collected through desk research. Pakistan

scored low on all six dimensions to provide an overall score of only 30 points out of a total of 100 points on the assessment index. This cumulative score fell in the range of "poor" protections for freedom of expression in the country. The report found that during the year 2020 Pakistan's media and Internet regula-

tory authorities continued to exert arbitrary legal and regulatory restrictions on speech and online content, by ordering bans, suspensions, and advisories against social media apps, entertainment content, and news discussions of social and political issues. Journalists remained vulnerable to physical, legal, and digital threats in the absence of longawaited legislation on journalists' safety, according to the study. The report found that at least eight individuals connected with the media were killed, at least 36 journalists were attacked in the line of duty, 10 were arrested, and as many as 23 instances of arbitrary detentions in connection with news reporting and online expression were recorded across Pakistan during the year. Women journalists were especially targeted with coordinated online attacks as they reported

on political issues and the government's pandemic response. The report noted that the Covid-19 pandemic intensified the challenges to freedom of expression and access to information in Pakistan. Internet users were consistently exposed to disinformation while journalists reporting on the pandemic faced physical safety risks and restrictions on access to information sources, and many young citizens without Internet services found themselves abandoned as education systems shifted online, according to the report. The online report launch also featured a panel discussion with press freedom advocate Owais Aslam Ali, journalist Asad Hashim, digital rights activist Farieha Aziz, and MMFD Co-founder Sadaf Khan. The panelists spoke about the impact of the pandemic on free speech in the country.

**Navy Ship Nasr pays visit to Mombasa**

**DNA**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Navy Ship NASR has paid a goodwill visit to Mombasa Kenya as part of Overseas Deployment to the African region. Upon arrival at the port of Mombasa, PN Ship was received by the High Commissioner of Pakistan to Kenya, Pakistan Defence Advisor and host naval officials. During the ship stay at Mombasa, the Mission Commander and Commanding Officer of PNS NASR called on Kenyan Principal Secretary for Defence, Deputy Governor Mombasa and Commander Kenyan Navy. During the interactions, matters of mutual interest and enhancement of bilateral cooperation were emphasized. Mission Commander conveyed sincere regards of Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi for the people of Kenya in general and Kenyan Navy in particular. Mission Commander appreciated the dignities on deteriorating situation and human rights violations being perpetrated by the Indian Armed forces against innocent people of Illegally Indian Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IOJK).

**Govt recovers one lac, 55 thousand acres of lands**

**ABID RAZA**

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Sardar Usman Buzdar has announced to continue indiscriminate action against the land grabbers till every inch of the state land is not recovered from the squatters. While giving details during a presser at his office on Wednesday, the CM said one lac and 55 thousand acres of land has been retrieved in different parts of the province having a value of Rs. 450 billion. It is the largest operation in the history of the province and the task will be brought to its logical end, he indicated. During the last seven days, 12318-acre land of Rs. 22.32 billion and 70 lac value has been recovered from illegal occupants in 31 districts, he said. 403 FIRs have been registered and 97 accused have also been arrested, he added. Similarly, the CM pointed out that indiscriminate action was also underway against sugar and price-hike mafias. The PTI government is actively working to curb every sort of mafia and public interest was being fully protected under the leadership of PM Imran Khan. The land has been retrieved in Sargodha, Sheikhupura, Rawalpindi, Rajanpur, DG Khan, Multan, Narowal and other cities and the recovered state land will be utilized for public welfare purposes, he said.

**Police register 627 cases over SOPs violations**

**DNA**

LAHORE: The Lahore police registered 627 cases in different areas of the city over violation of the corona-related standard operating procedures (SOPs) including not wearing of face-masks. The police registered 312 FIRs [first information reports] over violation of the corona-related SOPs, social distancing and commercial activities schedule whereas 315 FIRs were lodged against persons for not following the government directions of wearing safety masks. A Lahore police spokesperson said that 84 FIRs were registered in Model Town division areas over face-mask violations and 140 over violation of other SOPs. Also, 135 FIRs were registered in City division, 71 FIRs in Civil Lines division, 84 in Cantt division, 34 FIRs in Sadar division and 89 cases were lodged in Iqbal Town division. Capital City Police Officer Additional IG Gulam Mahmood Dogar said that all precautions and guidelines given by provincial government are only for protection and safety of life and health of citizens.

**Bombings kill Afghan religious figure**

KABUL: A senior pro-government religious figure and two civilians were killed in northern Afghanistan amid a string of landmine blasts in the country amid efforts to revive peace process. The provincial police command in the northern Takhar province bordering Tajikistan said Abdul Samad Mohammadi, the head of the Ulema (religious scholars) Council, lost his life to a magnetic bomb attached to his car. It said the incident took place in the afternoon in the provincial capital Taluqan city. Local authorities have blamed the Taliban for the bombing, but the group has not claimed the responsibility for the attack. Separately, a bomb blast in another northern province of Balkh bordering Uzbekistan claimed the lives of two civilians and left 16 others wounded. – DNA



ISLAMABAD: SAPM on health Dr. Faisal Sultan receiving a consignment of Covid-19 vaccine from China at the Nur Khan Airbase. – DNA

**Cases registered against Jahangir Tareen, son**

**DNA**

LAHORE: PTI leader Jahangir Tareen has been charged with alleged fraud and money laundering. A Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Lahore investigation team registered a case of alleged fraud of Rs3.14 billion on March 22 against them. The FIR states that Jahangir Tareen allegedly transferred illegal shares worth billions of rupees to Feroze Pulp Mills Limited (FPML), which is owned by his son and close relatives. It says the transfers, especially after 2011-12, were "patently fraudulent investments which ultimately translated into personal gains" for Jahangir's family. Some Rs3 billion were invested and laundered through the same factory. The FIR outlines when and how FPML was made back in 1991. It includes sections 406, 420 and 109 of the Pakistan Penal Code with Section 3/4 of Anti-Money Laundering Act, 2010.

**Jahangir Tareen rejects FIA's allegations as baseless**

ISLAMABAD: After the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) Wednesday lodged case against Jahangir Tareen accusing him of committing Rs 3.25 billion fraud, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader has termed the allegations as baseless. The PTI leader said in his statement that his personal and family assets are declared and all members are taxpayers. He said he did his business with honesty and suffered loss. Jahangir Tareen went on to say that complete record of his business and transfer of cash is available, and has also been shown to the FIA. He claimed that all funds were transferred abroad through legal banking channel. Terming the FIRs against him and his chil-

Rana M Shawaz will be the investigation officer. Talking to a private news channel, Jahangir said that the allegations by FIA are "baseless". He said a private audit firm has already validated the accounts of his companies. The PTI leader took the position that all the shares were transferred in accordance with the law and accounts law. Last year, PM Imran Khan

had tasked the FIA to investigate the sugar crisis throughout the country and find out who benefited from it. A report by the FIA released last year had claimed that top PTI members were among those who gained from the recent sugar crisis in the country. Among the people named in the FIA report were Jahangir Tareen and a brother of the then Minister for

National Food Security Khusro Bakhtiar. Tareen was said by the report to have benefited the most from the sugar crisis followed by Bakhtiar's brother. The report had also claimed that companies belonging to Moonis Elahi – an ally of the party – profited from the sugar crisis. Elahi is Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi's son and a key member of the PML-Q.

**Accountability court summons Sindh CM**

**KHAYAM ABBASI**

ISLAMABAD: An accountability Court (AC) of Islamabad on Wednesday again summoned Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah and other accused in next hearing in a corruption reference pertaining to Nooriabad Power Plant. The court also directed the NAB to share copies of reference with the accused person named in the case. Sindh chief minister appeared before the trial court during hearing this day along with his legal team. The NAB prosecutor, however, requested the court to issue arrest warrants against the accused who failed to appear before it. The defence lawyer argued that the issuance of arrest warrants without complying with the summons to the accused was against the principles of justice. The counsel further argued that copies of reference were also not provided to the accused nominated in the case. The NAB prosecutor in-



formed the court that a total of 17 persons are nominated in the corruption reference. After this, the court again served notices to all accused for April 19, and ordered NAB to provide copies of the reference to them. According to the reference filed by the NAB, CM Murad Ali Shah is accused of misusing the power in the disbursement of funds for the Nooriabad power plant project. It stated that public funds worth billions have been embezzled for Nooriabad Power Company and Sindh Transmission and Dispatch Company. Sindh CM Shah and Abdul Ghani Majeed are among 17 persons who are nominated in the corruption reference by the anti-graft watchdog.

**Overseas Pakistanis keen to invest in CPEC**

Head of delegation Chaudhry Muhammad Afzal said that overseas Pakistanis especially those settled in KSA are more interested to bring investment in different sectors

**DNA**

ISLAMABAD: Overseas Pakistanis from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) have shown interest to bring \$ 10 million investment in different potential sectors including food industry and food processing in Allama Iqbal Industrial City (AIIC) Faisalabad. The AIIC Special Economic Zone under the framework of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is offering one window shop for foreign and local investors to bring investment in the different sectors, head of delegation of

Overseas Pakistani Investors from Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), Chaudhry Muhammad Afzal said in a media interview Wednesday. The 13 members of delegation of overseas Pakistani investors from KSA visited the AIIC in Faisalabad to see the future investment opportunities and negotiated with the Chairman of Faisalabad Industrial Estate Development and Management Company (FIEM- MC) Mian Kashif Ashfaq. Head of delegation Chaudhry Muhammad Afzal said that overseas Pakistanis especially those settled in KSA are more interested to bring investment in different

sectors including food and food processing, farming, Oil and Petrochemical, medical and medical equipment, Pharmaceutical, tyres manufacturing particularly in the CPEC Special Economic Zones (SEZs). He said, "We are demanding 200 acre land in the SEZ on 30 years lease and on 10 percent down payment for decreasing the cost of doing business in multi sectors". He said that the delegation of investors want to acquire land in Allama Iqbal Industrial City (AIIC) to establish their industries in different sectors and because of the more high-quality business envi-

ronment and facilities offered by the government in SEZs. He said that the AIIC is the largest industrial zone among prioritized SEZs in terms of area with 3217 acres and the Allama Iqbal SEZ has advantage of being adjacent to M3-Industrial city which comprises of large number of projects including agriculture and food, pharmaceuticals, information technology, chemicals and automotive. He said that already Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have signed the agreement of \$ 9 billion investment in Petrochemicals in Gawadar and now a number of overseas

Pakistani investors not only from Saudi Arab but from European Union (EU) countries are also interested to bring investment in this potential sector. Afzal said that after the execution of the mega project of CPEC, overseas Pakistanis are hopeful for economic emergence and industrial growth of Pakistan to provide state of the art facilities for investors in the local SEZs. He said that CPEC is a game changer project not only for Pakistan but it will play the role of catalyst for regional and global trade by provide economic integration between the world markets.