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Briefs

COAS visits Lahore Corps

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) visited troops of Lahore Corps in the field. COAS was briefed about operational preparedness of the formation, interacted with troops carrying out maintenance of defences and also witnessed small arms firing. Speaking on the occasion, COAS appreciated troops for their professionalism and high training standards. COAS advised officers and men to stay focused in their professional pursuits and keep abreast with changing nature of threat.

Ink thrown at Shahbaz Gill

STAFF REPORT

LAHORE: With the political situation in the country getting uglier by the day, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Shahbaz Gill was attacked with eggs and ink when he arrived at the Lahore High Court (LHC) on Monday. Two eggs and black ink were thrown at Gill inside the LHC's premises after he arrived for a hearing at the court. Gill mostly remained unharmed, but some of the ink landed on his face and hands, TV footage showed. The Opposition workers who were allegedly involved in the attack were hen set on by PTI supporters as security personnel rushed Gill to the courtroom. While talking to the media, Gill described the incident as hooliganism and said the Opposition had actually thrown the ink of their own black deeds on him.

Fawad warns PML-N leaders

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Science and Technology, Chaudhry Fawad Hussain on Monday condemned the uncivilized incident of hurling inkpot on Shahbaz Gill outside the Lahore High Court and urged the leaders of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz to avoid promoting the culture of dirty politics in the country. In an interview with a private television channel, he said such incidents would aggravate the political differences among the party workers.

Govt wants resignation of CEC

The minister called on the election commission to be disbanded, alleging that it had failed to meet up to the standards required of it

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The PTI has called on the chief election commissioner to resign and the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to be disbanded, as it holds the commission responsible for failing to hold the recently-held Senate elections in a transparent manner.

"It was a longstanding demand of the prime minister that the power of money should not be used to influence elections," said Education Minister Shafiqat Mehmood, flanked

Experts say govt demand illogical

ANSAR BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The experts on election matters have opined that the government demand regarding resignation of the Chief Election commissioner is illogical and misguided.

Talking to media former Supreme Court Judge Shaq Usmani said that if the govt demand is met then they will ask by information minister Shibli Faraz and Fawad Chaudhry. "For this purpose, the premier

the Chief Justice and any judge whom they don't like to step down. He said this is unprecedented demand and will have consequences. Likewise, former Secretary Election Commission Kanwar Dilshad said somebody of has misguided the Prime Minister because this demand is unwarranted. He said CEP is a constitutional body and can only be removed through constitutional means.

pose, the premier

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ISLAMABAD: Sayed Mohammad Ali Hosseini Ambassador of Iran received my Mr. Adam Mulawarman Tugio, New Ambassador of Indonesia to Pakistan. Bilateral and regional developments discussed during the meeting. - DNA

Maryam slams NAB for witch-hunting

STAFF REPORT

LAHORE: PML-N Vice President Maryam Nawaz wants to know who gave the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) the authority to check the statements of witnesses. NAB is a slave to order, she said while speaking on Monday at Jati Umra in Lahore before a Lahore High Court hearing on NAB's plea to cancel

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Resignation only option, says Fazl

PESHAWAR: The chief of Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), Maulana Fazlur Rehman on Monday said that long march would not be much effective to achieve desired goals without resignation of opposition parties' parliamentarians from assemblies.

Speaking at press conference, he said that option of a resignation from assemblies was on the agenda of PDM meeting to be held on Tuesday.

He said that final strategy would be decided in the PDM meeting. Fazalur Rehman said that duration of the long march would be more than a day. - Staff Report

ECP says Daska election was not transparent

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan has said that the petition challenging the re-polling in Sialkot's NA-75 should be dismissed as many rules were violated during the February 19 by-elections. The commission submitted its reply in the petition filed by Ali Asjad Malhi, who contested the by-election on the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's ticket. The electoral body said that the Code of Conduct was issued on December 21, 2020 but still the rules were not followed. It said that it had ordered "a prohibition on the commencement and carrying on of the development works



all postings and transfers in the constituency before the by-election. On January 1, Ramzan Kamboh, the Daska DSP, was granted medical leave for four weeks and the charge was given to Sambrial DSP Zulfiqar Virk in violation of clear orders of the ECP, the body said. It filed a complaint and issued notices to Virk but they received no response. On February 2, the additional charge was withdrawn from Virk and Pasrur DSP Mazhar Ahmed Gondal took over. "In order to defeat the order of the Election Commission and the transparency of the electoral process in the constituency, Virk

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ISLAMABAD: High Commissioner Farzana Zahir called on Philippe Bronchain, Ambassador of Belgium to Pakistan this morning. Discussed shared interests and priorities of the two countries. - DNA

Olive plantation can fetch forex, says PM

We already import edible oils like ghee and palm oils. Our biggest challenge is how we will provide our people with food and good nutrition

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: Prime Minister Imran Khan has said planting olives can bring foreign exchange into Pakistan. He was speaking after launching the olive plantation campaign in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Nowshera district on Monday. The olive plantation is part of the ten billion tree Tsunami programme. PM Khan was accompanied by Defence Minister Pervez Khattak, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Shah

Hails election of Baloch, tribal leaders

ISLAMABAD, Prime Minister Imran Khan Monday said the elections of leaders from Balochistan and merged tribal districts as Senate chairman and deputy chairman respectively would help strengthen the federation. He, in a meeting with Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani and Deputy Chairman Mirza Muhammad Afridi, who called on him here, said their elections on top slots in upper house of the parliament was also a matter of pride for the people of their areas. The prime minister hoped that the Senate chairman would continue rendering his services efficiently in his second tenure too, just like his previous term. He also expressed good wishes for both the chairman and deputy chairman of the Senate. - Staff Report

Farman, KP Chief Minister Mahmood Khan, and Special Assistant on Climate Change Amin Aslam. "There was a time Pakistan was exporting wheat," PM Khan said, adding that this year Pakistan had to import four million tonnes of wheat. "We already import edible oils like ghee and palm oils. Our biggest challenge in the coming days is how we will provide our people with food and good nutrition," he said.

Continued on page 06

No change in petrol, diesel prices

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Government of Pakistan has been absorbing the upward price fluctuation in international market in order to provide maximum relief to the end consumers. Despite very limited fiscal space, the Government has decided that the prices of MS (Petrol) and High Speed Diesel (HSD) will remain the same. However, as no Petroleum Levy (PL) is being charged on SKO and LDO, the prices of Kerosene (SKO) and Light Diesel Oil (LDO) have been marginally increased by Rs.3.42/liter and Rs.2.19/liter respectively due to significant rise in the international prices of Petroleum Products.

Czech Jerusalem office condemned

NEWS DESK

DUBAI: The Arab Parliament condemned Czech Republic's opening of an embassy in Jerusalem, saying the decision is against the international law and violates the rights of Palestinians, state news agency Petra reported. Speaker of the Parliament Adel Assomi called on the "government and parliament of the Czech Republic to not follow through with this illegal action that runs counter to the international legitimacy." Jordan's foreign ministry has also expressed its condemnation to Czech Republic's decision, describing it as a flagrant violation of international law. "Any measures or decisions aimed at changing the holy city's legal status are null, illegal and have no legal effect,"

the ministry's spokesperson Dhaifallah Ali Al-Fayez said. Prague opened a Jerusalem branch of its Israel embassy, which is located in Tel Aviv, on Thursday. Its inauguration, attended by Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babis, was two weeks after Israel sent several thousand COVID-19 vaccine doses to the Czech Republic. The Palestinian Foreign Ministry said it considered Prague's move "a blatant attack on the Palestinian people and their rights, a flagrant violation of international law," and said it would harm peace prospects. In Cairo, Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit said in a statement: "The legal status of Jerusalem will be affected by the decision of one country or another to open representative offices."

PIA to operate direct flights to Turkey

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI, The Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has decided to resume direct flights to Turkey. The national airline plans to operate flights to Turkey's Istanbul city from Lahore and Islamabad thrice a week from mid-May. The PIA had stopped operating flights on this route many years back. The decision to resume flights from Lahore and Islamabad to Turkey will help fetch significant revenue for the loss-making national entity that is striving to cut operational cost. It is noteworthy that Federal Aviation Minister Ghulam Sarwar Khan had last week met Turkey's Ambassador in Islamabad Insan Mustafa Yurdakul and discussed the matters relating to promoting bilateral ties in diverse fields including aviation.

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Briefs

DC visits rural health centers

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ali visited the Rural Health Centers to check the medical and administrative matters and inspected the medical facilities provided to the patients in detail. He went RHC Mamu Kanjan and Mureed wala and directed to take action against the absent staff and reported him. He inspected the working condition of the medical machinery, cleanliness and other available facilities. The Deputy Commissioner also checked the Corona SOPs in the centers and clarified that without face mask services should not be provided to maintain a sense of implementation of Corona SOPs.

He went to the drug store and saw the record of availability of medicines and medicines distributed to the patients and said that the available medicines should be given to the entitled patients in a transparent manner. The Deputy Commissioner checked the cleanliness of the health centers and directed to change the sheets of some of the beds immediately and said that rural health centers and primary health centers were of paramount importance to bring the fruits of government initiatives in the health sector to the lower level patients and therefore services should be provided beyond public expectations.

RCCI urges for uniform lockdown policy

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) urges to adopt a uniform lockdown policy across the country to deal with Corona. Acting President RCCI Shahraiz A Malik has said in a statement that a uniform smart lockdown policy should be formulated in collaboration with stakeholders.

Rawalpindi and Islamabad are twin cities. Under Smart Lockdown, shop closing hours should be kept the same.

He said that only by adopting a uniform policy the fourth wave of COVID-19 can be dealt with effectively. The Rawalpindi Chamber stands with the business community, he added.

The number of cases can be reduced only by strictly implementation of standard operating procedures (SOPs). The electronic and digital media being an effective medium, can play a vital role here in spreading awareness messages to the youth, children and the elderly, he added.

"We have to prove that we are responsible citizens, and this responsibility lies to everyone," he said.

'Govt wants to strengthen national institutions'

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Capital Development Authority Ali Nawaz Awan on Monday said the government wanted to strengthen the national institutions and was working for improving their work capacity.

Talking to a private news channel, he said the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) led government wanted to provide relief to the people as it was working for the purpose.

The SAPM said the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) was a constitutional institution and holding transparent elections was its responsibility but it was failed to ensure fairness during the recent by and the Senate elections. Replying to a question, he said the incumbent government had always respected the courts' decisions and obeyed them but on the other side the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz had always criticised their verdicts.

Ali Nawaz Awan urged that political leadership to use appropriate words against others and avoid derogatory language. - APP

Third wave of coronavirus spreading speedily: Dr Yasmin

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Provincial Minister for Health Dr Yasmin Rashid said on Monday the third wave of coronavirus was spreading speedily due to carelessness and non-implementation of SOPs by the citizens.

Talking to the media after presiding over the syndicate meeting of Faisalabad Medical University (FMU), she said that 116,000 front line workers had been vaccinated against coronavirus across the province.

She said that 'Sinopharm' vaccination was most safe, adding that other imported vaccinations would also be given after it proved safe. The vaccination of above 60 years old people was continued, she said and appealed to the elderly people to get themselves registered for the vaccination by sending CNIC through SMS on 1166. The minister said that total 114 vaccination centers had been set up in all the 9 divisions of the province and the number could also be increased in case of need.

"We will have to face the third wave of coronavirus bravely as like first and second", the minister said, adding that Faisalabad, Gujranwala, Gujrat, Sargodha, Lahore, and Rawalpindi were on hit list of coronavirus and the virus could be spread in others parts of the country also if proper precautionary measures were not taken.



She said that new kinds of coronavirus were spreading in different countries speedily so it was the responsibility of citizens to take preventive measures not only for their safety but also for others. She urged the opposition to avoid a long march due to fast spreading of coronavirus for the safety of people.

Expressing concern over the statement of opposition, she said the government was always urging the people every day to adopt all precautionary measures as the corona pandemic was not going away. Dr Yasmin Rashid said the government had invited opposition for dialogue for bringing electoral reforms.

To a question, she said the government had sufficient quantities of corona vaccine, however more stock of the vaccination would reach in Pakistan within next two days. The minister said the government was vaccinating the front line workers, health staff, police, administrations

and journalists above 60. She said that quota for other journalists would also be allocated as the new stock of vaccine reached.

The minister directed the commissioner and health authority to monitor arrangements made for the vaccination of elderly people. She said the percentage of coronavirus spread in Faisalabad is 9, Lahore 11, Rawalpindi 6, Multan 6 and Gujranwala 9. She said that special instructions had been issued to control the situation in aforementioned cities for which various practical measures had been taken which include: closure of marriage halls, marquees, and community centers till March 29, cut in staff to 50 percent in government and private offices, closure of business centers at 6 p.m.

She said that aggregate percentage of virus spreading in Pakistan especially in Punjab province is 8 percent.

The minister said that clinical tests for coronavirus of 300 people were conducted in Lahore, Jhelum and other districts on an experimental basis and it was disclosed that a new wave of coronavirus was spreading from the UK virus which was 70 percent more severe. Commissioner Saqib Manan, Vice Chancellor FMU Dr Zafar Iqbal Ch, CEO health Dr Mushtaq Ahmed Sipra and others were also present on the occasion.



ISLAMABAD: UKPABC delegation led by M. Khurshid Barlas President UK-Pakistan Business Council (Pak chapter) had a meeting with Senator Faisal Javed today. - DNA

FCCI president for pace up industrialization

FAISALABAD: Pakistan must produce a chain of highly skilled and qualified technologists to gear up the pace of industrialization, said Engineer Hafiz Ihtasham Javed, President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI). Addressing the FCCI Standing Committee on Institute of Electrical & Electronics Engineers (IEEE), he stressed the need for further improving industrial academia linkages. He said that societal values had created a pompous trend of producing doctors and engineers by downgrading technologists and other professionals deemed necessary to strengthen the industrialization process.

He said that it was a change that FCCI and IEEE had acknowledged the importance of technologists and were regularly organizing awareness sessions to harness the skills and expertise of the technologists in addition to elevating its social status. Engineer Hafiz Ihtasham Javed told that textile printing sector had been using basic printing machinery for the last 8 years but still we have to invite technologists for trouble shooting from China and other European countries manufacturing textile printing machinery. He said: "Trouble shooting is a common phenomenon but the technologists from other countries have capacity to settle it down while our technologists generally lack requisite skill and expertise".

Regarding his practical experience as engineer, he said that he gave his debut from his own factory and saved approximately 30% of electricity just by implementing fundamental electricity laws. Continuing, he said that engineers were supposed to facilitate masses and hence our engineers should also make concerted efforts to fulfill the needs of huge population of 220 million. - APP

Senate elections resulted in increased polarization: Zahid

A new round of litigations and protests could be seen on the horizon which will deprive the govt of its ability to provide relief to the masses or undertake serious long due reforms

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group of FPCCI, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain on Monday said the recent Senate elections have exposed serious flaws in the system.

How come general elections can be conducted in a good manner if an issue of one hundred votes cannot be tackled properly? He asked Mian Zahid Hussain said that Senate elections have resulted in increased tensions among the stakeholders which has

raised concerns among the business community as instability will multiply in the weeks to come.

Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that the politicians representing the ruling coalition, as well as opposition, have started the verbal war in press conferences and talk shows widening the political divide.

A new round of litigations and protests could be seen on the horizon which will deprive the government of its ability to provide relief to the masses or undertake some serious long due reforms, he observed. The business leader noted that how come government deliver when its whole at-

Strict action against traffic laws violators

MAHBOOB AHIR

SARGODHA: Traffic police Sargodha DS in the light of the orders of P. Muhammad Kashif, Inspector of the Traffic Police Sargodha Muhammad Azam, Aftab Aslam, Saeed Akhtar, Sub Inspector Muhammad Mumtaz Ahmad Yar, Riazul Hassan, Lali Umar Daraz Bhatti, Arshad Baig, Muhammad Yusuf, Qaiser Abbas, Amir Kamal, Muhammad Munir, and A.SI Muhammad Afzal, Habib-ur-Rehman, Arshad Ijaz, and others are taking stern action against violators of traffic rules. Similarly action against underage drivers and other violators of the law is also on the cards.

Instructions have been given to drivers. Do not violate traffic rules or you will be subject to further action.

Obituary

Mehboob Ahir's cousin, Shehzad Ahir, Aurish Ahir's uncle Muhammad Mumtaz has passed away in Lahore. On the occasion of his funeral, D.C.O Sargodha, D.S.P Traffic Sargodha Intiaz Khan, Mohammad Saqlain, Mohammad Saleem, Malik Rab Nawaz, Mohammad Safdar Qureshi, Mohammad Ansar, and the people of Sargodha expressed their deep sorrow and grief and said that may Allah Almighty grant patience and beauty to the bereaved family give him a place in Paradise.

16 arrested over gas decanting

FAISALABAD: The police arrested 16 shopkeepers on the charge of illegal gas decanting and selling loose petrol in different parts of Faisalabad during the past 24 hours.

Police said on Monday that the team conducted raid at various areas of its jurisdiction and arrested 16 accused—Azhar Mehmood of Iron market, Mujahid Hussain of Bukhari chowk, Nawaz and Ayyaz Khan of T-Chowk, Bilal Haneef of Rajbah road, Umar and Shafaqat Ali of Makhdoom road, Ahmad of Sargodha Road, Asif, Shaikat Ali, Asif Mehmood and Muneer Ahmad of Tariq Abad and Imran Bashir of Intiaz Mart. Further investigation was underway. - APP

PHP arrest 172 criminals

FAISALABAD: Punjab Highway Patrolling (PHP) police Faisalabad Region arrested 172 criminals and recovered illicit weapons from their possession during the last two weeks.

According to PHP sources, the police teams nabbed 2 proclaimed offenders and a court absconder and recovered 4 pistols and bullets from their possession.

The PHP teams also apprehended drug peddlers and seized 43 liters liquor and 444 gram hashish.

The patrolling police provided first aid to 1300 people on highways and removed encroachments from 10 places during the same period. - APP

Faisalabad: 938 senior citizens get accinated

NEWS DESK

FAISALABAD: As many as 938 senior citizen have vaccinated against Corona in last 5 days at 5 Vaccination centers established in the district and the process to vaccination the 60 and above years age of people was underway. District Health Officer Dr Ata ul Moenum informed that 662 senior citizens at Sports Complex Samanabad Center, 142 at Tehsil Headquarters Hospital Samundari New Building Center, 77 at Sports Complex Chak Jhumra, 41 at Tehsil Headquarters Hospital New Building Tandianwala and 16 at Rural Health Center New Building Khurrianwala center so far. The DHO informed that the forthcoming vaccination centers, all senior citizens above 60 years of age who have texted their National Identity Card 1166 from their mobile phones, however, can apply for corona vaccine without waiting for the verification code on their mobile and they visit the relevant center, the centers are functional from 8 am to 8 pm.

Blast kills 1 Rangers personnel, injures 2

KARACHI: One Rangers personnel was martyred while two sustained injuries among six others in a bomb blast near Pakistan Rangers Sindh vehicle in Orangi Town area of the megalopolis on Monday.

The bomb, planted in a motorcycle, exploded when the Rangers vehicle was passing through the Vivo Mobile Market of Orangi Town number 5, as a result one personnel of Rangers was martyred and two sustained injuries while passerby citizens including a policeman were also hurt.

Martyred Rangers personnel was identified as Roshan Ali s/o Khan Muhammad Solangi while injured were identified as Aijaz and Hanif, according to the station house officer Peerabad A D Chaudhary.

A policeman of Anti Vehicle Lifting Cell identified as Yousaf was also injured. The police, Rangers and rescue workers immediately rushed to the spot of incident and shifted the injured to the nearest hospital for medical treatment.

The law enforcement agencies cordoned off the area. Deputy Inspector General of Police West Capt (R) Asim Qaimkhan and Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) West Suhai Talpur also visited the spot of incident. - APP

Opposition's long march doomed to fail: Ashrafi

Severely criticizing the anti Pakistan slogans of PML-N legislator without naming him, he urged former President Asif Ali Zardari to take notice of the same

ISLAMABAD: Special Representative to the Prime Minister for Interfaith Harmony and Middle East, Hafiz Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi on Monday said the opposition's planned long march was destined to fail as the government of Prime Minister Imran Khan would complete its constitutional tenure of five years.

Talking to media, Ashrafi, who was also Chairman Pakistan Ulama Council (PUC) said the government would now onwards concentrate on providing solace to the people by checking price hike and food inflation. He urged the business community to reduce their profits by 50 percent during the upcoming holy month of Ramadan and help government to control inflation.

He said some vested interests were trying to vitiate the serene atmosphere of the country by fanning hatred after facing defeat in political arena.

Opposition should accept the defeat of Senator Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani in elections of Chairman Senate with the same spirit the government had accepted the defeat of Finance Minister Hafeez Sheikh. The opposition PML-N and PPP had ditched their candidate of Deputy Chairman Senate Senator Abdul Ghafour Haideri (JUF) Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam-Fazl by not voting him. He said government wanted election reforms and opposition should cooperate to achieve the goal of holding free, fair, transparent and undisputed



elections. A person of moderate income could never think to participate in the elections, he said adding that the Chief Election Commission

(CEC) should control the use of money in the elections. Sacrilegious banners, placards and blasphemous slogans displayed in the Aurat

March were being investigated. The organizers of Aurat March were of the opinion that the tempered banners, placards and slogans had been shared on

social media. However the situation would be cleared after the investigations.

He said the government has introduced reforms in seminary education and certificates of religious seminaries would be recognized at national level from next year. Not a single complaint has so far received about blasphemy in last five months.

Severely criticizing the anti Pakistan slogans of (PML-N) Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz legislator without naming him, he urged former President Asif Ali Zardari to take notice of the same.

He said Pakistan was the only country which defeated the menace of terrorism, thanks to untiring efforts of Pakistan Army. - APP

Briefs

FBR unearths fake invoices' scam

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) said here Monday that its Regional Tax Office (RTO) Faisalabad has unearthed a huge scam of fake and flying invoices.

According to an FBR statement, the RTO's Investigation and Prosecution Cell has registered an FIR against M/s Amin Traders on account of issuance of fake and flying invoices. During a search operation, truck load of record of various businesses, invoices and hundreds of stamps used in generation of fake invoices were confiscated. So far, from investigations, it appears that the accused was involved in huge scam of hundreds of millions of tax fraud by means of being the epicenter of notorious business of fake/flying invoices, the statement said. Separate teams have been constituted to unearth the whole scam, it added. - APP

IESCO issues power suspension schedule

DNA

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 16th March from 09:00 AM to 03:00 PM, Capt. Nisar Shaheed, Baral Army, CMH Army, Mangla Cantt, Gadari, Benny Feeders From 09:00 AM to 12:00 Noon, Hamid, Haji Shah New, Shanka, People's Colony, Shams Abad, Dar es Salaam, Chaklala Garrison, JSHQ, CNC Feeders, From 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., Tipu Road, Rehmatabad-2, National Park, and others. From 09:00 AM to 04:00 PM Bathar 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.

14 outlaws arrested; narcotics and valuables recovered

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Police have arrested 14 outlaws including two members of dacoits' gang and recovered snatched motorbike, narcotics, kites and weapons from their possession, police spokesman said.

According to details, SSP (Operations) Dr. Syed Mustafa Tanveer had directed all zonal officers to accelerate their efforts to curb the crime in the city. Following these directions, SP (Industrial-Area) Liaqat Hayat Niazi constituted special team under supervision of SHO Shams Colony police station, Sub-inspector Aamir Abbas along with other officials which successfully arrested two wanted members of dacoit gang identified as Ehsan-Ullah and Najeeb-Ullah and recovered snatched motorbike and weapons used in crime. Cases have been registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway from them.

Further-More Sihala police arrested a drug peddlers namely Zahid Mehmood and recovered 1.185 kilograms hashish from him. Bhara Kahu Police arrested four accused Mohsin, Wahid, Kashif and Hafiz and recovered four 30 bore pistols along with ammunition from their possession. Aabpara police arrested two accused Muhammad Hamza and Shahbaz Meshiah and recovered 230 gram hashish and 12 liters alcohol from their possession. Shahzad Town police arrested accused Rafi-Ullah and recovered 149 gram hashish from him. - DNA

Business community opposes new restrictions on businesses

Ajmal Baloch, President, All-Pakistan Anjuman-e-Tijaran said that due to previous lockdowns and restrictions, businesses have already suffered huge losses while the government has not provided any compensation to them

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: The business community of the federal capital during a press conference at the National Press Club, Islamabad has strongly opposed the new restrictions imposed on businesses and called upon the government to withdraw them immediately to save the businesses from further losses. Speaking at the occasion, Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) appreciated the role of DC ICT Hamza Shafiqat and his team for playing a frontline role against the spread of Covid-19 and cooperating with business community in running business activities. However, he expressed concerns over the new guidelines of NCOC for new restrictions due to which



the ICT Administration has issued a new notification to close all commercial activities, establishments, markets and amusement parks on Saturday and Sunday except for essential services. He said that this decision would badly hit the businesses that were al-

ready struggling for revival due to previous lockdowns. He said that in these tough times, businesses needed relief measures from the government in taxes, interest rates, loans and utility charges, but instead of providing any relief, the government was taking

measures that would put businesses into deep troubles. ICCI President said that the customers normally do shopping on weekends due to not finding time on working days. However, closing businesses on Saturday and Sunday will not only create

problems for customers, it would also cause more rush in markets on other days and lead to further increase in the Covid-19 pandemic cases. Therefore, he urged that businesses should be allowed to remain open on weekends to avoid rush and curb the spread

of coronavirus. He emphasized that instead of closing businesses on weekends, ICT Administration should focus on enforcement of SOPs and assured that the business community would fully cooperate with it in implementation of SOPs while running business activities. He also appealed to the traders not to allow entry to any customer in shops without a mask.

Ajmal Baloch, President, All-Pakistan Anjuman-e-Tijaran said that due to previous lockdowns and restrictions, businesses have already suffered huge losses while the government has not provided any compensation to them. They said the closure of businesses would render thousands of people jobless, therefore, new restrictions should be withdrawn. Therefore, they urged that the ICT Administration should allow businesses to run on weekends.

AC court adjourned reference against Zardari

ISLAMABAD: An Accountability Court (AC) on Monday adjourned hearing on Thaha Water Supply scheme reference against former president Asif Ali Zardari and others till March 24. AC-II Judge Muhammad Azam Khan adjourned the case without further proceeding due to lawyers' strike. The court summoned the NAB witnesses including Zulfiqar Gopang and Kaleem Shahzad again on next date of hearing and adjourned the case. Meanwhile, the same court adjourned hearing till April 12, on graft reference pertaining to workers welfare funds against accused Iftikhar Raheem and others. The court asked the NAB to file supplementary reference till next date. - APP

Excise dept. advises public to avoid visiting HQ

ISLAMABAD: Excise and Taxation Office (ETO) Islamabad on Monday advised public to opt for online means for vehicle registration and transfer as the federal capital witnessed an uptick in coronavirus cases. Talking to media, Excise Director Bilal Azam said people were being encouraged for maximum use of the 'City Islamabad Application' to get online appointment for the purpose so as to reduce gathering at the office in compliance with the Corona virus Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). He said a comprehensive drive had been launched to sensitize the masses about availability of online appointment system at the 'City Islamabad App'. Bilal said people should contact excise office through the application to get their vehicles transferred and registered at their door steps. Citizens might also get online appointment by contacting official phones numbers of the ETO 051-90395386 and 051-2775386, he added. He said vehicle owners should visit the ETO website www. Islamabadexcise.gov.pk for collecting their registration card. - APP

CDA to hold auction of commercial plots on March 29

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Capital Development Authority (CDA) will hold a three days auction of 29 commercial plots on March 29 at Jinnah Convention Center. The commercial plots of sector D-12, G-6, G-10, G-11, G-8, Blue Area, I-8, F-8, F-11, I-12 and other developed sectors will be presented for auction. Plots of five star hotels, apartment hospitals, and petrol pumps are also included which would be presented for auction. CDA official said that to provide the best opportunities of investment CDA has presented the plots in developed sectors for auction. The authority has devised a special team to facilitate and guide the investors in this regard. Brochures of plots for auction are available at one window Directorate and in the branches of selected bank. CDA has also given an option of online buying of these brochures.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi receiving covid-19 vaccine, at vaccination center, Tarlai, Islamabad. - DNA

NTC earns Rs578 million profit

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: The National Telecommunication Corporation (NTC) has earned a record profit of Rs578 million during the Financial Year 2019-20 despite the economic slowdown due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. "The NTC is probably one of the few Federal Organizations which has recovered from a loss-making entity to a profitable organization. NTC has earned a record profit of Rs.578 Million in last FY 2019-20 especially during COVID-19 Pandemic," a senior official of the corporation said. He said that the NTC, during COVID-19 pandemic, also provided the Data Hosting platform and Video Conference System to the federal government for hosting of their entire data and for conducting PM office, Cabinet, ECC and NCOC meetings in a safe and secure environment. Now NTC is recognized as an efficient, modern, disciplined and forward-looking entity in the Public and Private Telecom Sector. The official said "the NTC in the recent years has made significant achievements, record growth of Exchanges all over Pakistan @ 240%, record expansion of exchanges to new Cities and Sites @ 50%, record completion of ADP Projects @ 100% during Financial Year 2016-17 & 2019-20 and Broadband Subscribers Growth @ 115%.

ANF seizes 425 Kgs drugs valuing USD 14.658 Million

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Anti-Narcotics Force Pakistan seized 425.253 Kgs narcotics valuing US \$ 14.658 Million internationally, arrested 42 culprits including seven Afghan national, one Pakistani national lady and impounded 17 vehicles while conducting 29 counter-narcotics strikes throughout the country. The seized drugs comprised 4.681 Kg Heroin, 350.400 Kg Hashish, 65.200 Kg Opium, 2.352 Kg Amphetamine, 2.620 Kg Methamphetamine, and Tab Al-prozalam 2500, Tab Diazepam 150, Tab Clonazepam 2180, Tab Clomipramine HCL 1200 & Tab Pseudoephed-

rine 2200.

ANF KP, Police Station, Peshawar intercepted a suspected Nissan Trailer and recovered 123.600 Kg Hashish from secret cavity of spare fuel tank. 2 x accused Jamshaid Ahmed & Muhammad Abbas residents of Rahim Yar Khan were arrested on the spot. The recovered drugs were being smuggled from Bara to Karachi. In another operation, Police Station Peshawar in collaboration with ANF post Torkham apprehended 1 x accused Hafta Gul resident of Afghanistan and recovered 1.200 Kg Hashish. The arrested accused is Afghan National and was trying to smuggle drugs from Afghanistan to Peshawar. In third operation, ANF KP in

collaboration with 104 Wing Khyber Rifles intercepted a Double Cabin Pick up and recovered 15.600 Kg Hashish and arrested 2 x accused Lal Habib & Muhammad Wali residents of Khyber. In fourth operation, Police Station Peshawar established a naka near Motorway Toll Plaza, Peshawar and recovered 1.200 Kg Hashish from personal possession of arrested accused Babar resident of Khyber. In fifth operation, Police Station Peshawar in collaboration with ANF Det Torkham apprehended 5 x accused at international pedestrian departure tube and recovered Psychotropic Tablets i.e. Alprozolam 2500 x Tabs, Clonazepam 2180 x Tabs, Clomipramine HCL

1200 Tabs, Pseudoephedrine 2200 Tabs & Diazepam 150 Tablets from the 5 x arrested accused Tahir, Noor Bahar, Haroon, Nusrat Ullah & Khalid residents of Afghanistan.

ANF Rawalpindi, Police Station Attock established a naka near Iqbal Shaheed Toll Plaza, G.T Road, Attock, intercepted a Bed Ford Truck and recovered 5 Kg Hashish from personal possession of arrested accused Arif Muhammad & Rafaqat residents of Abbottabad. In another operation, Police Station, Rawalpindi intercepted a Honda Civic Car from Attock Petrol Pump near T Chowk G.T road, Islamabad and recovered 3.600 Kg Hashish from secret cavities of the said vehicle.

IPC exhorts public to avoid hoax calls

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad police chief Qazi Jamil-ur-Rehman on Monday appealed the masses to avoid making hoax calls as it may put someone's life in danger. "If we are sent to a hoax call, it means we're not available when someone really needs our help. It could be a matter of life or death," the IG said in a statement issued here. He further informed that police emergency department 15 was playing an important role in receiving and transmitting calls from public. But, unfortunately it received approximately 2700 fake calls each day that not only waste the time of operator but may cause delay in responding to an emergency situation, he observed.

Turkey keen to invest in Pakistan: Turkish envoy

FPCCI Delegation led by Qurban Ali Chairman FPCCI Capital Office met Turkish Ambassador. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, Gilgit-Baltistan, the Turkish experience in the fields of tourism, mines and minerals can be utilized

DNA

A delegation of the business community led by Qurban Ali, Chairman, FPCCI Capital Office Islamabad called on Turkish Ambassador to Pakistan Ehsan Mustafa Erdakl. Discussions on further improving bilateral trade and economic relations between Pakistan and Turkey. The delegation of FPCCI comprised of Chairman FPCCI Capital Office Qurban Ali included Former President of Gilgit Small Chamber Shafiqat Ali and Muhammad Nawaz from Gujranwala Chamber. Speaking on the occasion, FPCCI Capital Office Chairman Qurban Ali stressed on further strengthening of bilateral trade and relations

between Pakistan and Turkey and said that it is time to increase the volume of bilateral trade between the two countries.

He highlighted various investment opportunities in Pakistan in the Sectors of oil and The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry FPCCI Capital House, Awan-e-Sanat-o-Tijarat Road, Islamabad, Pakistan Tel: 051-2251891-93, 2289303 Email: islamabad.capital@fpcci.org.pk URL: www.fpcci.org.pk gas, mines and mineral, gem stones, tourism, information technology, food processing, agriculture, dairy products, furniture, hotel and resorts. He further said that the experience of Turkish tourism sector can be utilized



for the development of the tourism sector. Half of the world's highest peaks are in Pakistan and the current government is also paying special attention for the

promotion of tourism. The Turkish advanced technology in various fields may lead the Pakistan's various sectors developed and beneficial, he added. Ehsan

Mustafa Erdakl, Turkish Ambassador said that the vision and ideology of Pakistan and Turkey are similar and the friendship between the two countries is consid-

ered best and ideal in the world. The private sector of both countries have come more closer in this era through FPCCI and Turkish Cham-

ber of Commerce which are playing their pivotal role in stabilizing and enhancing bilateral trade relations between both the countries. Turkish Ambassador Ehsan Mustafa Erdakl added here that, Turkish businessmen are keen to visit Pakistan to explore new business and investment opportunities. He said that it is the time to transform historical good bilateral relations into closer trade and economic relations between the two countries.

A large Turkish trade delegation will visit Pakistan once the pandemic of Covid 19 improves. The Turkish Ambassador also invited the FPCCI delegation to visit Turkey and assured his full support and cooperation to make it fruitful for them.

Briefs

Rs 98,007 million released for NHA

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has released Rs 98,007.296million for National Highway Authority (NHA) road infrastructure projects under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) 2020-2021. Out of the released Rs 98,007.296 million amount, Rs 83,659.884 million were local component whereas Rs 14,347.412million as foreign assistance, an official source told media on Monday.

It is worth a mention that a total of Rs 118,674.855 million had been allocated in the PSDP:2020-2021 of the present budget out of which Rs 88,954.855 million were allocated for on-going schemes whereas Rs 29720.000 million were earmarked for new schemes of the NHA.

Dacoit gang busted; three arrested

DNA

RAWALPINDI: In a crackdown against criminal elements, Rawalpindi Police have busted a dacoit gang and arrested its three members besides recovering cash Rs 216,000, mobile phones and three pistols 30 bore from their possession. According to a police spokesman, Pirwahai police in a raid and arrested Bilal, Azhar and Bilal and recovered cash Rs 216,000, mobile phones and three 30 bore pistols from their possession.

He informed that the Police team constituted under the supervision of SHO Pirwahai Police Station on the directives of SP Rawal conducted a raid and managed to net the gang members. As per preliminary police record, the criminals were also involved in other crimes, he added.

SP Rawal said that other members and facilitators of the gang would also be arrested following preliminary investigations with the detainee culprits. The SP also lauded endeavor of Pirwahai police team for netting the accused.

CIA held two suspects

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Crime Investigation Agency (CIA) of Islamabad Police on Monday arrested two accused and recovered snatched mobile phones, laptop, motorbike and weapons from their possession. A team constituted by SSP (Investigation) Atta ur-Rehman under the supervision of DSP CIA, comprising Sub-inspector Tariq Rauf, ASI Zulfiqar along with others held the suspects during special checking in the city. They were identified as Attaur-Ullah s/o Rehman Dad resident of Rawalpindi and Muhammad Shah s/o Muhammad Farooq resident of Murree district Rawalpindi. Cases have been registered against them in Koral and Khanna police stations and further investigation underway.

IGEHA allots 2,354 plots in Green Enclave-1

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA) has allocated around 2,354 plots to allottees in Green Enclave-I project in different categories. "The remaining allottees will be informed through notice or newspapers' advertisements to submit their dues for including them in next balloting," an official in the authority told media. The official said the authority was trying its best to complete the Bhara Kahu Green Enclave-I housing project within the stipulated time and hoped that it would be completed by the end of this year.

He said the FGEHA was giving special attention to gardening activities for creating healthier environment in the Green Enclave to facilitate its residents.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani, Senator Shibli Faraz, and Senator Samina Mumtaz called on President Dr. Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. – DNA

Miyawaki forests planted at eight different sites

CDA has planted 8 Miyawaki forests in Islamabad at different sites including Shakarparian, Blue Area, F-6, F-7, F-8, F-10, D-12, and Fatima Jinnah

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Work of the administration of Capital Development Authority (CDA) on Miyawaki forests campaign is underway according to the vision of the Prime Minister Imran Khan to ensure clean climate of capital city. PM Imran Khan inaugurated first Miyawaki forest at Lotus Park few days back. Miyawaki forests have been planted at 8 different sites in the city so far. These forests will be planted at 23 places in Islamabad. According to detail, the administration of CDA is committed for clean cli-

mate side by side clean and green environment in the capital city. In this regard, the administration is planting different saplings at different places including main roads, avenues, bridges, round about, green belts, parks, and others. Miyawaki trees are also being planted.

CDA has planted 8 Miyawaki forests in Islamabad at different sites including Shakarparian, Blue Area, F-6, F-7, F-8, F-10, D-12, and Fatima Jinnah. In the next phase same forests will be planted in G-6, G-7, G-10, I-9, and other sectors. CDA is also ensuring the protection of Miyawaki forests.



CCP issues show cause notice to four firms

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has issued Show Cause Notices to four companies for prima facie violating Section 10 of the Competition Act, 2010. A Show Cause Notice was issued to Unilever Pakistan Limited for prima facie violation of Section 10. Reckitt Benckiser Pakistan Limited sent a formal complaint that Unilever Pakistan Limited was distributing false/misleading information by making absolute claims regarding its products, Lifebuoy Soap, and Hand wash, said a press release issued here.

The enquiry report concluded that Unilever Pakistan Limited was harming other undertakings' business interests and misleading consumers by making absolute claims regarding the above mentioned products. Some of the claims were: "100% guaranteed protection from germs", "World's No. 1 germs protection soap", and "99.9% germ protection in 10 seconds." The disclaimers about these claims were printed in tiny fonts and were hardly noticeable.

On the enquiry's recommendations, Unilever Pakistan Limited was served a Show Cause Notice for prima facie violating Section 10 of the Act.

In another case of prima facie deceptive marketing practices, a France-based company, KENNOL Performance Oil, sent a formal complaint against three Pakistani firms, Kennol Petroleum (Pvt) Limited, Dewan Oil Store, and Japan Lube Petroleum, for copying the packaging of its product, KENNOL ULTIMA 20W60. KENNOL Performance Oil stated that its product 'Kennol' is registered in France and with the Intellectual Property Organisation (IPO) in Pakistan, and it has not authorized any other firm to use it in Pakistan. Hence the respondents, Kennol Petroleum, Dewan Store and Japan Lube, were misleading consumers

about their products. The CCP's enquiry concluded that the trademark belongs to KENNOL Performance Oil, and no one in Pakistan is authorised to use it. The enquiry also concluded that Kennol Petroleum, Dewan Stores, and Japan Lube were engaged in copycat packaging of KENNOL Performance Oil's product to deceive consumers and harm its business interest. Both these actions are a prima facie violation of Section 10 of the Competition Act. The CCP issued Show Cause Notices to Kennol Petroleum, Dewan Stores and Japan Lube and directed them to respond to the notices.

AIU offers MA/MSc admission

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIU) has provided final opportunity for admissions in MA/MSc programmes while adhering to HEC's post graduate education policy. The AIU, in a statement, on Monday said it will not offer these programmes in the upcoming semester - autumn 2021. According to the details, university has offered admissions in thirteen MA programmes which include Urdu, History, M Com, Arabic, Islamic Studies (General), Islamic Studies in three specializations - Quran and Tafseer, Islamic Law, Hadith and Seerat - Elementary

Teacher Education, Science Education, Special Education, DNFE, TEFL and MLIS in the spring 2021 semester. On the other hand, university has also offered admissions in nine MSc programmes which include Sociology, Economics, Public Nutrition, Pakistan Studies, Gender and Women Studies, Forestry Extension, Mass Communication, Administrative Sciences and Sustainable Environmental Design in the current semester. It is pertinent to mention here that no university will offer these programmes beyond spring 2021 semester in accordance to the HEC's post graduate education policy.

Warrants for complicit in reference against Gilani: AC

DNA

ISLAMABAD: An Accountability Court (AC) on Monday issued non-bailable arrest warrants against former secretary Farooq Awan in Universal Services Funds graft reference on continuous disappearance.

AC-II Judge Muhammad Azam Khan heard the graft reference against former Prime Minister Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, Farooq Awan and others.

The accused Farooq Awan didn't appear again before the court at this the judge issued non-bailable warrants against him. The court, however, granted one-day exemption from hearing to former Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani on his lawyer's request. The hearing of the case then adjourned till March 30. It may be mentioned here that Gilani had been named as accused in reference pertaining to misuse of powers in grant of advertising campaign contract of Universal Services Funds.



ISLAMABAD: Abdul Aziz AlNeyadi, the Charge d' affairs of UAE Embassy in Islamabad meets Ikram Mohammad Ibrahim, the High Commissioner of Malaysia in Islamabad and discusses future bilateral cooperation. – DNA

Pakistan among biggest importers of major arms in Asia

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan was among the biggest importers of major arms in Asia and Oceania from 2016-2020, according to a Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) report published on Monday. Asia and Oceania was the largest importing region for major arms, receiving 42 per cent of global arms transfers in 2016-2020. In addition to Pakistan, India, Australia, China and South Korea were also among the biggest importers in the region. International transfers of major arms stayed at the same level between 2011-15 and 2016-20. Substantial increases in transfers by three of the top five arms export-

ers—the USA, France and Germany—were largely offset by declining Russian and Chinese arms exports. Middle Eastern arms imports grew by 25 per cent in the period, driven chiefly by Saudi Arabia (+61 per cent), Egypt (+136 per cent) and Qatar (+361 per cent). For the first time since 2001-2005, the volume of deliveries of major arms between countries did not increase between 2011-15 and 2016-20. However, international arms transfers remain close to the highest level since the end of the cold war. "It is too early to say whether the period of rapid growth in arms transfers of the past two decades is over," said Pieter D. Wezeman, Senior Researcher with the SIPRI Arms and Military Expenditure Programme.

"For example, the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic could see some countries reassessing their arms imports in the coming years. However, at the same time, even at the height of the pandemic in 2020, several countries signed large contracts for major arms." The United States remains the largest arms exporter, increasing its global share of arms exports from 32 to 37 per cent between 2011-15 and 2016-20. The USA supplied major arms to 96 states in 2016-20, far more than any other supplier. Almost half (47 per cent) of US arms transfers went to the Middle East. Saudi Arabia alone accounted for 24 per cent of total US arms exports. The 15 per cent increase in US arms exports between 2011-15 and 2016-

20 further widened the gap between the USA and second largest arms exporter Russia. The third and fourth largest exporters also experienced substantial growth between 2011-15 and 2016-20. France increased its exports of major arms by 44pc and accounted for 8.2pc of global arms exports in 2016-20. India, Egypt and Qatar together received 59pc of French arms exports. Germany increased its exports of major arms by 21 per cent between 2011-15 and 2016-20 and accounted for 5.5 per cent of the global total. The top markets for German arms exports were South Korea, Algeria and Egypt. Russia and China both saw their arms exports falling. Arms exports by Russia, which accounted for

20 per cent of all exports of major arms in 2016-20, dropped by 22 per cent (to roughly the same level as in 2006-10). The bulk—around 90 per cent—of this decrease was attributable to a 53 per cent fall in its arms exports to India. "Russia substantially increased its arms transfers to China, Algeria and Egypt between 2011-15 and 2016-20, but this did not offset the large drop in its arms exports to India," said Alexandra Kuimova, Researcher with the SIPRI Arms and Military Expenditure Programme. "Although Russia has recently signed new large arms deals with several states and its exports will probably gradually increase again in the coming years, it faces strong competition from the USA in most regions."

Police launch search operation

RAWALPINDI: Police on special directives of City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi on Monday launched a search operation in Kuri Road and adjoining areas in the jurisdiction of Sadiqabad Police Station, said a police spokesman.

He informed that heavy police contingent, Elite Force, Special Branch personnel and Ladies police under the supervision of SHO Sadiqabad Police Station conducted an operation in the area and searched 147 houses while 340 persons were checked and several interrogated. Police also checked particulars of 61 tenants during the search operation.

According to Superintendent Police (SP) Rawal, the search operations to net criminals and proclaimed offenders were regularly being conducted under National Action Plan in different areas of the district particularly to ensure law and order. – APP

RCB Food Branch checks 2786 outlets

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Cantonment Board (RCB) Food Branch checked as many as 2786 food outlets and issued 2266 notices for unhygienic and poor cleanliness conditions during last eight months of the current financial year while fines amounting to over Rs 2.3 million were also imposed on the violators.

According to RCB Food Branch, total 2786 food outlets were checked and the teams collected 1261 food samples which were sent to lab for quality test.

The cases of substandard food items were also sent to the court of the cantonment magistrate which imposed fines on the rules violators. Food Inspectors on the directive of the Cantonment Executive Officer conducted surprise visits of different markets including Saddar, Peshawar Road Tench Bhatta, Bakra Mandi and other areas and inspected cleanliness condition with quality of food items at food outlets.

In order to ensure supply of quality food items to the residents, he said, the teams were conducting raids in different areas on daily basis. The fines were also being imposed on the stall holders and vendors for unhygienic food and poor cleanliness condition.

The raids would continue, he said adding that the teams were directed to also check the health of the workers serving at the food outlet.

IHC seeks comments in chairman IESCO case

RAJA PERVAIZ

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) Monday sought comments from respondents in a case challenging the appointment of chairman board of directors and members of Islamabad Electricity Supply Company (IESCO).

The petitioner had named federation government, Security Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP), Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) and IESCO board of directors in the case.

Justice Aamer Farooq of IHC heard the case filed by Eng. Zameer Ahmed through his counsel Umer Gilani Advocate.

The lawyer pleaded before the bench that the top court had cleared in a judgment that the chairman of board of director would be elected instead of selected. He further said that no relevant experience had been demanded in advertisement issued for the post of chairman.

He said that the IHC also had explained in one of its judgment that age relaxation in the appointment could be given only in extraordinary situation, adding that current chairman IESCO was 72 year old.

The petitioner said that no test or interview was conducted for the appointment of chairman and board member.

He prayed the court to declare the appointments as null and void.

Turning Balochistan Green

Pakistan is amongst the top ten countries that face an existential threat because of climate change. The government however, looks to be taking some other to mitigate the adverse effects of the process. While speaking at a press conference at Quetta, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (PM) on Environment and Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam's words inform us that the government has a sound knowledge of the ongoing drought in Balochistan and its negative effects.

There have been attempts to introduce eco-friendly reforms in Balochistan to save it from the catastrophic effects of climate change. However, the suggested projects seem to be nothing more than ambitious claims right now. Indeed, the most effective way to deal with the consequences of climate change is to introduce environmental protection on a larger scale. Megaprojects, for instance, the construction of dams, the plantation of 100 million trees, creation of national parks, the provision of gas and cheap LNG to protect juniper forests of the province and initiation of a project to recharge the underground water, all require immense infrastructural development and constant injection of funds.

Even if the government fulfills the two requirements, the scheme cannot achieve the goals if the authorities do not complete it with an incredibly focused approach. Nevertheless, given the state is coming up with a diverse plan to tackle the problem shows that the government knows the areas where intervention is necessary.

Though the PM aide tells us the steps that the government will take, he has not provided us with the details on how the project will be achieved. Neither is there any information about the projects' completion deadlines. Lastly, details about the socio-economic impact of the government's plan were also missing from the presser. These are essential components of any development scheme. Their absence from any such project implies that the government is just making castles in the air.

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High Covid Numbers

Just when the country starts to open up and lift restrictions, the covid positivity rate rises to concerning levels again. The recent covid positivity rate is a cause for alarm—it shot up to between 5 and 6 percent in the last few days.

This is a high rate paralleling the range of earlier pandemic days in the summer. This has worried the government as well—luckily it has recognized that this rate means that this is the beginning of a third wave of covid in Pakistan unless some prompt action is taken. The issue now is not just the virus but also different strains. The National Command and Operation Centre (NCO) has asked all federating units to take immediate actions to ensure strict implementation of standard operating procedures (SOPs). The number of active cases has jumped to 19,764 compared to the total number of cases weeks ago, which were around 16,000. In Gujrat, oxygen beds are at 100 percent capacity in use by coronavirus patients.

Just weeks after restrictions were removed, a degree of lockdown has again been placed, with schools and colleges shifting again to a work from home model. However just this and the vaccination won't do. The fear now is not just from the coronavirus but also from different strains of the virus which have spread across the world—the South African and Brazilian virus strains are particularly worrying because of their easy spread. Unfortunately the government might have to look into tightening travel restrictions from certain countries.

While the numbers can soon escalate to early pandemic levels, the country may be in a better position because of the advent of the coronavirus vaccines. The vaccination drive across the country has begun—now senior citizens can go to get themselves vaccinated from designated vaccination centers. However, how successful the vaccination drive will be depends on the efficiency of disbursement, and also requires good behavior by citizens to get themselves vaccinated in a safe way.

Anticipating a new decade of Syrian conflict

Baria Alamuddin



Turkey has performed comparable feats of demographic engineering in areas under its control. After much of the Kurdish population fled, Ankara has eased its own refugee burden as these regions have been repopulated with a majority of Sunni Arabs, using the Turkish lira and connected to the Turkish electricity grid, suggesting that Erdogan has no intention of relinquishing these territories

After a decade of war in what used to be Syria, are 10 further years of conflict the best that can be expected?

Syria is a plurality of furiously competing polities: Rebel-held Idlib; Turkish-occupied northern areas; eastern regions where Kurdish forces, US troops and Iranian proxies jostle for supremacy; territories nominally under Assad's control; a residual Daesh presence in some remote areas; not to forget Israel's occupation of the Golan and its unceasing air strikes against Iranian positions. The regime scarcely controls its own territories, with localized factions (Druze, Alawite, Arab) patrolling their own communities, while Russian and Iranian forces act with impunity in their zones of control. "We're seeing the Balkanization of Syria," observed one UN official.

As in Iraq and Lebanon, Iran-aligned militias monopolize external and internal border zones, levying tolls and customs duties while overseeing the movement of weapons, missiles, narcotics and other smuggled goods. Civilians and traders in essential supplies pay extortionate fees to move from one canton to the next. This fragmented reality won't change without extensive renewed fighting, but no party has serious prospects of winning outright. Meanwhile, most of the civilized world shows little intention of renormalizing ties with Assad. The EU pledges not to lift sanctions or normalize relations until UN Security Council resolutions are implemented. The US's Caesar Act likewise consolidates the regime's richly deserved isolation.

The principle parties are seeking to render permanent the war's brutal demographic shifts. Not for the first time, the Assad regime is pursuing legal measures to permanently dispossess entire populations whose loyalty is under question. A new law dictates that those who failed to perform military service must pay \$8,000, or lose their property; for refugees who lost everything, it may as well be \$8 million. Inside Syria, the currency's latest collapse leaves civilians unable to afford the most basic foods as grocery prices soared by about 230 percent.

A similarly motivated 2018 law allowed the regime to confiscate property and demolish homes

of perceived dissidents. The regime seized and auctioned off hundreds of farms from recaptured areas around Hama, leaving once prosperous farmers destitute. The cash-strapped Assad regime wins either way—extorting heavy taxes from people desperate not to lose their property, or profitably flogging off these assets to loyalists. Turkey has performed comparable feats of demographic engineering in areas under its control. After much of the Kurdish population fled, Ankara has eased its own refugee burden as these regions have been repopulated with a majority of Sunni Arabs, using the Turkish lira and connected to the Turkish electricity grid, suggesting that Erdogan has no intention of relinquishing these territories. Such land grabs set the stage for future bouts of conflict, as dispossessed factions seek redress and revenge.

Activism by Turkey-sponsored Muslim Brotherhood evangelists among displaced populations also has worrying ideological implications, compounded by proselytism and recruitment by Al-Qaeda and Daesh-aligned elements. Among millions of young Syrians who never attended school, with scant future prospects, and enduring severe psychological trauma, radicalization is merely a matter of time.

In tiny Lebanon, the influx of 1.5 million Syrians likewise has a huge demographic impact. As with Lebanon's vast Palestinian refugee population, the Syrian presence is looking increasingly permanent, with far-reaching implications for refugees who lack employment and citizenship rights, not to mention Lebanon's stability and social coherence.

Prolonging the Syrian conflict only reaps more human misery. Up to a million are dead, and nearly 90 percent of children require humanitarian assistance. From a population of about 20 million, 5.5 million have fled and 6.7 million are internally displaced. Tens of thousands were tortured to death in regime prisons.

Assad's proposed solution to nationwide hunger was to outlaw TV cooking programmes! Even citizens who remain loyal to Assad live hand to mouth. The Syrian pound trades on the black

market at about 1 percent of its pre-war value in dollars. Civil servants can earn a relatively comfortable \$15 a month!

All conflicts acquire longevity through being internationalized. Syria has so many international parties on its soil, none of whom appear anxious to leave, that it could take years to deescalate the situation. Moscow is anxious to profit from a future peace dividend through lucrative reconstruction projects and expanding its regional influence.

For Tehran, Syria is essentially a battlefield. Southwestern Syria is Iran's frontline in its never-ending confrontation with Israel. Central Syria is an essential route through which Iran rearms its proxies, including the transfer of medium-range missiles. Tehran expects Syria to be the battlefield where any confrontation would play out if Iran itself were threatened. Efforts at Shiite conversion and militia recruitment in Deir Ezzor are also inherently destabilizing. For Iran, therefore, Syria is a perpetual Dar Al-Harb, a "house of war" that can never be normalized as long as Iran's proxies retain a quasi-permanent presence. The Astana process (Russia-Turkey-Iran) was designed to exclude Western and Arab parties from the Syrian arena.

For the new trilateral process (Russia-Turkey-Qatar), Moscow has excluded Tehran, and introduced an Arab party known for its hostility to the Assads. It is too early to know if this process has any mileage, but it at least appears more amenable to Western diplomatic engagement. Moscow and Ankara will obviously fight hard to protect their territorial and material interests in Syria, but could the counterpoint be a weakening of Assad and Tehran's grip? Ten further years of Syrian conflict are certainly not inevitable. However, ending this hugely complex war will require infinitely greater international focus and unity of purpose than at any time since 2011. A solution is possible, but only if Russia, America, the EU, Arab states and Turkey begin working seriously together to achieve this goal.

— Courtesy: Arab News

Myanmar on path to becoming a failed state

Dr. Azeem Ibrahim



If the military backs down and does restore power to Suu Kyi, this cannot be done except by conceding that the original action was in some sense illegal. So a direct restoration of the civilian government is off the table simply from a credibility point of view for the current people in power

A month-and-a-half into the new military government in Myanmar and popular resistance to the regime is growing by the day. What is alarming is that the military seems to have been taken by surprise by the strength of popular feeling on this issue and has no clear plan as to how to respond. And, most worrying of all, it is not obvious how this situation can be de-escalated safely by the new junta.

That there was going to be some popular response to the military takeover of the government was a given. Even though the civilian government of Aung San Suu Kyi did not have any particularly notable achievements under its belt over the previous five years in power, it remained far more popular than the military—as was shown by the November federal elections. But the strength of the popular response does come as a surprise. To be fair, it has even taken pro-democracy observers by surprise. So this is not the issue here. The issue is that the coup was not a reactive response that the military was forced into at short notice.

It was a deliberate move it had built toward over at least three months. In that time, its leaders should have at least considered what would happen if things did not go quite as they expected them to. When you have that much time to consider your position and your options, you do not just cross the Rubicon and hope for the best. You do extensive contingency

planning.

Yet no such planning appears on display in what is happening in Myanmar at the moment.

The military government seems to be getting caught on the back foot time and again.

And, when that happens, its leaders have no idea how to respond other than to ratchet up the violence in a way that is only bound to further inflame the popular response.

This is now happening to such a degree that even China is showing concern. After all, if the military government does not get to grips with the situation and find a way to put a lid on the protests in a safe way, billions of dollars of Chinese infrastructure investments in the country will be at risk.

This is how precarious the situation is in Myanmar. First, unless the military backs down and restores power to the civilian government and Suu Kyi, it does not appear that the protests will subside. If the military tries to suppress the demonstrations by force, so far we have seen that this is only serving to fuel further protests.

If the military backs down and does restore power to Suu Kyi, this cannot be done except by conceding that the original action was in some sense illegal. So a direct restoration of the civilian government is off the table simply from a credibility point of view for the current people

in power. And, lastly, the protests against the military government are grassroots and have no other organizing principle or value besides the restoration of the civilian government as it stood in January. There is not going to be an alternative, compromise solution to which the popular movement can switch.

In this environment, the only party that has the capacity to change the political dynamic in Myanmar is the incumbent military government. Its leaders are the only ones who could be expected to shift the trajectory of events in a deliberate and purposeful way. But they appear to have no ideas on how to do that. Instead, they are hunkering down and only escalating the violence.

As things stand, and if nothing else intervenes, the trajectory appears to be toward ever-increasing violence and the eventual breakdown of all order in Myanmar.

Add in the amorphous nature of the grassroots protests, the myriad separatist border conflicts surrounding the Burmese heartland of the country and the inevitable involvement of external powers seeking to wage their proxy battles in the region and we may well be looking at another Syria. At this point, it is only the current military government that appears to be in a position to change the path of the country.

— Courtesy: Arab News

Briefs

Olive plantation can fetch

From Page 01

He then spoke about the challenge of foreign exchange reserves and emphasised on the difference in the country's import and export figures. The third challenge of Pakistan is climate change, he said, adding that the country's increasing population needs to be provided with employment. "Pollution is fast increasing in our cities," he said. The premier then said that the 10 billion Tsunami project will protect our future generation. He urged the youth of Pakistan to contribute to the project for their own sake. Olives can bring foreign exchange into Pakistan, he said, reasoning that it could save the country funds. The government is giving priority to olive cultivation which will not only make the farmers prosper but also help save foreign exchange. Pakistan spends a lot on the import of edible oil that can be reduced with the production of olive oil locally by planting olive trees particularly on western bank of the Sindh River, he said. The production of olive oil can also generate news jobs and flourish businesses in the country.

Govt wants resignation of CEC

From Page 01

The Senate elections to be held via an open ballot," Mehmood said it is the sole responsibility of the ECP to ensure transparent polls are held. He said that the government had told the ECP to implement a system wherein it would not be possible for corrupt practices to take place. The minister called on the election commission to be disbanded, alleging that it had failed to meet up to the standards required of it. "To ensure transparent elections are held is the responsibility of the election commission. This responsibility was not fulfilled," he said. "The election commission failed to act as a neutral umpire hence it should resign," added Mehmood. Explaining the government's demand for the ECP to be disbanded, Mehmood said the PTI was the most popular political party in the country yet it did not have confidence in the ECP. He claimed the ruling party was not the only one which didn't trust the ECP. "If you ask other parties, even they don't have confidence in the ECP," he said. "The ECP should collectively resign and a new commission should be made which enjoys the trust of all parties," Mehmood said no political party in Pakistan is happy with the results of the Senate elections, adding that whatever transpired during the recently-held polls is a result of the ECP's 'failure'. "The chief election commissioner and his members [of the ECP] should resign," added the minister.

Houthi missile attack kills three children

MONITORING DESK

AL-MUKALLA: Three children and 15 soldiers died in a Houthi missile attack on Sunday on a school in Yemen. Military sources said the school in Kadha district in the west of Taiz governorate had previously been used as a base by the Iran-backed militia, and was recaptured when pro-government fighters seized Kadha last week. The 15 government soldiers were inside the school when the Houthi missile struck. The dead children, two brothers and a relative, were near by. Fighting has recently escalated in Taiz in southwestern Yemen between the Houthis and fighters loyal to the internationally recognized government. The Yemeni army's demining teams spent Saturday and Sunday clearing dozens of land mines planted by the Houthis in the recently liberated areas west of the city of Taiz. The Yemeni army's demining teams spent Saturday and Sunday clearing dozens of land mines planted by the Houthis in the recently liberated areas west of the city of Taiz. Yemen's army spokesman Col. Abdul Basit Al-Baher told Arab News that the army and local security authorities deployed joint patrols in the liberated areas in Al-Maafar and Maqbanah districts, and urged displaced people to return to their homes.



ISLAMABADI Players of Pakistan Army and Pakistan Airforce in action during a polo match organised by Murree Brewery. — DNA

Kabaddi includes in World Nomad Games 2021

The games, an international extravaganza dedicated to ethnic sports were earlier scheduled to be held in the Turkish city of Bursa in autumn, last year with the cooperation of the World Ethnosport Confederation (WEC) but were moved to 2021 due to the coronavirus pandemic

ISLAMABAD: The International Kabaddi Federation's efforts to introduce the sport at a much bigger level finally paid dividends as it will be making debut in the Fourth World Nomad Games, this year.

"Kabaddi has been included in the World Nomad Games. It is a big news for the kabaddi fans and enthusiasts across the world," Secretary Pakistan Kabaddi Federation (PKF) Rana Muhammad Sarwar told APP on Monday. The games, an international extravaganza dedicated to ethnic sports

were earlier scheduled to be held in the Turkish city of Bursa in autumn, last year with the cooperation of the World Ethnosport Confederation (WEC) but were moved to 2021 due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The venue of the Games has also been shifted to Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan due to a clash with the 5th Islamic Solidarity Games, which are scheduled to take place in September 2021 in Konya, Turkey. According to Sarwar, the organizers were expected to give the final date to hold games in the next few days.



Being held since 2014 after every two years, the event includes traditional sports such as archery, mounted archery, horse racing, archery, falcon-

ry, and various types of wrestling. The previous three editions also took place in Kyrgyzstan. Within the short span of time the popularity of the games have increased manifold, which is evident from the fact that the last edition of the games in 2018 hosted athletes from 66 countries. Sarwar said that Pakistan would field a strong outfit in the event. "We are sure to make a mark in the games as currently, we are the best world side, who are the winner of circle-style Kabaddi World Cup," he added. — APP

Afghan officials reverse ban on girls singing after outcry

FOREIGN DESK

KABUL: A ban on girls singing in public imposed by Afghan education officials last week has been overturned after a social media campaign that included local women uploading videos of themselves belting out their favourite songs. Schoolgirl choirs are a regular feature of official Afghan events, but when education authorities in the capital Kabul banned the participation of girls over the age of 12, it prompted an immediate

backlash. The order raised fears that education officials were "Talibanising" the country, heralding a return to when the Taliban armed group barred the participation of women in almost all parts of society outside their own homes. The education ministry issued a statement late on Sunday saying the ban "does not reflect the positions or policies of the ministry". The announcement followed a furious backlash from social media users using the hashtag #IAmMySong to raise awareness. "In Afghanistan today the Ministry of Education suffocated

the voices of our little girls by making it illegal for them to sing," tweeted Shmila Kohestani, former captain of the national women's football team. "They are quite literally teaching girls that they have no voice. #IAmMySong" On Facebook, Tayeb Safa wrote: "I feel the Taliban are making a comeback". The controversy comes amid fears of a possible Taliban return to power as the US mulls pulling its remaining troops from the country in the coming weeks in accordance with a landmark deal signed with the armed group last year.

Iran says compromise needed to end nuclear deal deadlock

BRUSSELS: Iran's foreign minister said Monday that now was the time for the United States to decide if it will "compromise" to break the deadlock to revive the nuclear deal with Tehran. "Europeans are used to compromise. Iran and the United States are not. The Americans are used to imposing, and we are used to resisting," Mohammad Javad Zarif said during a videoconference with the Brussels-based European Policy Centre think tank.

"So now is the time to decide. Will we both compromise and go back to the JCPOA? Or will we go back to our own paths?" he said, using the initials for the 2015 accord between Iran and world powers. The deal, known formally as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, has been hanging by a thread since former US president Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from it in 2018 and reimposed punishing sanctions on Tehran. Following Joe Biden's US presidential election victory in November, the US, the European parties to the deal - France, Germany and Britain - and Tehran have been scrambling to find a way to salvage the pact.

Biden has signalled his readiness to revive the pact that has been largely left in tatters by his predecessor's decision to pull out. But the new US leader insists Iran first return to its nuclear commitments, most of which it suspended in response to US sanctions, while Tehran demands Washington take the first step by scrapping them. Zarif repeated the Iranian position that the US needs to return to full compliance before Tehran will roll back steps it has taken that breach the deal.

"We are ready to go back to the JCPOA immediately after the United States goes back to the implementation of the agreement. It is as simple as that. We don't need any further negotiations," he said. Tehran's top diplomat said that any agreement "involves a give and take" but insisted that despite its flaw the existing deal was the "best agreement we could have". "The current US administration or the next administration will not be able to achieve a better deal with Iran than the JCPOA. Not with this government and not with any future government. This is the best possible deal," he said. — APP



ISLAMABAD: President Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Sardar Masood Khan in meeting with Chaudhary Majid Mukhtar. — DNA

Bravo century steers Windies to Lanka sweep

Pollard led the West Indies to a 2-1 T20 International series win at the Coolidge Cricket Ground, also in Antigua, a week earlier and now attention shifts to the two-match Test series starting next Sunday at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium

SPORTS DESK

ANTIGUA: Darren Bravo's fourth One-Day International century guided the West Indies to a five-wicket victory over Sri Lanka and a clean sweep of the three-match series at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua on Sunday. Set another challenging target of 275, the home side's response was anchored by Bravo's innings of 102 off 132 balls highlighted by five fours and four sixes. He was the obvious choice as man of the match with Shai Hope the equally straightforward option as man of the series with the opener following earlier scores of 110 and 84 with an elegant 64 to set his team well on their way. Sri

Lanka, who made three changes to their team from the nail-biting loss in the second match two days earlier, fought to restrain a powerful West Indies batting line-up but in the end they were undone by the home side's wealth of talent and experience. Captain Kieron Pollard ensured there was to be no late stumble despite Bravo's dismissal to seamer Suranga Lakmal just before the end. He finished unbeaten on 53, having featured in an 80-run fifth-wicket stand with Bravo and watched with contentment at the non-striker's end as the man he replaced as skipper more than a year ago, Jason Holder, hoisted a six over wide long on off Lakmal to formalise the result with nine balls to spare. In sweeping

the series 3-0, the West Indies reversed the result of the corresponding campaign in Sri Lanka 13 months earlier. Pollard led the West Indies to a 2-1 T20 International series win at the Coolidge Cricket Ground, also in Antigua, a week earlier and now attention shifts to the two-match Test series starting next Sunday at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium. Wanindu Hasaranga further enhanced his all-round value with a blistering unbeaten 80 in lifting Sri Lanka to 274 for six batting first in the morning session. Two days after blazing an unbeaten 47, Hasaranga featured in an unbroken seventh-wicket stand of 123 with Ashen Bandara, who was on 55 at the non-striker's end as the rampant Hasaranga belted

three fours and a six off Holder in the final over of the innings. Their partnership was a record for the seventh wicket for Sri Lanka against the Caribbean side while Hasaranga's individual score, which came off 60 deliveries and featured seven fours and three sixes, was a record for a Sri Lankan batter at number eight in ODIs. Hasaranga's innings was all the more remarkable in that he was hobbled for much of it by a left leg injury which impacted on his effectiveness as a bowler in defence of the total. West Indies were in complete control of the match before the pair came together in the 32nd over as the visitors' middle-order yet again failed to capitalise on a decent platform. Danushka Gunathilaka and cap-

tain Dimuth Karunaratne put on 68 at the top of the order after they were put in. However, Gunathilaka's demise to pacer Alzarri Joseph for 36 triggered a gradual decline to 151 for six with left-arm spinner Akeal Hosen taking three for 33 while Jason Mohammed snared his sixth wicket of the series by bowling Karunaratne for 31. Seeking to avoid the sweep and earn their first points of the 2023 World Cup qualification table, Sri Lanka brought in seamers Lakmal and Asitha Fernando together with Dasun Shanaka in place of Dushmantha Chameera, Nuwan Pradeep and Oshada Fernando. West Indies gave a debut to fast-medium bowler Anderson Phillip at the expense of Romario Shepherd.

Pele congratulates Ronald after passing goal

SPORTS DESK

Pele congratulated Cristiano Ronaldo after the Portugal forward's hat-trick against Cagliari took him past the Brazilian legend's tally of goals scored in official matches. Ronaldo netted three times inside the opening 32 minutes to take his career total to 770 - three clear of Pele's tally of 767. "Life is a solo flight. Each makes his own journey. And what a beautiful journey you are having. I admire you a lot, I love watching you play and this is no secret to anyone. Congratulations on breaking my record of goals in official matches," Pele posted on Instagram. Some reports suggest this is a world record tally but that is disputed by the Czech Football Association, which claims former Austria and Czechoslovakia striker Josef Bican is football's true all-time top scorer with 821 goals.

Maryam slams NAB

From Page 01

post-arrest bail granted to her in the Chaudhry Sugar Mills case. Maryam said that it was said in the high court that "Maryam Nawaz is giving statements and her bail should be cancelled". "NAB is an institution of revenge," Maryam said and called NAB's claims that she was not cooperating in the watchdog's investigation a "big lie". She said she was detained for three months and asked trivial questions. "People can see that the government's legs are shaking and your hands and feet are swollen, don't fool the people," she said. "NAB is no longer an institution catching corruption, but an institution to harass [Prime Minister] Imran Khan's opponents because he cannot compete in the field" Maryam said. If NAB had caught corruption, it would have caught the flour and sugar thieves, she said. She called for the PTI government to stop hiding behind NAB and the high court. The PML-N leader said that PM Khan is a puppet who was imposed on 220 million people and all of Pakistan saw the result. "He [PM Imran Khan] is the culprit of the people so the PML-N and PDM will not sit with the government," she said. The LHC had released Maryam on November 4, 2019 on bail with direction to surrender her passport to the Registrar's office of the court to show her bonafide since the NAB had feared she could flee the country.

ECP says Daska election

From Page 01

was once again assigned the duty of Daska's central circle in-charge under the alias Zulfiqar Ali for supervising the law and order situation," the commission claimed. The government appointed "selective officers/officials" of law enforcing agencies and violated the election rules. It claimed that "security officials, political leaders from the contesting parties, public officials," and the law enforcement agencies violated the rules and failed to ensure a "conducive environment for honest, fair and transparent elections". The ECP had ordered the re-polling on March 18 but it has been rescheduled to April 10. The commission said that its duty is to "organise and conduct the election and to make such arrangements as are necessary to ensure that the election is conducted honestly, justly, fairly and in accordance with the law and that corrupt practices are guarded against". The voting was held from 8am to 5pm at polling stations across the constituency. Polling at some stations in Daska was halted after two people were killed and seven injured in a firing incident. The next day, the results were withheld after the results of 20 polling stations were delayed. PML-N's Syed Nosheen Iftikhar, who was contesting the election, wrote a letter to the Chief Election Commissioner Sikander Sultan Raja and asked him to order a recount in all polling stations in Daska. She claimed that the results of 335 polling stations came in Friday night, while the staff of 23 stations went missing. She said that a forensic audit of all Daska polling stations should be conducted.

Briefs

Suu Kyi court hearing postponed

YANGON: A block on mobile data networks across Myanmar on Monday scuppered a scheduled video court appearance by ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi, as protesters returned to the streets after the bloodiest day since the military coup six weeks ago.

At least 44 protesters were killed Sunday as security forces cracked down on pro-democracy demonstrations, taking the death toll since the coup to more than 120, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) monitoring group. Myanmar has been in uproar since the putsch, with daily protests demanding a restoration of democracy despite the junta's increasingly forceful attempts to quell dissent.

The court hearing for Suu Kyi, who spent more than 15 years under house arrest during previous military rule, was scheduled for 10 am (0330 GMT) in Myanmar's capital Naypyidaw, but it was postponed until March 24, her lawyer Khin Maung Zaw told AFP. "There's no court hearing because there's no internet and the hearing is conducted by video conference... We cannot do video," he said.

Myanmar authorities have throttled the internet every night for several weeks, normally restoring services in the morning, but monitoring service Netblocks said mobile data networks were kept offline Monday. — APP

Civilians wounded in Syrian missile raids

WEB DESK

ANKARA: Missile attacks in Turkish-controlled northern Syria wounded several civilians, according to Turkey's defence ministry and a monitoring group. The ministry said on Monday that the ballistic missiles were fired from the Kuweires air base in Aleppo — under the control of the Syrian government — and struck al-Bab and Jarablus towns in the north of the war-torn country. The raid "targeted civilian settlements and fuel tankers... civilians were wounded," the ministry said in a tweet, accompanied by a video appearing to show several trucks on fire.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said its sources on the ground heard loud explosions near Jarablus "caused by rocket attacks of unknown origin". Several civilians and workers had been wounded, it added. In March, missile attacks on oil refineries in the same area left four dead and 24 wounded.

The facilities have been the subject of repeated attacks in recent months, although neither Damascus nor ally Moscow — which has troops in Syria — have claimed responsibility for the raids. Ankara had contacted Russian troops to demand a halt to the firing, the defence ministry said on Monday, adding its troops in the region had been "alerted".

Netherlands suspends use of AstraZeneca vaccine

The Netherlands has become the latest country to suspend use of the Oxford-AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine over concerns about possible side effects. The World Health Organization and the European Medicines Agency say there is no indication of a link between the vaccine and reports of blood clots.

Seven countries have so far fully suspended the AstraZeneca vaccinations. Experts say cases of clotting in vaccinated people are lower than the number seen in the general population. About 17 million people in the EU and the UK have received a dose of the vaccine, with fewer than 40 cases of blood clots reported as of last week, AstraZeneca said. The Dutch government said its suspension, which will last until at least 29 March, was a precaution. The Irish Republic took similar action over blood clotting reports in Norway, Denmark, Norway, Bulgaria, Iceland and the Democratic Republic of Congo have all suspended inoculations with the vaccine. — APP



DOHA: Under the patronage of Qatar Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Prime minister and Interior minister Sheikh Khalid bin Khalifa bin Abdul Aziz Thanawi and Interior minister of Pakistan Sheikh Rashid Ahmed inaugurated the 13th edition of Millipole Cater 2021. - DNA

5 killed in anti-coup protests after Myanmar's deadliest day

The court hearing for the Nobel laureate — who spent more than 15 years under house arrest during previous military rule — was scheduled for 10 am (0330 GMT) in Myanmar's capital Naypyidaw, but it was postponed until March 24, her lawyer Khin Maung Zaw

YANGON: At least five anti-coup protesters were killed across Myanmar on Monday as demonstrators returned to the streets after the deadliest day since the military seized power from civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi. At least 44 protesters were killed Sunday as security forces cracked down on pro-democracy demonstrations, taking the death toll since the coup to more than 120, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) monitoring group. Those killed on Monday were shot dead in two locations and

witnesses said the junta was again using lethal force against protesters. "Two men were killed because of gunshots and six others were injured," a witness in Magway region's Aungmye town told AFP, adding that one of the dead was shot in the chest.

"He was right besides me. Another one got shot in his head." The country has been in uproar since the putsch, with daily protests demanding a restoration of democracy despite the junta's increasingly forceful attempts to quell dissent. The bulk of the earlier deaths

on Sunday came from a clash in a garment-producing district in the capital Yangon where multiple Chinese-owned factories were razed, drawing a sharp rebuke Monday from Beijing, which urged Myanmar to "resolutely avoid a recurrence of such incidents". Despite the high death toll, protesters returned to the streets Monday but by afternoon fatalities were also reported in the central city of Myingyan. "Three people, including a woman... with gunshots," said a Myingyan resident, telling AFP that the youngest death was 19 years

old. At least 16 were injured, though "five are in a critical condition," the resident said. Both witnesses who spoke to AFP declined to be named for fear of repercussions.

News of the violence came out in the afternoon due to a block on mobile data networks across Myanmar — which also scuppered a scheduled video court appearance by Suu Kyi. The court hearing for the Nobel laureate — who spent more than 15 years under house arrest during previous military rule — was scheduled for 10 am (0330 GMT) in Myanmar's capital Naypyidaw, but it was

postponed until March 24, her lawyer Khin Maung Zaw told AFP.

"There's no court hearing because there's no internet and the hearing is conducted by video conference... We cannot do video," he said. Myanmar authorities have throttled the internet every night for several weeks, normally restoring services in the morning, but monitoring service Netblocks said mobile data networks were kept offline Monday. Suu Kyi faces at least four charges. Military authorities have also accused her of accepting illegal payments — allegations her

lawyer says are "groundless". Suu Kyi's postponed hearing came a day after violent clashes between security forces and protesters, and the torching of several Chinese-owned factories in a textile-producing district of commercial hub Yangon as many protesters believe Beijing is supportive of the coup.

Six Yangon townships were under martial law by morning — anyone arrested there faces trial by military tribunal rather than civilian courts, with sentences ranging from three years' hard labour to execution. — APP

Azerbaijan launches massive military drills

BAKU: In accordance with the combat training plan for 2021, the Azerbaijani Army started operational-tactical Exercises, Azeri media citing Azerbaijani Defense Ministry.

The exercises held under the leadership of the Minister of Defense involved up to 10,000 military personnel, up to 100 tanks and other armored vehicles, up to 200 missiles and artillery systems of various caliber, multiple launch rocket systems, and mortars, up to 30 military aviation assets, as well as unmanned aerial vehicles for various purposes.

In the exercises conducted in a mountain-wooded area with difficult terrain, the main attention considering the combat experience gained during the Patriotic War is focused on controlling troops, bringing them into the state of combat readiness and regrouping, as well as on improving combat coordination and interoperability between the Army Corps, Rocket and Artillery Troops, aviation and Special Forces. During the exercise, which will last until March 18, the troops will fulfill tasks to fight against terrorist detachments (groups), in particular, illegal armed formations, and to conduct counter-terrorism operations. — DNA

China shares experience for desert locust control

DNA

BEIJING, March 15 (): A Chinese expert shares his experience for desert locust control in Pakistan on a webinar jointly held by China and Pakistan, according to a report published by China Economic Net (CEN).

The report says, Tang Renjian, the minister of the Chinese Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs and Syed Fakhar Imam, the minister of the Pakistani Ministry of National Food Security & Research sent a congratulatory and a video address respectively

for the launch of the locust control training.

At the seminar, Zhang Long, a professor from China Agricultural University, said China and Pakistan are iron brothers, and China would like to help Pakistan deal with the desert locust plague. Zhang is one of the expert team members who traveled to Pakistan to help the desert locust control in February 2020. As Zhang along with the other experts made a field trip across Pakistan then, Zhang made different suggestions for desert locust control according to different situations. Zhang points out that Pun-

jab province is facing the most emergent situation now.

As the nymphs will hatch in the next two weeks, some action must be taken immediately, including digging out eggs and spraying chemicals. Besides specific measures, Zhang also advised Pakistanis to establish a sustainable, high-efficient and long-term management system for the desert locust control. In this system, biological and ecological controls are the main methods. Zhang thought that monitoring and forecast of the locust should be more precise and efficient. Zhang also stressed that

Pakistan should strengthen scientific research in locust biology, ecology and physiology to tackle threats of locust plague. He also advised to train more people for the locust control. The webinar is jointly by relevant departments of China and Pakistan, including the Chinese Embassy in Pakistan, the National Agro-tech Extension and Service Center affiliated to the Chinese Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, the Chinese Ministry of Commerce, the Pakistani Embassy in Beijing and the Pakistani Ministry of National Food Security & Research.



KABUL: Pakistan ambassador to Afghanistan Mansoor Ahmad Khan hosted Pakistani delegation comprising parliamentarians, intellectuals and journalists visiting Afghanistan on CRSS initiative for strengthening multifaceted engagement with Afghanistan. — DNA

Merkel's party suffers setback in regional polls

FOREIGN DESK

BERLIN: German Chancellor Angela Merkel's party has had its worst-ever election result in two key regional votes seen as tests ahead of September's general election. The Christian Democrats have historically enjoyed firm support in Baden-Württemberg and Rhineland-Palatinate and had led opinion polls.

But early results show a marked drop widely blamed on public anger at the response to the coro-

navirus pandemic. Mrs Merkel is due to step down in September, after 16 years in office.

The CDU's poor performance is the first major test for Armin Laschet, who was elected party leader in January. The 60-year-old centrist, however, is not guaranteed to be the party's candidate for chancellor in the election on 26 September. His rival for the role is Markus Söder, leader of the CDU's Bavarian sister party the CSU. The party aims to have the matter settled by late May.

NZ marks 2nd anniversary of mosque attack

DNA

CHRISTCHURCH: Muslim community in New Zealand on Monday marked the second anniversary of the deadly terrorist attack on a mosque and an Islamic center in 2019.

A special prayer ceremony was held at Al Noor Mosque in Christchurch, attended by hundreds of people, including local officials, according to state-run Radio New Zealand (RNZ). "Today I feel sad and peaceful at the same time, sad for those who have left us but grateful that we can all come together again to remember our loved

ones and friends," the RNZ quoted mosque prayer-leader Gamal Fouda as saying at the gathering.

On March 15, 2019, Brenton Tarrant, an Australian white supremacist, killed 51 people and injured 40 more at the Al Noor Mosque and Linwood Islamic Centre. He was sentenced to life in prison in August last year without the possibility of parole, in the first such ruling ever handed down in the island country. Christchurch Mayor Lianne Dalziel also attended the ceremony.

Speaking at the occasion, she said she has been close to the

Turkey will continue to fight against "Islamophobia"

ANKARA: Turkey's Foreign Ministry has issued a press release regarding "15 March International Day to Combat Islamophobia". "On the occasion of the second anniversary of the terrorist attack perpetrated in Christchurch/New Zealand on 15 March 2019, we commemorate with respect and mercy those 51 people who lost their lives, including one Turkish citizen," the Ministry said. The Ministry underlined that Turkey played a leading role in combating Islamophobia and intolerance at international fora and supports the efforts of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in this direction. "Following the terror attack in New Zealand, the Open-Ended Emergency Meeting of the OIC Executive Committee was held on 22 March 2019 in Istanbul at the level of Foreign Ministers upon Turkey's call in her capacity as the then-OIC Summit Chair," the Ministry said, adding that a call was made for raising international awareness on combatting Islamophobia. — DNA

Muslim community through her history as an immigration minister and a mayor who presided over citizenship ceremonies in the country.

"I know some of the families personally, so it's been difficult coming to terms with what's happened," she said. "Some of them came here as refugees and the essence of refugee status is offering people a level of protection they can't get in their own country but we couldn't protect them from the behavior of an extremist, someone who was motivated to carry out a terrorist attack on innocent people as they were praying," she added.

HAMAS condemns Kosovo

DNA

GAZA: HAMAS spokesperson Hazem Qasim has released a statement regarding Kosovo's decision to open an embassy in Jerusalem. "HAMAS vehemently condemns the announcement by the foreign ministry of Kosovo about opening an embassy in occupied Jerusalem," Qasim said, and underlining that this move is a blatant violation of all international resolutions and humanitarian treaties and reflects an appalling bias towards the Zionist occupation. "We believe that this prompted by the wave of normalization between some Arab parties and the Israeli occupation."

"Jerusalem will remain a Palestinian city and its identity will remain Arab, and all such Israeli attempts will not change history," he concluded.

Dutch vote in Covid-dominated election

THE HAGUE: The Netherlands began three days of voting Monday in one of the first major tests of a European government's coronavirus policies, with Prime Minister Mark Rutte expected to win another term in office. With the country still under tight restrictions, some polling stations are open on Monday and Tuesday to give at-risk people a chance to cast their ballots without crowding, ahead of the main voting day Wednesday. Rutte — in power since 2010 and one of Europe's longest-serving leaders — is expected to emerge as head of his fourth coalition government owing to his steady handling of the pandemic. The virus has drowned out previously dominant issues such as immigration, and opinion polls show Rutte's liberal VVD (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy) party with around 25 percent of the vote.

But there is also dissatisfaction, with police using water cannon to break up an anti-Rutte protest on Sunday, and riots against the introduction of a night-time curfew in January. "A lot of people think 'leave Mr Rutte to finish the job' and that's perhaps a good idea, but he has to leave after that," language teacher Lies Eisma, 72, told AFP after voting. "We've seen him for long enough and I am not in agreement with all his measures, and especially not with solving all the problems that we have now in the Netherlands. Those he simply let slide."

Somalia receives first batch of vaccine doses

MOGADISHU: Somalia on Monday received the first shipment of 300,000 doses of Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine to help contain the spread of the COVID-19 in the Horn of African nation. The health ministry said the first shipment will target frontline workers, elderly and people with chronic health conditions and aims to reduce deaths and diseases caused by the pandemic.

"The arrival of the COVID-19 vaccines happens at a critical time as Somalia is now experiencing a new wave of the epidemic. It can be contained if all countries stand together, Somalia included," Fawziya Abikar Nur, minister of health and human services said in a statement issued in Mogadishu. "I call on all health workers and people at high risk who have been prioritized to receive vaccines from this first batch, so we can protect our health workforce, other frontline workers and high risk people," Nur added. The minister said the government has secured enough vaccines from the COVAX Facility to vaccinate at least 20 percent of the population.

Nur said the government is in the process of assessing ways of providing vaccines for more people. "We have strong systems in place to carry out immunization campaigns and enable safe delivery of the COVID-19 vaccines to frontline workers. This first roll-out of the vaccination will be a landmark step in Somalia's fight against COVID-19," she said. She said Somalia has recorded 8,946 confirmed COVID-19 cases including 349 deaths since March 2020. — APP

Briefs

President, first lady get vaccination

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi and First Lady Samina Alvi received shots of COVID-19 vaccine doses in Islamabad on Monday. Speaking on the occasion, he said the vaccine is being administered to senior citizens in Pakistan as per age categories. He said I got myself registered on the Helpline 1166 and got the shots as per my turn. He said the government has introduced an easy and the best mechanism to avoid long queues. The President advised to continue precautionary measures even after the vaccination. He said in the wake of third wave of Covid-19 pandemic, the people should continue wearing face masks, frequent hand washing, and maintaining social distancing, alking to media, the president said the elite across the world had been breaking the queue to get vaccinated but in Pakistan, the government had put in place an efficient mechanism for vaccination of the people on their turn. Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Health Dr Faisal Sultan also accompanied the president and the first lady. "I think the vaccine gives further protection but we will have to take precautions of wearing masks, washing hands and social distancing unless the world fully overcomes the pandemic. Allah knows till how long we will have to do this," he said. Calling the COVID-19 a deadly disease, the president said it affected the elderly more than others and it could only be tackled through precautions.

'Punjab Local Bodies Act attack on SC'

ISLAMABAD: Justice Qazi Faiz Isa said the Punjab Local Bodies Act is like an attack on the Supreme Court of Pakistan and in plain words Punjab government did not want to hold Local government elections. A two-member bench headed by Justice Qazi Faiz Isa on Monday heard the case of local bodies elections. The case has been adjourned for an indefinite time period. "Punjab government, intoxicated with power, wants to separate Punjab from the country," remarked Justice Qazi Faiz. "There is a plan to repeat the East Pakistan tragedy in Punjab as the provincial government is playing with the constitution and the whole country is being ruined," Justice Qazi Faiz Isa remarked. Justice Qazi said that three years have passed since the government came to power but no decision has been taken on the census and doesn't this show the incompetence of the government. The SCP Judge questioned about the state of government being run like this. "The country does not belong to the Punjab government, it belongs to us," Justice Qazi remarked. — DNA

UK sanctions Assad allies

LONDON: The UK imposed fresh sanctions on six allies of Syrian President Bashar Assad on Monday, including his foreign minister, the UK foreign office said. "The Assad regime has subjected the Syrian people to a decade of brutality for the temerity of demanding peaceful reform," British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said. "We are holding six more individuals from the regime to account for their wholesale assault on the very citizens they should be protecting," Raab added. A tweet from the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office showed a video of the destruction and suffering from the decade of war in Syria. "Syrians have suffered horrific violence and conflict for 10 years. The UK has provided vital aid to those in need from the start," the tweet said. "We continue to push for an end to the conflict," it added. — APP

Ample sports strengthen youth's mental and physical ability

Isphanyar Bhandara says Sports builds character and personality in young people and strengthens their mental abilities; 117th MP Bhandara Memorial Polo Cup Final played in Rawalpindi

SPORTS REPORTER

RAWALPINDI: Chief Executive Murree Brewery Company Isphanyar Bhandara has said that sports help in developing the mental and physical abilities of the youth. This builds their character along with improving patience and courage in their personalities, because self-confidence in a person can play an important role in the country's development. He added that the players are assets of the nation and play an important role in promoting sports for the formation of a healthy society. He expressed his views while talking to reporters after distributing prizes in the successful team at the 117th MP Bhandara Memorial Polo Cup Final in Rawalpindi. Eight teams that participated in the pilot event were: In the final ASC Iqbal Team scored 6 goals to beat PAF team by 5-1/2 goals. Ambassador of Sweden, Henrik Persson was the Chief Guest of this event. He appreciated the efforts of the Murree Brewery team for the promotion sports event went on to say that the inaugural M.P. Bhandara Memorial Polo Tournament was held in 1904. Besides, Ambassadors of Morocco and Nepal also attended the event and distributed awards among the players.

(More coverage in the coming issue of CENTRELINE magazine)



Afghan peace common objective of Pak, Qatar: Rashid

DNA

DOHA: Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed says Pakistan and Qatar has immense scope for trade and called for enhancing business ties between the two countries. He was talking to Qatari Prime Minister Khalid bin Khalifa in Doha today (Monday). They also exchange views about Pak-Qatar bilateral relations and trade promotion including increase in Pakistani manpower and internal security issues in Qatar. Talking about regional

situation, Sheikh Rashid Ahmed said sustainable peace in Afghanistan is a long-standing common objective of Pakistan and Qatar and Islamabad appreciates Doha's exemplary role in this regard. He also handed over a special letter from Prime Minister Imran Khan to Khalid bin Khalifa, carrying a goodwill message to the people of both countries. Shaikh Rashid also attended the Milipol Qatar International Exhibition and visited the Pakistani stall and inspected the products. He will return to Islamabad on Wednesday.

Babar takes up reforms with NA speaker

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Advisor to Prime Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Babar Awan on Monday called on Speaker of National Assembly Asad Qaiser to discuss electoral reforms. As per details, Babar Awan, after PM Imran Khan's decision of forming a committee for electoral reforms, met NA Speaker to discuss constitution of a parliamentary committee for the purpose. Babar Awan said that planning is required now for ensuring transparent elections in the future and parliamentary committee will

also be formed for passing open voting bill. He further said that PM Imran wants to end reservations on electoral process once and for all and the proposed legislation is in interest of all political parties. Both PTI leaders also discussed resolution by Gilgit Baltistan assembly regarding provincial status. Babar Awan said that a constitutional amendment is required to give the region status of a province. PM Imran Khan has directed Babar Awan and Asad Qaiser to review the situation and brief him about constitutional requirements in this regard.

Don't take current wave of virus lightly, Buzdar warns people

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Usman Buzdar on Monday warned the public against taking the current wave of the coronavirus pandemic lightly while directing the authorities to ensure strict compliance of SOPs across the province. In a statement, CM Buzdar described the current wave of the virus is "more dangerous" than the previous. COVID-19 cases have spiked sharply in the country's largest province during the last two weeks. According to government data, 1,191 cases of coronavirus were reported in Punjab in the last 24 hours, out of 2,253 cases in total reported from all over Pakistan. The provincial government has also reimposed restrictions in order to contain the virus and enforced smart lockdowns in various cities, while educational institutes in seven cities have been shut for two weeks from today. Buzdar said there would no compromise on the safety of people and that it is a top priority for the government to ensure that the lives of

the people are secured. The chief minister directed the police and local administration to ensure the closure of markets and bazaars according to the new timings announced by the government. He said that the government is aware of the problems faced by traders, but asked them to prioritise people's lives as these measures were necessary. "Due to flagrant violation of COVID-19 SOPs, the number of cases is increasing along with the death toll," he noted. CM Buzdar also urged the public to help the administration in observing safety guidelines. The national tally of total



active COVID-19 cases was recorded at 22,038 on Monday, with 2,253 more people testing positive for the virus and 1,307 people recovering from the disease during the last 24 hours. A total of 29 corona patients also lost their lives during the past 24 hours, 26 of whom were under treatment in hospitals. Three were out of hospitals in quarantine at home, according to the latest update issued by the National Command and Operations Centre (NCO). During the last 24 hours, most of the deaths occurred in Punjab, followed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Of the total 29 deaths, 16 of the deceased had been on ventilator support. The maximum ventilators were occupied in four major areas, including Multan 28%, Islamabad 38%, Peshawar 23% and Lahore 34%. The maximum oxygen beds (oxygen providing facility other than ventilators) were also occupied in four major areas: Gujrat 59%, Peshawar 45%, Islamabad 36% and Lahore 30%. Around 245 ventilators were occupied elsewhere in the country, while no COVID affected person was on ventilator in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Gilgit Baltistan (GB) and Balochistan.

US helps increase electricity revenue

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: The United States Mission to Pakistan, along with the Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO), celebrated the successful completion of a pilot project to help decrease electricity theft and increase power revenue in Peshawar. Under the project, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) installed 157 kilometers of anti-theft cable and 5,000 smart meters in various areas covered by PESCO, including Chamkani subdivision, which had been reporting approximately 60 percent revenue loss, or 1.3 billion PKR per year, due to theft, billing problems, and power supply issues.

Smart meters operating on a central wireless internet system make accurate billing easier and improve customer service. Additionally, USAID introduced an innovative online transformer monitoring system that will enable PESCO to conduct real-time energy accounting and proactively take corrective actions. This is a first-of-its-kind system for a Pakistani government-owned power distribution company. "With the dependency on technology in today's world, energy has become even more important to our daily lives. That's why our partnership with the Government of Pakistan in the energy sector is so important and why, together, we seek new ways to secure the country's energy resources," said

USAID Mission Director Julie Koenen. "Because of its success, the Pakistani government now has the opportunity to expand this project to other parts of PESCO and potentially other distribution companies to increase revenue throughout the country." The handover ceremony was organized by USAID's Sustainable Energy for Pakistan (SEP) Project, a four-year technical assistance initiative. Through SEP, USAID is supporting the Government of Pakistan's efforts to deliver financially sustainable energy services to the people of Pakistan. The U.S. government's partnership with Pakistan's energy sector spans many decades and covers a wide range of projects to meet Pakistan's ambitions toward energy modernization.

Pak, US for deepening ties in education, culture areas

He highlighted the steps taken by the ministry to keep the educational process continue during the Covid-19 pandemic i.e launching of Teleschool, Radio school, E-Taleem portal, initiative of distance learning programme and online contents development

ZUBAIR AHMED

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and United States (US) on Monday have expressed the desire to deepen ties through consistent engagements in areas of education and culture. It was agreed during a called on meeting held here between the US Charge d' Affairs in Pakistan Angela Aggeler and Federal Minister for Education, Professional Training, National Heritage and Culture Shafqat Mahmood. Shafqat said relationships of both countries in the education sector is very close and US scholarship programmes in various formats have helped Pakistan in building capacity. He particularly mentioned that

the Fulbright programme was enormously beneficial in faculty development which has been very helpful in improving standards of education. The two sides also discussed affects of Covid-19 pandemic on educational sector, universities partnership programmes, role of technology in education, Single National Curriculum and collaboration on technical and skill areas. Shafqat said relationships of both countries in the education sector is the best in the world and people of both countries are learning from each other. He highlighted the steps taken by the ministry to keep the educational process continue during the Covid-19 pandemic i.e launching of Teleschool,

Radio school, E-Taleem portal, initiative of distance learning programme and online contents development. Apprising the use of technology experiments in education, steps for enhancing stable

internet connectivity across the country, teachers training and madrassah reforms programme, he remarked, the results of these far reaching reforms shall be seen in next few years and will change the

landscape of education and learning in the country. Angela Aggeler, while talking the bilateral relationships of two countries, said President Joe Biden is very much familiar with Pakistan so the relations between two countries will be ever stronger in the future. While talking to the regional situation, Shafqat said stable Afghanistan is in our vital national interests and we shall extend all possible cooperation for lasting peace in Afghanistan. The both sides reaffirmed their firm resolve to further strengthen their relations through consistent engagements. The meeting was also attended by the federal secretary education Farah Hamid Khan.



PPP against impeachment of Sanjrani

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has opposed Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) vice president Maryam Nawaz's proposal to impeach newly elected Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani, said sources. Maryam Nawaz's proposal was second by Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) Chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman, but the PPP decided against it. Well informed sources said that the PPP wants to utilise all the constitutional and legal options before the impeachment of Sadiq Sanjrani and has advised the PML-N leadership not to go in haste. "Decisions made in haste can prove harmful." The defeat can result in more political damage to the PDM, the sources within the PPP said. Sources claimed that the Pakistan People's Party leadership will utilise other means if it fails to get justice from the court. It is to be noted that the 11-parties opposition alliance, Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) has finalized its plea challenging the victory of Sadiq Sanjrani as chairman Senate after seven votes cast in favor of Yousuf Raza Gilani were rejected. The PDM has stated in its plea that a stamp on the name of the candidate, cannot lead to rejection of the vote. Seven votes cast in Gilani's favor were deliberately rejected by the Presiding Officer Syed Muzaffar Hussain Shah.

Sindh govt issues lockdown directives till April 15

KARACHI: Sindh government on Monday announced to change market and marriage hall timings as well as directed for 50 percent attendance in all public and private offices under work-from-home formula with immediate effect till April 15 to control the spread of Covid-19 in the province. The provincial government issued the new Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in pursuance of the directions of the National Command and Control Centre (NCCO) and in exercise of powers under section 3 (1) of Sindh Epidemic Diseases Act 2014. According to the Sindh government's order, all commercial and businesses including markets, shopping malls, marriage halls etc to remain open at 6a.m. and will close at 10p.m except essential services like medical stores, clinics, hospitals as well as petrol pumps, bakeries or milk shops and restaurants etc. The provincial government has ordered for 50 percent work-from-home formula in all public and private offices of the province. Amusement parks will be closed by 6p.m. As per earlier decisions only outdoor events or marriages are allowed with upper limit of 300 persons till 10 p.m under defined SOPs. — APP

India records worst single-day spike

DNA

NEW DELHI: India has recorded 26,291 new coronavirus cases, its highest single-day spike this year, taking the total caseload to 11,385,339, according to official data. The number of deaths linked with COVID-19 increased to 158,725 with 118 more fatalities being recorded on the day, the federal health ministry update said on Monday. India, which has the largest virus caseload after the United States and Brazil, saw a downward trend in infections at the end of 2020, but the numbers have been rising again in recent weeks. The western state of Maharashtra, which has been a virus hotspot since the outbreak last year, accounted for 16,620 new infections. The number of infections on Monday was the highest daily rise in 85 days since December 20 when as many as 26,624 new infections were recorded, according to data on the Johns Hopkins University website.