



Islamabad POST

Monday, March 29, 2021

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

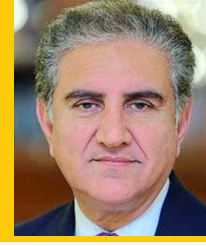
Price Rs. 20

Nowruz promotes peace, solidarity, says Begum Alvi

Detailed News On Page-08

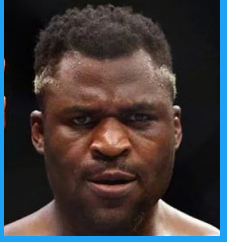
Pak to support Saudi Arabia at all forums: FM

Detailed News On Page-08



Ngannou wins heavyweight title of UFC

Detailed News On Page-06



Briefs

Govt to make Pak a welfare state

IBRAR KHAN

ISLAMABAD: Speaking in the housing telethon Senator Shibli Faraz said that Prime Minister Imran Khan is committed to make Pakistan a welfare state. He said that Prime Minister's scheme for low cost housing is aimed at provide housing facilities to the common people. He said that the success of the scheme depends on the role of the banks. The government is ensuring that banks facilitate the people without any difficulties. Governor State Bank Raza Baqir, President NBP and Chairman NPHA participated in the telethon.

Action to be taken against SOP violaters

STAFF REPORT

SIALKOT: Special Assistant to the Punjab Chief Minister on Information Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan on Sunday has told that suggestion regarding imposing complete ban on holding marriage ceremonies across the province is under consideration. Addressing a press conference in Sialkot, the special assistant said that wearing a facemask has been declared necessary and strict action will be taken against the violaters. She said that coronavirus pandemic can be dealt by following standard operating procedures (SOPs).

PPP was ready for long march

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader Sherry Rehman on Sunday has said that her party was ready to hold peaceful long march and protest against the government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). Addressing a press conference, the PPP senator said that her party doesn't believe in the politics of resignation. Earlier, PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that Senate opposition leader was PPP's right, no one should object on this adding that PML-N candidate was controversial in our party.

PRIME MINISTER TO PEOPLE

No lockdown but adhere to SOPs strictly

PM Imran Khan, who contracted COVID-19 last Saturday, was said to be coping well and ready to resume work soon; changes in the cabinet also on cards

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan has appealed to the people to avoid gatherings of any sort as the country grapples with an intensifying third wave of the coronavirus pandemic. "I exercised precaution for a whole year. I never went to any wedding or even to a restaurant to eat. I practiced social distancing and kept my mask on for the most part," the premier said in his video message telecast live on the national hook-up. "So I was safe. I was among those who remained safe in the first two waves, he said. The premier said that in the Senate election, however, he "did not exercise as much caution and so caught the virus". PM Imran Khan, who contracted COVID-19 last Saturday, was said to be coping well and ready to resume work soon, in an update provided by his aide on health, Dr Faisal Sultan. It is expected that the Prime Minister will undertake cabinet reshuffle once he resumes his duties. Federal Information minister and a few other ministers may be replaced. The premier, as he continued his address to the nation, said that today he cannot stress enough the need to exercise safety precautions.

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PM Imran hails Naya Pakistan housing scheme

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan has said that government's housing scheme for under privileged and low income people will boost the construction sector and thirty allied industries, which will create wealth in the country to pay back its debts. Virtually addressing the Housing Telethon, he said that it is for the first time in Pakistan that low income people are being provided mortgage financing to own their houses by paying instalments in place of monthly rent. Prime Minister said that the government is trying its best to give preference to the widows and Special persons. Prime Minister said that once the people will start constructing their houses under the scheme it will boost the construction industry and thirty other industries associated with it, which in turn will create wealth in the country. He said that Pakistan is burdened with the debts and wealth creation in the economy will help Pakistan repay its debts.

Pakistan, Italy vow to expand relations

The Italian ambassador said that he had visited many cities in Pak and found a home-like atmosphere



SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

RAWALPINDI: Punjab Minister for Literacy and Informal Basic Education Raja Rashid Hafeez has said that the people of Pakistan and Italy are bound in deep relations of friendship and brotherhood. These relations are being further strengthened by the cooperation of the people of the two countries in various fields. He said this while talking to Italian Ambassador to Pakistan Andreas Ferrarese. The Italian ambassador visited the provincial minister's residence in Satellite Town yesterday and discussed issues of mutual cooperation in the social sector. Expressing good wishes for Andreas Ferrarese and the people of Italy, the Provincial Minister said that we are grateful for Italy's support for the development of the social sector and our bilateral cooperation will continue in the future. On the occasion, the Italian ambassador said that he had visited many cities in Pakistan and found a home-like atmosphere and he does not feel alienated in Pakistan. He said that he wished to see the development and prosperity of the people of Pakistan and want to see Pakistan in the ranks of developed nations. Later on the Italian ambassador, along with the provincial minister, distributed books and bags among

Continued on Page 06

India spreading fake news about Pakistan for fifteen years

Ambassador Zaheer Janjua says full investigation report shows that the Indian networks controlled more than ten NGOs that were accredited to the UN but were inactive

DNA

BRUSSELS: The Brussels NGO EU Disinfo Lab dropped a small bomb in international diplomatic circles at the end of December last year: their research showed that India spread false news about Pakistan for 15 years. What does that mean for the fragile relationship between India and sworn nemesis Pakistan? Zaheer Aslam Janjua, Pakistani ambassador for the EU, Belgium and Luxembourg, explains the Pakistani position. The channels and media networks were ac-



tive in Brussels and Geneva, from where they broadcast "news" to the world. The aim was mainly to portray Pakistan in a negative light. The full investigation report shows that the Indian networks controlled more than ten NGOs that were accredited to the United Nations but were inactive. That way they could go about their business undisturbed. In addition, the Indian networks also registered more than 550 domain names for websites and employed fake journalists.

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GILGIT: Ambassador of European Union Androulla Kaminara enjoyed her recent visit to Gilgit-Baltistan. She visited Hunza and the Passu mountain range and the Passu bridge. She felt proud to have crossed it. She found wonderful friendly people in these areas. - DNA

Maryam, Fazl halt political activities



ABID RAZA

LAHORE: PML-N vice president Maryam Nawaz and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman were reportedly unwell on Sunday, with both catching a fever. Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman has been suffering from a fever for the past two days," said JUI-F sources. "He is currently at his Dera Ismail Khan residence." Sources said the JUI-F chief had gotten himself tested for coronavirus and the result came back negative. "Maulana Fazlur Rehman has suspended political activities [for the time being] as he is unwell," said sources. "Doctors have advised him to rest."

4767 new covid-19 cases reported

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has reported 57 deaths in the last 24 hours by novel coronavirus as the number of positive cases has surged to 654,591. The nationwide tally of fatalities has jumped to 14,215 on Sunday. According to the latest figures by the NCOC 4,767 persons tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 24 hours. Punjab remains the worst-hit province in terms of deaths followed by Sindh and KPK. Till now 264,607 coronavirus cases have been confirmed in Sindh, 212,918 in Punjab 84,609 in KPK, 55,594 in ICT, 19,497 in Balochistan, 12,367 in AJK and 4,999 in GB.

NCOC bans indoor, outdoor gatherings

ZUBAIR AHMED

ISLAMABAD: The National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) has announced imposing lockdown in Covid-19 hotspots from March 29 along with a complete ban on all kinds of indoor and outdoor activities from April 5. This was decided in a special meeting of the NCOC headed by Planning Minister Asad Umar and attend-

ed by all provincial chief secretaries. The NCOC will be providing maps of the latest COVID-19 hotspots to the provinces. It will also empower the provinces to clamp lockdown restrictions even before the time. It ordered that "all kind of gatherings (indoor / outdoor) will be banned with immediate effect." "This will include all social, cultural, political, sports and other events," the NCOC cleared.

All kinds of political, cultural, sports and social gatherings are banned from March 29 (Monday). All weddings including outdoor or indoor are banned from April 5. However, weddings, including both indoor and outdoor, will be banned from 5th April onward. The provinces will be at liberty to implement restrictions as per the situation on ground, the NCOC said.

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Pak, UAE agree to ease travel

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates have agreed to facilitate the ease of travel between the two countries, strengthen cooperation in diverse fields, and reinforce mutual support in multilateral organisations, media reported on Sunday. During a telephonic conversation,



Continued on Page 06

Thank You



Sarmad Ali
President / Jang Group



Nazafreen Saigol
Secy General / Dawn Group



Is indebted to All Pakistan Newspapers Society for electing CENTRELINE as Member of the Executive Committee

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Serena Hotels host Nowruz event in style; Nine countries take part - Page 08

Briefs

Shazia terms Bilawal's tone as democratic

DNA

KARACHI: Central Information Secretary Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarian and MNA Shazia Atta Marri has said that the tone of PML-N Vice President Maryam Nawaz against PPP was regretful in her yesterday's press conference while PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari kept political and democratic tone. She said it was very undesirable when PLM(N) leadership used "selected" word for Pakistan Peoples Party. Shazia Marri said that PPP leadership remained in jails for years, sustained exiles and rendered many valuable sacrifices and it is very sad that PPP was taunting with term "Selected" by PML (N) leaders. This she said while holding a joint press conference with Sherry Rehman, Mousa Bux Chandio and other PPP leaders at Bilawal House hereon today. Ms Marri said that we know how to respond to such taunting words. She added that PPP was blamed for setting up on a deal but someone else had benefited through a deal. Shazia Marri said that we don't want to prolong the fights, but we want existence of serious politics in the country.

Faisalabad smart lockdown imposed

DNA

FAISALABAD: On the recommendations of District Administration, Primary and Secondary Health Department Punjab has imposed Smart Lock Down in 19 areas of Faisalabad City. The decision has been taken due to constant increase in positivity percentage and prevalence of Covid 19. It was further informed that controlled entry and exit in the areas of district identified as hotspots of Covid disease. The 19 place are Kohinoor Town, Khayaban Colony 1,2&3 Canal road, Hassan Vilas, Eden Valley, Eden Garden, Eden Garden Executive block, Saeed colony 1 and 2, Peoples colony 1, Officers colony land 2, Abdullah garden, Madina Town, Model city, Tech town, Amin town, Zia Town, Raza Town, Raza garden, Faisal Town and Faisal garden where all markets, shopping malls, restaurants, offices (public and private) shall remain closed till 9th April. There shall be a complete ban on movement of people to and from these areas by public and private transport except for limited movement of one person per vehicle to and from the exempted localities, complete ban on gathering for social, religious and any other purpose however grocery stores, general/karyana stores, Ata Chakki, fruits and vegetable shops, tandoors and patrol pumps would remain open from 9 am to 7 pm 7 days a week. Milk shops, chicken and meat/fish shops from 7 to 7 and medical services points and Medi-Cal store would remain open 24 hours.

ICT admin de-sealed sub-sectors

SHAHEEN HANIF

ISLAMABAD: Office of the District Magistrate Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) on Sunday de-sealed sub-sectors after detailed survey, contact tracing, ground surveillance and testing of suspected individuals. According to notification, the residential areas of sub-sectors including G-6/2, G-10/4, F-11/1 were de-sealed on 5 pm today. The administration also decided to de-seal I-8/4 and I-10/2. However, the de-sealed areas will be regulated by the prevailing orders regarding COVID-19 SOPs issued from time to time. In case of any violation of SOPs, strict action will be taken against the delinquents under the relevant provisions of law. Moreover, the concerned Assistant Commissioners, ICT, ICT shall ensure compliance of all SOPs.

Sahara Trust to undertake next welfare project in Faisalabad

Abrar ul Haq said that Pakistan is included among top countries with maximum motility rate of cancer patient. He said that annually around 3 lac people die of cancer and their last stage is very painful particularly in case of malignant cancer

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: Sahara Trust for Life (STFL) will undertake its next mega welfare project in Faisalabad after the completion of cancer hospital in Narowal, said Mr. Abrar-ul-Haq Chairman STFL and Hilal Ahmar Pakistan. He was addressing a fundraising musical dinner in Circle Club here yesterday. He said that Pakistan is included among top countries with maximum motility rate of cancer patient. He said that annually around 3 lac people die of cancer and their last stage is very painful particularly in case of malignant cancer. He said that he has decided to establish a dedicated pain management department in this proposed cancer hospital in Narowal which needs heavy investment for the purchase of latest electronic-medical appliances. He also announced to give due representation to the Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) in the Board of Directors



(BOD) of the STFL so that they could ensure transparency in its expenditure in addition to deciding to launch new welfare projects. On the request of President FCCI Engineer Hafiz Ihtasham Javed Mr.

Abrar-ul-Haq categorically announced that the next project of STFL will be launched in Faisalabad. "It will ensure best and latest medical treatment to the needy segments", he added.

Earlier on the appeal of Engineer Hafiz Ihtasham Javed the local industrialists and businessmen announced to donate Rs.20 million plus for the under completion cancer hospital. He said that the business

community of Faisalabad is very generous and will also donate for the next project to be established in Faisalabad. Mian Muhammad Adrees former President FPCCI also appreciated the mar-

velous services offered by the STFL and presented a bouquet to Mr. Abrar-ul-Haq. The musical dinner was attended by a large number of businessmen and philanthropists.

Hashoo Group observes Earth Hour nationwide



ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: In a bid to participate in the global movement to conserve energy and protect the environment against the harmful effects of global warming, Hashoo Group observed the Earth Hour

at all of its hotels across Pakistan. Hashoo Group are the owners and operators of the five-star Pearl-Continental Hotels, Marriott Hotels, as well as the Hotel One brands in Pakistan. In solidarity with worldwide efforts to conserve

energy and protect the environment, the hotels switched off major power sources from 8:30 pm to 9:30 pm on Saturday, 27th March 2021. Earth Hour first began in 2007 in Australia in an attempt to conserve energy and combat global warming. Only 2 million resi-

dents and local businesses in Sydney took part in it. The next year 35 countries took part in it, and now over 100 countries participate in this globally. In 2019, 188 countries participated in it. The observance of Earth Hour is important, although many wonder how just 1 hour makes any difference. But believe it or not, it makes a lot of difference. It creates awareness, to show people that it is possible to survive without all the electronic gizmos and energy-consuming gadgets we have grown so accustomed to. By cutting back, people can make a huge difference and can take part in the battle against global warming. And millions of tons of energy is consumed worldwide when at this hour, all the world, unites to observe and celebrate Earth Hour 2021.

CDA takes charge of F-6 Sports Center for maintenance



STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The management of the Capital Development Authority (CDA) has taken charge of the F-6 Multi-Purpose Sports Center for maintenance. While the renovation of the said sports center is in the final stages. Due to lack of proper maintenance, the said center was getting dilapidated. However, on the special instructions of CDA management, renovation of F-6 Multi Purpose Sports Center has been started. The CDA has also taken charge of the said center for maintenance. It should be noted that the said multi-purpose sports center is a state of the art center. Where citizens find sports such as tennis, basketball, football field, walking, jogging track and skating rink under one roof. The Astro turf football field is also being repaired to cater to the needs and hobbies of the city's sports. The state-of-the-art acrylic surface is being prepared for skating rings at the said Multipurpose Sports Center.

Polio eradication drive kicks off in Faisalabad

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: The next Polio Eradication Campaign in Faisalabad district would continue from 29 March to 2 April and in the district 1.327 million children up to the age of five years would be administered polio drops and 3549 teams would perform duty and all necessary arrangements had been made finalized in this regard. Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ali was informed during the meeting of District Polio Eradication Committee. CEO Health Dr. Bilal Ahmed and other officers of various departments were also present. Deputy Commissioner said that all relevant departments should performed

their duty with vigilantly so that 100% targets should be achieved. He said that all arrangements and implementation should be done according to micro-plan so that the weaknesses and shortcomings could be rectified. He clarified that every round of polio was important therefore, awareness of parents would continue during the campaign. He said that all arrangements should be made finalize in tehsil level also and no negligence would be tolerated in this regard. He said that he himself would monitored the campaign. CEO briefed the house on final arrangements of next Polio campaign and said that duty roster has been issued in this regard.



PESHAWAR: Ambassador Schlagheck is totally amazed by Karachi's vibrant art scene! He visited the Canvas Gallery and was impressed by the intensity of the different art works exhibited there. He was equally impressed by the dedicated work and creativity of future generations of Pakistani artists at Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture. - DNA

Hotels owners demand indoor services

M Akram Farid further said that until the Covid-19 epidemic can be controlled, the govt should give all tax exemptions on the income of Three star and Four star hotels

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: The government has not given any relief to the hotel and service industry in the current Covid-19 pandemic. The hotel industry has borne the burden of 15,000 foreign travelers and temporarily accommodated foreign travelers in its hotels. The spread of the corona virus over the past year has also severely affected the hotel industry, leaving millions of hotel and restaurant workers unemployed and their stoves cold, but due to the government's inconsistent policies. This very important sector related to tourism is dying on its own and there is no department of the government is ready to listen their grievances. There is a need for the

government and concerned agencies to take sensible steps and take immediate practical steps in this regard. These views were expressed by the President of Hotels and Motels Association Islamabad Rawalpindi and Northern Areas. M. Akram Farid made these remarks during an emergency meeting. While speaking he said that government should give relief package to the Hotel industry and create facilities. M Akram Farid further said that until the Covid-19 epidemic can be controlled, the government should give all tax exemptions on the income of Three star and Four star hotels. He said that like other business sectors, the hotel industry has also been affected but it is unfortunate that the government has not given any relief to this

industry. Due to credit sale, sales tax and bed tax are being paid by the hotels out of their pockets. Due to Covid-19, business activities in hotels have been reduced to 30 percent. Senior Vice President (SVP) Haji Gul Afridi said that 5 to 6 million people in Pakistan are associated with hotel industry but the government is cracking down on this sector with various measures which are intolerable in all respects. Vice President (VP) Tariq Javed Malik said that tourism sector and hotels are inseparable. Where Covid-19 has shaken the country's economy, people have become unemployed but the government has forced the sector to its knees which contributes more to GDP which is not encouraging. Finance Secretary Haji Naem Afzal said

in his opinion the hotel industry urges the government to reduce the sales tax and bed tax rates in the current situation so that the industry can survive, as hotel users move to flats and guest houses due to the 21 per cent tax. In addition, hotels that have not yet been able to file taxes should be given a respite until conditions improve. Chaudhry Tassaduq Husain said that sales tax should be levied on hotels like restaurants at 7.5 percent and bed tax which was earlier one rupee per bed has been increased to five percent of room rent in July 2019 for hotels in Islamabad. In addition, property tax and water bills of 2019 and 2020 should be waived. Senior member Chaudhry Riaz said that relief should be given in electricity

and gas bills. He said that hotels have sided with the government in difficult times and in this regard, a very important sector is being overlooked. Meanwhile, Senior Joint Secretary Yousuf Awan said that foreigners are welcome in Pakistan for the tourist season from May to August. The process of booking and reservation of tourists is completed by March, but this time due to the Corona Emergency, the booking of foreign tourists is almost non-existent and what was already done is now being canceled. In the meeting, members of the Hotel and Motels Association, members and people associated with the hotel industry also presented their valuable views and expressed hope that their problems will be addressed.

DC chairs anti corona meeting

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: The meeting of Coordination Committee for anti Corona measures was held under the chairmanship of Divisional Commissioner Saqib Manan. RPO Raja Riffat Mukhtar, Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ali, Vice Chancellor Faisalabad Medical University Prof. Dr. Zafar Ali Chaudhry, Additional Commissioner Coordination Imran Raza Abbasi, Director Health Services Dr. Amanullah, CEO Health Dr. Bilal Ahmad, Medical Superintendents Allied, District Headquarters, Dr. Mushtaq Sipra, Asif Hameed Salimi and other officers of Health Department were present. During the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner apprised about the details of third wave of corona and its intensity. He informed that 25232 tests were taken and 2763 were positive since March 1. He further informed that implementation of SOPs in markets, bazaars and public places during the current situation of Corona epidemic besides distribution of face masks and implementation of other anti-precautionary measures. He said that complete lock down on Friday and Saturday is being implemented however violations have been reported from marriage ceremonies and district govt has decided to write Punjab Health department for re evaluation of the SoPs of marriage events so the intensity of corona could be stopped and micro smart lock down would also imposed in the high risk areas. Moreover DC said that 613 Shopping Malls, Resurants, marriage halls and private schools have been sealed in last 12 days for non compliance of corona SoPs.

Sindh reports no death, 282 cases of covid

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Fortunately no death stemming from Coronavirus reported, however 282 new cases emerged when 9,140 tests were conducted. This was stated by Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah in a statement issued here from CM House on Sunday. Mr. Murad Ali Shah said that fortunately no death was reported on today. He added that till the number death and was 4,491. The Chief Minister said that 9,140 samples were tested which detected 282 cases that constituted 3.0 percent current detection rate. He added that so far 3,271,748 tests have been conducted against which 264,888 cases were diagnosed, of them 96.6 percent or 255,769 patients have recovered, including 98 overnight. The CM said that currently 4,682 patients were under treatment, of them 4,337 were in home isolation, 8 at isolation centers and 283 at different hospitals. He added that the condition of 250 patients was stated to be critical, including 38 shifted to ventilators.

366 acre agri land retrieved

RAHIM YAR KHAN: On the direction of Punjab Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar, during the last four days, the district administrations had intensified crackdown on land grabbers and got vacated over 367 acres of government agricultural land worth Rs 615 million. The cases against 36 occupants were also registered while one had been arrested. Deputy Commissioner Dr Khuram Shehzad said that indiscriminate action was being taken against the elements occupying state land in the district and cases were being also registered against the land grabbers. He said that during the last four days, 36 cases had been registered against the grabbers in all the four tehsils while applications for registration of more cases had been sent to the concerned police stations by the Assistant Commissioners. He said that while taking action against the illegal occupation, the district administration had retrieved 1,439 acres of agricultural land costing more than Rs 2 billion adding that the administration would not take any leniency in this regard. - APP

Briefs

HEC calls for 'Research Proposals' under NRP project 2021

SHAHEEN HANIF

ISLAMABAD: The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has called for 'Research Proposals' under its three-year National Research Programme for Universities (NRP) 2021. According to the official sources, the amount of funding for the project will range up to PKR 20 million with a maximum project duration of three years. The HEC, in that regard, has invited applications from faculty members of public and private sector universities/degree awarding institutions to submit proposals in basic and applied research that will be selected competitively using a merit-based and transparent evaluation and selection process. Highlighting the key features of the programme, the sources told APP that the NRP is a flagship 'Research Programme' of the HEC for funding research grants on competitive merit for high quality and promising scientific research projects that demonstrate strategic relevance and impact to local industry and society. For further information regarding the proposal submission, requirements and the evaluation process, the applicants are encouraged to visit www.hec.gov.pk/site/nrp. The HEC has announced the April 30, 2021 as deadline for full project proposal submission.

PNCA to support artist's community

RAJA PERVAIZ

ISLAMABAD: Director General Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA), Dr. Fouzia Saeed has said PNCA has decided to continue online cultural programs to support artist's community, due to the current situation of third wave of COVID-19. Talking to media she said, "PNCA was making efforts to promote folk artists through online cultural events in the third wave of COVID-19 pandemic". She said they have taken the decision as the artist community had faced many financial issues due to the postponement of many cultural events. Renowned folk singer Qurban Niazi said the first phase of COVID-19 pandemic was worsened for the artist's community as there were lockdown and restrictions. He said later situation was improved but now again due to third wave of COVID-19 pandemic the artist's community were facing financial problems. Another artist Iqbal Ali a renowned drummer said due to COVID-19 pandemic, the artist's community had gone through very difficult time during last year in 2020.

Artists to submit entries for painting exhibition

ISLAMABAD: Artists are asked to send images of their art master pieces for "Arjuman Faisal Painting Award (APA) 2021" till May 05 with Rs. 100 processing fee, copy of computerized national identity card and a photograph. The award was announced by Gallery 6 in collaboration with its partners. According to details, the first winner will be given cash prize of Rs. 300,000, second Prize of Rs. 200,000 and third winner of Rs. 100,000. While merit prize of Rs. 50,000 will also be given to the best nominee. Curator of Gallery 6, Dr. Arjuman Faisal told APP that the competition was only for Pakistani citizens, adding that artist must be between 25 to 40 years of age (born between January 1981 to December 1996). "An artist can submit only one painting executed in 2020 or 2021. Any image digitally or mechanically produced and drawings only (graphite/charcoal/ pencil, etc.) will not be included in this competition" he added. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Representatives of restaurants located in the twin-cities holding a protest demonstration to condemn ban on the outdoor dining. According to reports the local administration has allowed them to operate for next 10 more days even on weekends. - DNA

Massive campaign to implement SOPs

IBRAR KHAN

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad Muhammad Hamza Shafiqat Sunday announced to launch a massive campaign for strict enforcement of the standard operating procedures (SOPs) in the federal capital as he was recovered from the coronavirus. In a tweet, he also announced his parents' recovery from the coronavirus, extending gratitude to the people, who had prayed for him and the family's safety. "I and my parents have tested negative for COVID Alhamdulillah. Jazak Allah for all the prayers. Starting massive campaign for controlling Covid in Islamabad from right now," he tweeted. The DC Islamabad, as well as, his parents contracted the coronavirus a couple of weeks ago which was announced on the twitter, a micro-blogging site, from his official account.

IESCO issues power suspension schedule

DNA

ISLAMABAD: 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 29th March from 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM, Kohistan, Kashif Gul, Mix Industry, Model Town, Industrial Estate, Ghazi Kohli, Jalala, Mushtaq Hussain Feeders, from 10:00 AM to 12:00 Noon, Hussainabad, Margalla 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.

CDA to start development work in industrial areas

Sardar Yasir emphasised that CDA must further improve street lights, sewerage systems, waste management and development of public toilets across all main areas of Islamabad

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of local industrialists and trade representatives led by Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) held a meeting with Amir Ali Ahmed, Chairman CDA and apprised him of the key issues of industrial areas in Islamabad along with other development issues in the federal capital. Ms. Fatma Azim Senior Vice President, Abdul Rehman Khan Vice President ICCL, Mian Akram Farid Chairman Founder Group, Abdul Rauf Alam, Convener ICCL CDA Committee, Tariq Sadiq President Islamabad Industrial Association, Muhammad Ahmed former President ICCL and Omair Khattak Executive Board Member ICCL were part of the delegation. Syed Munawar Shah Member Engineering and Faisal Naeem Director (Technical) were also present in the meeting. Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, President



ICCI said that the CDA Board in its meeting held in August 2020 had recommended the rationalization of lease extension fee for industrial plots @ Rs. 100,000/- per kanal, but the decision was not implemented as yet due to which industrial growth and expansion was

facing problems since investors were uncertain about the outcome of the policy. He urged that CDA should approach the National Coordination Committee on Housing, Construction & Development (NCHCD) for endorsement of this decision

so that it could be implemented to facilitate the lease renewals of industrial plots. He also highlighted the severity of parking issues in the local markets of Islamabad and stressed that CDA should auction plots for construction of multi-storey parking plazas across Islama-

bad to address this long standing issue. These parking plazas can be built on BOT basis and would also help generate additional revenue for CDA. Sardar Yasir emphasised that CDA must further improve street lights, sewerage systems, waste management and development of public toilets across all main areas of Islamabad. Ms. Fatma Azim Senior Vice President, Abdul Rehman Khan Vice President ICCL, Mian Akram Farid Chairman Founder Group, Tariq Sadiq President Islamabad Industrial Association and Muhammad Ahmed former President ICCL said that during Covid-19, SBP had launched refinance schemes for industries at low credit cost, but without lease renewal of industrial plots, banks were not extending these schemes to industries. They urged that CDA should expedite the implementation of its Board decision for lease renewals of industrial plots @ Rs.100,000/- per kanal as the SBP schemes were expiring by April 30 of this year.

Project management course organized for IPFP fellows

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The National Academy of Higher Education (NAHE) has organized an international standard research and project management course for IPFP Fellows who have been awarded Start-up Research Grants for Freshly Qualified PhDs (SRGP). In order to fully prepare Fellows of the Interim Placement of Fresh PhDs (IPFP) programme to run and manage their research projects over the long term, NAHE has collaborated with an international institution, Oxon Global, to provide top-tier training titled "The Fundamentals of Project Management" to IPFP Fellows. This programme is part of NAHE's continuous professional development initiatives for faculty of universities and HEC employees, which are running in accordance with an annual calendar of events. Keeping with SOPs to address the third wave of COVID-19, the course on "Fundamentals of Project Management" is being delivered online in its entirety. The opening address was given by Dr. Shaheen Sardar Ali, Rector NAHE. All six modules of this course, with rigorous evaluations and assessments will be delivered on four consecutive Saturdays to a cohort of 260 Fellows. IPFP Fellows and recipients of SRGP have already undergone a rigorous academic teaching course, the NFDP and a top-up reflective teaching and learning capacity enhancement workshop. - DNA

FAPUASA for reversal of edu. policies

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Federation of All Pakistan Universities Academic Staff Association (FAPUASA) has demanded that all the anti-education policies and steps undertaken under Dr. Tariq Banuri's tenure should be reviewed and reversed immediately. While appreciating the decision of Federal government on removal of Dr. Tariq Banuri as Chairman HEC, FAPUASA hoped that the new chairman would be appointed as per the criteria laid down in HEC Ordinance. Central President FAPUASA Dr. Nek Muhammad Shaikh and General Secretary Dr. Shahid Iqbal in a statement also hoped that the newly appointed chairman would take all stakeholders.

CCB plantation drive ends after planting few saplings

MEHMOOD ABDULLAH

RAWALPINDI: The Chaklala Cantonment Board (CCB) plantation drive under Prime Minister Imran Khan's flagship Ten Billion Tree Tsunami project have ended after simply planting a few dozen saplings along Humayun and Adiala roads. The residents of Tufail and Adiala roads while talking to media have decried the indifferent attitude of the CCB officials who, besides repeated requests by environment conscience residents, have left a wide area where plantation could be carried out to help mitigate the rising pollution due to ever increasing traffic among roads.

When contacted Mr. Zubair and Satti superintends of the CCB garden branch assured that plantation would be carried out in the spring season campaign but had denied considering the points highlighted by the area residents. Mrs. Ali Zia among the other area residents had demanded of the CCB CEO to take notice of negligence of the concerned. She said the rapidly increasing concrete jungle in the garrison city amid unbridled urbanization had almost wiped out its once cherished green cover. "After decades of negligence, it's the first government that has given some attention to the dwindling nature but the lethargic and criminal attitude in terms of the authorities' responsibility to protect environment is failing the attempt to enhance green cover," she added. Shahida Rehmani, a pulmonologist and area resident said it was so naive and unprofessional on the part of the CCB officials who were neglecting the potential plantation sites and planting trees on small medians, roadsides and green belts. She said trees were the lungs of our planet and equally important for human and biodiversity existence whereas it had become more imperative to plant maximum trees as air pollution along with everyday rising traffic was badly impacting human health.

'Police guides' initiative creating a big difference

"This initiative inculcates a sense of honor and dignity in a person who visits a police station without any reference," he stressed

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: People seem quite satisfied with the deployment of well-trained guides at multiple police stations of the federal capital and they are praising Inspector General of Police, (IGP) Islamabad Qazi Jameel-ur-Rehman for his out-of-the-box solution to bridge gap between the force and citizens. The 'police guide' initiative is getting tremendous response from the complainants, who are of the view that the registration of First Information Report (FIR) at many police sta-

tions is no more a herculean task. Talking to media on Sunday, the complainants said they were not afraid of visiting a police station anymore as the guidance and assistance being provided by the guides had completely changed their concept about the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) police. Muhammad Fahad Shoaib, a varsity student who visited Ramna police station, said he was delighted to see a significant change in the Islamabad police's behavior. "The bad behavior of a cop is the only thing which widens the gap between police and public," he

remarked. Appreciating the inclusiveness of ICT police, he said the deployment of guides was long due as previously there were no dedicated staffers at police stations for providing guidance to the people in registration of an FIR. "This initiative inculcates a sense of honor and dignity in a person who visits a police station without any reference," he stressed. "Decent and polite attitude by the police guide has reposed my confidence in the force," Abdul Rehman a resident of Sector I-9 told APP while explaining his visit to the police station of his locality.

He said a guide, deployed at I-9 police station, had fully facilitated him in registration of complaint. Luqman, a resident of Sector I-10/1 who came to the same police station to file a dispute application, said the appointment of qualified staff showed that the 'Thana culture' had changed truly. Raza Khan, a complainant at Sabzi Mandi police station, said he felt comfortable as a guide helped him in filing a complaint in no time. "I am very happy over this kind of people-friendly policing," he said and hoped that the department would continue to take

such measures in the future so that the gap between public and the police can be fulfilled." The ICT police spokesman said the 'police guides' initiative would surely improve the image of force in public eye. Such steps were imperative to promote community policing in the federal capital. He said the initiative was launched recently to provide maximum facilitation to the public on visiting a police station. It was the brainchild IGP Islamabad Qazi Jameel-ur-Rehman, who had been strong proponent of the community policing.

RMC better than other corporations

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Metropolitan Corporation is better than other metropolitan in the province in terms of volume of its ADP and number of development projects and this has been possible due to the increase in revenue while working in line with the government's vision of good governance. For the financial year 21-2020, Rs. 2956 million will be allocated for ADP and out of this huge amount, 389 development projects and schemes will be worked on. This was revealed by an analysis conducted by the Directorate of Public Relations, Rawalpindi. The analysis was based on data provided by the Local Govt and CDD, the Finance and Budget Wing of the MCR. - APP

Briefs

Railways rejects rumors about downsizing

MEHMOOD ABDULLAH

RAWALPINDI: The authorities of Pakistan Railways have rejected the rumors about downsizing saying, no employee of the Railways would be terminated. According to Superintendent, Pakistan Railways Rawalpindi Division, Inamullah, the rationalization process was continuing in Pakistan Railways which had nothing to do with downsizing.

Talking to media, he informed that the news of downsizing was baseless as these were just rumors and no employee of the Railways would be terminated.

Inamullah said that during the rationalization process no one would be dismissed however, all the employees would be adjusted in accordance with their expertise and experience.

Online scrutiny of papers for overseas

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The agency for protection of overseas Pakistanis' rights has commended Prime Minister Imran Khan and concerned federal government officials for facilitating online scrutiny of papers for overseas compatriots.

The present government has given the best protection to the rights of overseas Pakistanis by providing various facilities in the shortest possible time.

The government deserves congratulations on these steps. Khalid Nawaz, Chief Executive Officer of Knight Human Management Shalhan GL Pakistan expressed these views while addressing the participants of a training session held here in School of Arts and Design on Sunday for overseas Pakistan workers.

Khalid Nawaz said that Pakistani working abroad need to certify their technical skills at various levels. These people used to face many difficulties and hassles in verifying their credentials, but under the direction of Prime Minister Imran Khan, the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission of Pakistan, through its website, not only provide facility to these Pakistani professionals for verification of certificates but they will now be able to get new certificates online from NEVTEC according to their technical skills. "This initiative of NEVTEC has facilitated overseas Pakistanis and reduced the difficulties they face in finding employment abroad."

Crackdown against firecrackers businesses

KHAYAM ABBASI

RAWALPINDI: City Police Officer (CPO) Muhammad Ahsan Younas has directed police officials to launch crackdown against the firecracker dealers on the auspicious occasion of 'Shab-e-Barat'.

He said the setting off fireworks completely banned would be taken against violators, according to police spokesman. The business of firecrackers would be discouraged adding that it would be crushed with full force.

He said police would establish special pickets on all the entry and exit points to keep a vigil on suspicious elements and criminals. The CPO said it was the prime duty of the police to protect the lives and property of the people.

He said negligence would not be tolerated and action would be taken against those who would found negligent in performing their duties.

On the other hand, the police have started taking action against dealers, involved in the business of fireworks and firecrackers. Meanwhile, the special security measures have been taken while security in all religious places has also been beefed up to avoid any untoward incident.



ISLAMABAD: CEO Serena Hotels Aziz Boolani posing for a picture with the staff of the Azerbaijan embassy on the occasion of Nowruz festival celebrated at Islamabad Serena Hotels. (More coverage on the Back Page). – DNA

Despite surge in cases, citizens violating SOPs

On Sunday with restrictions eased, the residents rushed towards city markets and shopping centres, violating the SOPs put forward by the government to stem the spread of the virus

ZUBAIR AHMAD

RAWALPINDI: The third wave of coronavirus has hit hard as the number of confirmed cases of the deadly virus across Rawalpindi district jumped to 15,927 while 13,293 of them have been discharged but, the citizens particularly youngsters are not following the coronavirus Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) issued by the Punjab government under the guidelines issued by the National Command and Operation Centre (NCO) to contain the spread of COVID-19. The Punjab government had issued a notification to change the business hours and weekly closure of bazaars and markets in Rawalpindi

district in the wake of Covid-19 surge.

The traders were directed to close shops by 7.30 pm and take an off on Fridays and Saturdays.

On Sunday with restrictions eased, the residents rushed towards city markets and shopping centres, violating the SOPs put forward by the government to stem the spread of the virus. At shopping malls, big grocery stores and cash and carry stores, and different markets, women with young children could be seen despite the government banning children from the markets.

"Observing social distancing is a dream, which we can see but can't implement in letter and spirit," said a police officer. He added the traders'

community had assured the authorities of implementing the SOPs, but so far they had failed to fulfil their commitment. A shopkeeper, Wajid said that the market committees did nothing to protect the citizens as well as to implement the SOPs.

Although, big shopping malls and cash and carry stores were implementing SOPs to some extent but most of the small shops were witnessed openly violating the SOPs of providing sanitizers to their customers while at many points people were seen ignoring the SOP of maintaining social-distancing.

The SOP of not bringing children especially minor ones to markets was also not followed and hundreds of women were seen carrying infants or mi-

nor kids with them while shopping in the city markets. "I can't provide sanitizers to all of my customers because it is not a cheap item," Altaf, a small trader in Moti Bazaar said.

The shops owners said they could not stop people from coming to their shops as this will hurt their business. However, some shops were seen to be following the SOPs with security guards, stopping customers from entering if two or three customers were already in the shop.

Mushtaq said they had lost a large number of customers due to implementing social distancing because customers did not wait and moved to the next shop if denied entry. Rawalpindi District sees a jump in Covid-19 cases par-

ticularly during March after third wave attacked the district, as blatant violation of the SOPs continued despite repeated warnings by the relevant authorities.

Total admitted patients in Rawalpindi district are 184 including 19 critical, 66 stable and 99 in moderate condition. 22 patients are in Holy Family Hospital, 30 in Benazir Bhutto Hospital, 97 in Rawalpindi Institute of Urology, 30 in Fauji Foundation Hospital, two in Heart International and 3 in Begum Akhter Memorial hospital. Nearly 1817 patients are in home isolation.

But, neither social distancing nor other SOPs were being maintained at most of the markets across the district. The public transport, especially the van and Suzuki pick-

up based transport, poses a serious threat to the residents due to non-compliance with the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) as social distancing for prevention of coronavirus pandemic are being violated despite warnings and fines by the authorities concerned.

The district administration is taking strict actions against the transporters, shopping plazas, marriage halls, restaurants and other public places for not following all the precautionary measures.

A large number of vehicles were inspected and fines were imposed by RTA Rawalpindi but still, the transporters, drivers and passengers are not fully following the SOPs which may cause danger to the health system.



ISLAMABAD: High Commissioner of Malaysia Ikrum Mohammed Ibrahim and Ambassador of Indonesia Adam Tugio along with their spouses posing for a picture on the occasion of Nowruz festival celebrated at Islamabad Serena Hotels. – DNA

AIOU offers associate degree program

IBRAR KHAN

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has offered associate degree program in business administration with three different specializations in spring 2021 semester including Islamic Banking, Human Resource Management and Marketing.

Two-year (Associate Degree) program is also offered in four fields including General, Mass Communication, B Com and Library Science. Prospectuses for all these programs are available online on the university website (www.aiou.edu.pk). Prospectuses are also available at the main campus of the university, regional offices and prospectus sale

points established in the coordinating offices of the country. Interested candidates may apply online till the extended deadline of April 12 with late fee charges. Admission fee can be deposited till April 13. It is pertinent to mention here that university has provided final opportunity for admissions in MA/MSc programs while adhering to HEC's post graduate education policy. AIOU will not offer these programs in the upcoming semester i.e. autumn 2021. Interested candidates may avail this golden opportunity and apply for admission in any of the suitable program based on the eligibility criterion to enhance their education till the extended deadline of March 30 with late fee charges.

PTI govt removes HEC Chairman Dr. Tariq Banuri

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Higher Education Commission (HEC) Chairman Dr. Tariq Banuri has been removed from his post before the expiry of his term.

The HEC Amendment Ordinance 2021 has been issued in this regard, paving way for removal of Tariq Banuri it may be recalled that Dr. Tariq Banuri was appointed in May 2018 by former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi for a four-year term and his tenure was due to end in May 2022.

The ordinance issued has reduced the tenure of the Chairman Higher Education Commission from four years to two years which ultimately led to the dismissal of Tariq Banuri.

A formal notification issued in this regard states "In terms of sub-section (5), read with sub-section



(5A), of Section 6 of Higher Education Commission Ordinance, 2002, as amended vide Higher Education Commission (Amendment) Ordinance, 2021, Dr. Tariq Banuri has ceased to be the Chairperson, Higher Educa-

tion Commission forthwith and is accordingly removed from the said post, with immediate effect". Earlier, the Cabinet Committee on Legislation has passed an ordinance regarding the replacement of the

HEC chairman. The ordinance limited the tenure of the Higher Education Commission chairman from four to two years. The committee approved a new ordinance to amend the HEC Act 2002.

Deworming campaign to start from April 5

RAJA PERVAIZ

RAWALPINDI: More than 0.9 million children between 5 to 14 years of age will get free of cost deworming tablets during a five-day-long drive being started from April 5 to prevent parasitic worms from infecting them. District Health Officer (DHO) Dr. Jawad Khalid told media, that the drive would help overcome malnutrition and intestinal infections among the children as abdominal worms could cause several diseases. The DHO said that children working at different places would also be given medicines besides those studying in seminaries and schools.

Dr. Jawad said that drive would not be compromised despite prevailing COVID-19 situation, adding parasitic worms have debilitating consequences on the health and education of children, and on their long-term earning potential.

He urged the citizens to cooperate with the health teams as a healthy child was essential for a healthy society and this message should be conveyed to every nook and corner of the district.

Doctors remove safety pin stuck in esophagus

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Specialist doctors at Benazir Bhutto Hospital in Rawalpindi safely removed the safety pin stuck in the esophagus (muscular tube that carries food and liquids from mouth to the stomach) of a minor child.

Otolaryngologists Prof Dr. Muhammad Aslam Chaudhry and Dr. Fahim expertly removed the safety pin stuck in the esophagus of a 6-year-old child during the operation which was completed in just 15 minutes with the help of endoscopy at Benazir Bhutto Hospital Rawalpindi and saved the child's life.

Prof Dr. Muhammad Aslam Chaudhry told media that the safety pin trap in the esophagus of a child named Zoran, who was referred from Gujjar Khan, could prove to be very deadly and if it could not be removed by endoscopy procedure. He said if the safety pin was not removed by endoscopy then it would be removed after opening the breast and making several cuts, which could have resulted in the death of the child. He said the state-of-the-art facilities were provided by the Punjab government at Benazir Bhutto Hospital in Rawalpindi. This difficult and complicated operation was easily completed and which saved the life of the baby, he added.

Car, bike-lifter gang busted, 5 arrested

RAWALPINDI: In a crackdown against criminal elements, Rawalpindi Police have busted a car and bike-lifter gang and arrested five members.

Police also recovered eight stolen cars, seven motorcycles, weapons and other items from their possession.

According to a police spokesman, New Town police rounded up five members of 'Farhan' gang namely Farhan, ring leader, Majid, Zubair, Haroon and Qadeer who were wanted in various snatching and car and bike lifting cases.

Police recovered eight stolen cars, seven motorcycles, two pistols and other items from their possession.

He informed that the police team constituted under the supervision of SDPO and SHO New Town Police Station on the directives of SP Rawal Zia ul Din 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.

He stated that other members and facilitators of the gang would also be arrested following preliminary investigations with the detainee culprits. Superintendent Police (SP) Rawal lauded endeavor of New Town police team for netting the accused. – APP

Sidestepping allies

JUST when the alliance looked all set to exclude the Pakistan People's Party from the office of opposition leader in the Senate, the party sidestepped PDM altogether. PPP used its high numbers in the Senate, brought JI into the fold, won over four independents and secured two votes from the ANP. The Senate opposition leader was chosen without the PML-N and other major parties in the alliance having a say.

For the PPP, this shrewd tactical move has ensured that it secures the highest office of opposition in the parliament. With practically a hung Senate, a leader of opposition has an important role to play in the days to come. A leader from their own party all but ensures that PTI's term in office will find the PPP firmly at the head of the opposition table in the Senate.

PML-N however, has not taken kindly to being sidelined without any consultation. Where the party was looking resolute in its bid to get a candidate of its own as opposition leader—one that the PPP was not at all comfortable with—it has now been left without an important seat in the upper house. Overall, this only spells further trouble for the alliance. More harsh words have been exchanged—PML-N leaders such as Maryam Nawaz have made more accusations of duplicitous behaviour from PPP.

If the two largest parties continue this back and forth, it is hard to see PDM being salvaged from all this acrimony. For the government, it did not really matter who led the opposition as long as they managed to retain their hold over the Senate seat. This they have done with rousing success, and have also managed to bludgeon the opposition's unified stance in the process. It is now down to the opposition leaders to see the light for themselves. Together, they stand a chance against the government's majority; alone, the only stratagem available, looks to be through toothless press conferences and dissenting statements.

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

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Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960

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



Surging cases

FOR the second consecutive day, Pakistan reported over 4000 cases within 24 hours—the majority of which came from Punjab. We have not seen such an immense spike in transmission since June of last year. Once again we have digressed dangerously far towards losing a high number of the population through infections. The importance of adhering to restrictions and practicing preventative protocols seems to be lost on the general public as well as the authorities, especially since in-person meetings are still being held despite PM Imran Khan testing positive.

A clear message of intolerance of any and all violations of Covid-19 restrictions is effectively muddled when members of the government continue to schedule meetings with the PM in spite of knowing full well that he had contracted the virus. Such acts take away the seriousness of the matter and condone the abandonment of standard protocols.

According to a statement made by Asad Umar, the Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Pakistan might be surpassing the intensity of the first wave of the pandemic given the rate at which the positivity ratio is increasing—10.15 percent to be exact. If it is not brought back down, the little freedom that was extended to the masses will have to be curtailed immediately.

In fact, if the current situation persists then tougher regulations will have to be enforced to limit the spread of the virus—the old and new variants. We were once on the road to recovery from the pandemic, it is imperative that we fight to revert back to the progress we were making.

Our authorities need to set an example that the public can follow; if they are not proactive or careful in the way they approach the pandemic, they cannot expect the public to either. As such, a strong front against the virus must be shown at the state level for all to follow. Only when the gravity of the situation is understood will we be successful in taming the pandemic.

Indonesia: the emerging economic giant

Dr. Mehmood Ul Hassan Khan



President Joko Widodo announced Indonesian “Vision 2045” with the promise to make Indonesia a \$7 trillion economy by 2045, seven times its current value. It forecasted an annual GDP per capita of \$320 million rupiah (\$22,807) in 2045. It is based on four pillars mainly human development and the mastery of science and technology, sustainable economic development, equitable development, strengthening national resilience and governance. President Jokowi termed development of human resources would be a top priority

OURS is the age of commercial diplomacy and Indonesia is the pioneer of it in Southeast Asia region. Economic liberalization, privatization, development of private sector, foreign direct investment (FDIs), joint venture and digitalization are playing important role in the socio-economic progress of Indonesia which is the champion of structural reforms in the region and actually outperformed all the regional economies in achieving and sustaining high ratios of GDPs and GNPs.

According to various published reports of the World Bank, IMF, Asian Development Bank, Indonesia is the future economic giant in the region. It is the largest economy in Southeast Asia and the world's seventh by purchasing power parity. Somehow, ongoing COVID-19 has damaged its macro-economy which is now showing resilience and robust recovery. According to IMF published report (2021) GDP of Indonesia may reach to above 5.1 percent during 2021.

As any other advanced economy the key drivers of its national economy are private domestic consumption stimulated by its huge market with a growing middle class of nearly 70 million people (55 percent of GDP).

According to the IMF's report (October 2020) growth is expected to return in full force to 5.1 to 6.1 percent in 2021 before stabilising at 5.3 percent in 2022, subject to the post-pandemic global economy recovery. Moreover, in its most recent (January 2021) update of the World Economic Outlook, the IMF has revised its GDP growth projections for Indonesia to 4.8% in 2021 and 6% in 2022.

Despite the regional recession and global pandemic the first in 20 years, Indonesia avoided an even larger downturn in 2020 because of a credible economic policy response.

The latest OECD Economic Survey (2021) acknowledged Indonesian government timely economic policies and financial assistance that averted recession, economic meltdown and poverty in its society. It introduced numerous structural reforms which actually improved market functioning and saved its economy and civility alike even in a severe crisis. Its GDP decreased by 2.1 percent in 2020 and the OECD Survey forecasted growth of 4.9 percent for 2021 and 5.4 percent in 2022. The recovery is sustained by pent-up demand for consumer goods and capital goods and will gain momentum as containment measures are phased out and vaccination progresses to the entire archipelago of 17 000 islands. Traditionally, most Indonesians work in the informal sector and their limited savings were used to guarantee basic necessities during lockdowns. The emerging middle class that was celebrated in the 2010s found itself much more vulnerable than expected which has to be supported for achieving the desired goals of socio-economic prosperity in the country. According to the IMF, the budget deficit increased from 2.2 percent of GDP in 2019 to 5.3 percent in 2020. The estimations is for a stabilisation of the deficit at 5 percent, before a reduction to 3.7 percent in 2022.

Inflation was estimated at 2.1 percent in 2020 and is expected to be reduced to 1.6 percent in 2021 before increasing to 2.5 percent in 2022. Public debt has shown a significant improvement since the Asian Financial Crisis in 1998 which reached up to 150 percent of GDP, but it reduced slightly to 30.5 percent of GDP in 2019.

Three social programs (RPJMN, PNPM Urban and PAMSI-MAS) have been initiated to ensure that the poorest strata of the population have access to healthcare and education. Other structural issues that remain to be tackled include a large public infrastructure gap, high labour informality and

youth unemployment, and low educational attainment. Environmental protection also remains a major challenge. The government hopes to take advantage of the country's strategic location between Asia and the Pacific in the current unfavourable international context (weakening demand from China and falling commodity prices), and aims to be in the top six largest economies by 2030.

In 2021, the Indonesian's most immediate challenge is related to the economic, social and public health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Indonesia has achieved enormous gains in poverty reduction, cutting the poverty rate by more than half since 1999, to approximately 9.8 percent of the population in 2020. Indonesia is a developed market economy with abundant natural resources having a young, large and burgeoning population (274.8 million), a labor force of 136.7 million people in 2020, and political stability.

According to World Bank, (2020) its agricultural sector contributes to 12.7 percent of the country's GDP and employed 27.7 percent of the active population in 2020. Indonesia is the second-largest natural rubber producer in the world. Other major crops include rice, sugarcane, coffee, tea, tobacco, palm oil, coconuts and spices.

Besides, the country is the world's biggest nickel ore producer and has become a major exporter of stainless steel. Indonesian land area used for agriculture has been growing, and is currently around 30 percent. Indonesia is the only Asian country to have been a member of the OPEC, although its membership is frozen since December 2017 because it would not agree to production cuts mandated by OPEC. Industry contributes approximately to 38.9 percent of GDP and employed 22.7 percent of the labour force in 2020. The industrial sector includes manufacturing of textiles, cement, chemical fertilisers, electronic products, rubber tyres, clothing and shoes (most of these are for the American market). Wood processing is also a major activity as the country is one of the world's largest timber producers.

The service sector (financial institutions, transportation and communications) contributes to 44.2 percent of the GDP and employed 49.6 percent of the active population in 2020. The banking sector is well developed and the Islamic bank Syariah has expanded rapidly in recent years. Tourism is a major source of revenue, although the sector has suffered from terrorist threats and natural catastrophes in the past few years. From January to October 2019, the country received 13.6 million visitors, an increase of 4.6% compared to the same period of 2018 (Ministry of Tourism data). The government was expecting the country to become a leading Asian and World tourism destination by 2045 with 73 million tourists.

President Joko Widodo announced Indonesian “Vision 2045” with the promise to make Indonesia a \$7 trillion economy by 2045, seven times its current value. It forecasted an annual GDP per capita of \$320 million rupiah (\$22,807) in 2045. It is based on four pillars mainly human development and the mastery of science and technology, sustainable economic development, equitable development, strengthening national resilience and governance.

President Jokowi termed development of human resources would be a top priority. The effort was made to respond to demographic bonuses that create their own opportunities. The President Jokowi wanted to create a generation of hard workers who are dynamic, mastering science and technology. He upheld the importance of infrastructural

development which would continue to support community activities, including economic development and ease of accessibility. To achieve simplification of all forms of regulatory constraints president Jokowi invited the House of Representatives to issue major laws concerning the Employment Copyright Act and the UMKM (Usaha Mikro Kecil Menengah or Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises) Empowerment Act, which would aim at unlocking local potential and contribute to nation building.

He planned to introduce simplification of the bureaucracy and was also determined to cut significant amounts of bureaucratic red tape and simplify echelons, claiming there would be only two echelon levels; the functional level that respects competence and expertise. The president introduced a comprehensive economic transformation drive by intending to focus efforts to transform from dependency on natural resources to the competitiveness of modern manufacturing and services that have high added value for the prosperity of the people. Diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Indonesia are strong and people of both nations support and help each other over the period in different ways and situations. Indonesia and Pakistan are strengthening mutual relations in order to potentially deal in different sectors of the economy and the bilateral trade is also growing on annual basis. Pakistan and Indonesia stand proudly together as two of the largest Muslim populated countries and emerging economies of creative and talented people. In recent years, Indonesia-Pakistan bilateral relations have seen significant development as the two countries continuously endeavor to expand their all-round cooperation including in the areas of trade & economy and educational cooperation.

Major import items of Indonesia to Pakistan included rice, chemical, raw cotton, wheat, paper, fruits, garments, leather, plastic materials, cotton yarn, cloth, other textile products, sports and surgical goods.

Both countries are also cooperating in the spheres of global and regional security, terrorism, narcotics, maritime security, and human trafficking. Holding of various Strategic Forums has further strengthened cooperation between the two countries and identified new areas of cooperation related to security issues of concern and agreement between the two countries.

It is advisable that the concerted communication and consultations with various stakeholders between the two brotherly countries will certainly build greater confidence and improve the environment for both countries to uplift business, economic and other aspects of bilateral ties.

Being prominent regional geopolitical expert I suggest that Indonesia is an ideal country for investments because of Indonesia's favorable endowments of natural resources and geographically strategic location with its large number of human resources. Indonesia is a diverse archipelago nation of more than 300 ethnic groups and continues to be the largest economy in Southeast Asia.

Indonesia ranks as the fourth most populous country in the world, the world's 7th largest economy in terms of purchasing power parity, and is a member of the G20 group of nations. Indonesia was the second fastest growing economy in G-20 from 2012 up to the COVID-19 outbreak in 2020. Since the pandemic, it has ranked third after China and South Korea in terms of economic growth among G-20 economies according to Bloomberg data collected in September 2020.

— The writer is Director of Geopolitics/Economy, Member Board of Experts, at CGSS, Islamabad

Amplification in the effectiveness of soft power

Zahra Ali



The primordial historical sites and landmarks, and the splendor of our towering mountain ranges and gentle seas offer much to explore. Tourism is a key stride towards increasing the understanding of other cultures

PAKISTAN being in the limelight on a global juncture now more than ever, it must be remembered that it hosts six UNESCO world heritage sites. More often the country's history is spotlighted around early Islam, Sufi, and Mughal artistic monuments while it is noteworthy that Pakistan has been a hospice to various smaller religious groups including Sikhs, Parsis, Zikris, Bahá'í, Buddhists and Kalasha; the largest and most prominent of which are Hindus, Christians and Ahmadis. Pakistan is a pluralistic society with myriad religious and ethno-linguistic identities.

The Constitution of Pakistan guarantees all citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law, adequate provision for the minorities to freely profess and practice their religions and develop their cultures. Pakistan has been a home to various Hindu temples and Buddhist relics pooled with rich natural landscapes.

The opening of the recent Kartarpur corridor illustrates one such action where a visa-free initiative for the Sikh community was taken for cross-border pilgrimages, Pakistan demonstrating a pro-peace stance while the premier also enhanced tourism. From reciprocal presents of ancient rulers to today's Expos & symposiums, numerous forms of culture have been used by state actors to demonstrate who they are, assert their claim in the global governance, shape national image and build

long-lasting relations with people from other cultures & ethnicities.

The green in the National flag of Pakistan symbolises the Muslim majority in Pakistan and the white stripe represents the various minority groups. Nonetheless, the white is as much Pakistan as the green.

The notion of public diplomacy & cultural diplomacy lies at the heart of soft power. Cultural diplomacy is one such aspect of public diplomacy. Whilst a traditional diplomatic approach aids in understanding, notifying and influencing the people, cultural diplomacy is the exchange of values, systems and other aspects of culture with the intention to forging mutual thought and consideration with the aim to promote reconciliation by strengthening intercultural and interfaith harmony and enhance socio-cultural cooperation.

Pakistan is a land of diverse multi-cultures, a repository both rich in history and blessed with striking topographical benefits. It is a cradle of rich landscapes and welcoming people that have much to offer those that desire to learn about our nation.

The primordial historical sites and landmarks, and the splendor of our towering mountain ranges and gentle seas offer much to explore. Tourism is a key stride towards increasing the understanding of other cultures.

The surge of international travel vloggers has amplified more than ever, to name a few; Eva

Zu Beck from Poland, Rosie Gabrielle from Canada have placed emphasis on art, literature, food, intricate truck murals and dance which is also evident through our books, movies and documentaries.

Mark Weins from the United States & Trevor James from Canada, contributed towards promoting how vast and varied the street food culture is in our Country on his social media accounts named “The Food Range. Former Minister of Information of Pakistan, Fawad Chaudhry, announced a new visa policy to revive the country's tourism industry. This measure offers an e-visa option to 175 countries and a visa-onarrival to 50 other countries exhibiting a well-articulated cultural-diplomacy effort.

Additionally, the minister had also announced policy decrees toward developing the country's image and making tourism a vibrant sector capable of accomplishing economic growth while enriching the brand image of the country. Ever since the ascension of Imran Khan to power, Pakistan has tremendously improved its soft power capital by utilizing public diplomacy.

The Pakistani leadership is in a frenzied move to build a positive image of the country. The emphasis on the tourism sector, therefore, aligns with Khan's reform agenda, which consists of enhancing the use of national resources and making the economic apparatus work for citizens while also making the country safe haven for minority groups more than ever before.

Briefs

Serbia, Portugal settle for draw

DNA

BELGRADE: Serbia drew with Portugal 2-2 in the second qualifier for the Qatar 2022 FIFA World Cup here on Saturday. Portugal gained the early lead in the 11th minute when Diogo Jota caught a long pass and sent it behind the keeper with a header. Jota repeated the almost same action with his head in the 36th minute, bringing his team ahead by two goals before halftime. However, the Serbian team woke up in the second half, thanks to a goal by Aleksandar Mitrovic who outjumped three defensive players and marked yet another successful header in this game. In the 60th minute Filip Kostic made use of a fast attack of the Serbian team, managed to outrun the defense and score the equalizer. Despite a fierce fight until the final whistle, none of the teams was able to break the deadlock. In three days both teams will play away - Serbia against Azerbaijan and Portugal against Luxembourg.

No lockdown but adhere to SOPs...

From Page 01

"The third [wave] is much more intense than the first two. I advise you all to be extremely careful," he said. "The first thing you should do is wear a mask. It has been proven across the world that wearing a mask dramatically reduces the chances of you contracting coronavirus," explained PM Imran Khan. He said secondly, it is important to understand that Pakistan "does not have the resources to go [under a complete lockdown] and feed people and take care of them". "Even countries far better off than Pakistan do not have the resources to do such a thing," the prime minister added. He acknowledged that ideally the country should shut down, but what we can do given the circumstances, is follow safety measures, like wearing a mask. "Try your utmost [to do this religiously] and tell others too. Because I fear the third peak that is coming, will be worse than the first two peaks," he reiterated. The premier said that "there is no telling where it is headed". "Our hospitals are already full and continue to fill up. Especially, with the variant from UK that people have brought to Lahore, Islamabad and Peshawar, where we are witnessing a rapid rise in cases," he said, urging people to realise the gravity of the situation.

NCOC bans indoor, outdoor...

From Page 01

The NCOC said these decisions will be implemented in districts and cities with 8% positivity percentage (three days rolling average). It will provide "updated hotspot maps" to the provinces for the enforcement of expanded lockdowns with effect from March 29. "Chief secretaries have been advised to ensure strict compliance of the sop's. Would request everyone to cooperate with the administration as they are enforcing these sop's for safeguarding u." The NCOC members have met under the supervision of Federal Minister for Planning and Development and discussed the COVID-19 situation. During the meeting, the provinces have been directed to strictly follow standard operating procedures (SOPs) to avoid the spread of the infection. The participants also expressed concerns over the slow process of administering the vaccine to the people. It was feared that coronavirus situation might get out of control if preventive measures were not strictly adhered to. The minister reiterated that hospitals are reaching their maximum capacity and if precautionary measure are not followed, government will have to take tough decisions. The meeting called upon the political, social and religious leaders and media to join hands for contain spread of third wave of COVID-19 pandemic.

Derajat off-road jeep challenge race concludes

The jeep rally was allowed with the standard operating procedures and on submission of the Covid-19 negative test reports by the participants as per the decision of Covid Task Force, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

STAFF REPORT

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: The first Derajat off-road jeep and motorcycle race concluded in Dera Ismail Khan on Sunday with great enthusiasm witnessed among both female and male drivers and the response of the local people turned up in large numbers was so unprecedented. Besides federal and provincial ministers and lawmakers, including Ali Amin Gandapur, Taimur Salim Jhagra, Commissioner Dera Ismail Khan Yahya Akhuzada and others, a large number of tourists and local people watched the spectacular jeep and motorcycle races. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA), Frontier 4x4 Club and Dera Ismail Khan district administration had jointly organized the three-day event. Twenty-eight racers, including Jaffar Magsi, Nadir Magsi, Sahibzada Sultan, Babar Khan, Salma Khan Marwat, Maheem Sheraz, Laila Akhuzada, Irshad Kakakhel, Zain Mahmood, Raza Saeed, Asif Fazal Chaudhry, Faisal Khan Shadi, Bewarigh Mazari, Awais Khakwani,



Malik Qadir Nawaz, Shahab Haider, Asad Khan, Nauman Saranjam Khan, Saud Majeed, Umar Iqbal Kanju, Sheryar Khan, Zafar Khan Baloch, Gohar Sangi, Tushna Patel, Jamila and others participated in the pre-peered category and covered 118 kilometres track from Yarak to Gloti.

The racers performed well during the 118km race on the track from Yarak to Gloti after passing through Paniala, Rehmani Khel



and Abdulkhel. Around 29 drivers participated in the stock category while 22 racers performed in the professional pre-peered category. Gendhoot, Babar Baloch and Aqeel Ahmad stood first, second and third, respectively. Similarly, Muhammad Rafiq, Sultan Bahadur and Rashid Goraya clinched first, second and third position in the B-category, respectively. In C-category, Hassan Jehangir, Malik Babar Ijaz and Syed Zahid

Qayyum stood first, second and third, respectively. Likewise, Shakil Ahmad, Shah Gul Mazari and Falak Sher Baloch won first, second and third position in the race, respectively. In the Women's category, Tushna Patel clinched first position while Maheem Sheraz stood second and Salma Marwat third. Similarly, Hamiddudin and Umar Amin clinched first and second position in the local jeep category. Besides, motorcycle racers also

took part in the competitions and received thunderous applause from the spectators. Moeen Khan, Zaim Khan Chohan and Adeel stood first, second and third, respectively, in the bikers' category. Likewise, Abu-Bakr Siddique, Sharif and Hassan Qureshi clinched first, second and third position in the local bikers' category. Earlier, qualifying rounds were held with a two kilometres track with dangerous turns. Sahibzada Sultan clinched first position after he covered the track in 1:53 minutes, Zain Mahmood stood second with 1:54 minutes and Asif Fazal Chaudhry ranked third with 1:55 minutes followed by Jaffar Magsi and Nadir Magsi with 1:56 minutes and 1:57 minutes, respectively. In the stock category, Sahibzada Fakhar stood first with 1:55 minutes, Taimur Khwaja second with 1:56 minutes and Rashid Goraya grabbed third position who covered the track in 1:58 minutes. The jeep rally was allowed with the standard operating procedures and on submission of the Covid-19 negative test reports by the participants as per the decision of Covid Task Force, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Black Caps beat Bangladesh in first T20I

DNA

HAMILTON: Devon Conway's unbeaten 92 steered New Zealand to a 66-run victory over Bangladesh in the first twenty20 international (T20I) of the three-match series in Hamilton on Sunday. Batting first after winning the toss, the host team put on 210 on the scoreboard. After knocks of 72 and 126 in the last two one-day internationals against Bangladesh, Conway continued his red hot form in the shortest format as well. In response, the visiting team could only manage to score 144 as Ish Sodhi spun a web around the batsmen claiming four key wickets. The leg-spinner derailed Bangladesh's chase by picking up all his wickets in the first two overs to finish with figures of 4-28 as New Zealand completed yet another convincing victory, having blanked the Asian side 3-0 in the one-dayers. Bangladesh looked destined for an even bigger loss when they were reduced to 59-6 inside eight overs but Afif Hossain put up some resistance with a knock of 45 while Mohammad Saifuddin remained unbeaten on 34 to take the side to 144-8.

Pakistan, Italy vow to expand...

Front Page 01

deserving students at the International Community Support Foundation's office. The event was attended by a large number of teachers and students, including the head of the foundation, Sultan Faiz. The students presented beautiful colorful programs in front of the guests. The Italian Ambassador appreciated the performance of the children and said that Pakistani students have immense potential. He also lauded the steps taken by the Punjab government to promote education and increase literacy rate. He especially paid homage to Raja Rashid Hafeez and said that considering the diligence with which the provincial minister is working, it can be hoped that the literacy rate of the people in Punjab will soon be reached to 100 percent. Expressing good wishes from the Italian government and people, Andreas Ferraresaid he would continue to support efforts to promote education in Pakistan. In his address, Raja Rashid Hafeez thanked the Italian Ambassador and said that we are grateful for the cooperation of the Italian Embassy in the field of education. He also mentioned that the practical steps taken by the Punjab government to increase the literacy rate are result oriented. Minister further said that we are working with missionary spirit to eradicate the darkness of ignorance from our province. Sultan Faiz and other speakers also addressed on the occasion.

Pak, UAE agree to ease travel

From Page 01

Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi and his UAE's counterpart Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al-Nahyan expressed satisfaction with the progress in bilateral relations. FM Qureshi conveyed his heartfelt condolences from the government and people of Pakistan on the sad demise of Deputy Ruler of Dubai and Finance Minister of the UAE, Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid Al-Maktoum. Offering prayers for the departed soul, the minister paid rich tribute to the life and services of Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid, remembering him as a good friend of Pakistan.

Slovenia re-imposes restrictions

LJUBLJANA: Slovenia, which had eased some of its coronavirus restrictions in February, said Sunday that they would be re-imposed until mid-April in view of the deteriorating situation in some neighbouring countries. "We're in a race against time," Prime Minister Janez Jansa told a news conference, announcing the closure of shops selling non-essential items, as well as cultural and religious venues, a ban on public gatherings and limits on travel between April 1 and 12. - APP

Ngannou captures UFC heavyweight title

SPORTS DESK

LAS VEGAS: Cameroon's Francis Ngannou showcased his devastating punch power as he knocked out Stipe Miocic in the second round to capture the undisputed UFC heavyweight title in Las Vegas at UFC 260. The bout was a rematch of their 2018 meeting at UFC 220, where American Miocic dominated Ngannou over five rounds for a landslide unanimous decision victory in Boston. On Saturday, Ngannou, 34, showed the improvements made since their first meeting as he exhibited composure and patience before eventually knocking out Miocic, 38, with a short left hook 52 seconds into round two to defeat the man widely considered to be the greatest heavyweight champion in UFC history. The win also marked the completion of a lifelong quest for Ngannou, who left Cameroon as a refugee and lived on the streets of Paris before eventually finding a gym with hopes of becoming a champion boxer. He was convinced by former coach Fernand Lopez to



switch focus to mixed martial arts and eventually earned his chance in the UFC, where his thunderous punch-power marked him out as a dangerous contender. After six straight stoppage victories, his first title shot against Miocic in 2018 fell short as his relative lack of MMA experience counted against him. But, in the rematch, Ngannou came of age as he flattened Miocic

to become only the third Africa-born champion in UFC history, joining welterweight champion Kamaru Usman, who was in Ngannou's corner on fight night, and middleweight champion Israel Adesanya. After his victory, Ngannou said he was willing to face the man considered by many to be the best pound-for-pound fighter in the sport, Jon Jones, who

is expected to move up to heavyweight to challenge for the title later this year. "For my opinion, Jon Jones is the greatest of all time in mixed martial arts. Him moving up is going to be a good thing," he said. "He's a challenge I will take and it will be a very good thing on the resume. But this time he is the challenger. I am the champ. He's coming up, looking for me."

Pak to become first int'l side to tour Zimbabwe post Covid-19

LAHORE: Pakistan will become the first men's international cricket side to play in Zimbabwe in the post-Covid-19 era when they announced the schedule of their two Test and three T20I series. The Pakistan side will arrive in Harare from Johannesburg on 17 April, where the five matches will take place from 21 April to 11 May with the T20Is to start at 1400 PST and the two Tests will commence at 1230 Pakistan Standard Time. After the T20Is on 21, 23 and 25 April, Babar Azam's side will play Zimbabwe in two Tests, the first of which will begin on 29 April. This will mark the first instance of the two sides facing off in the pinnacle format of the game since September 2013. This was also Pakistan's last Test on Zimbabwean soil. The second Test will commence on 7 May. Since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, Pakistan men's cricket sides have toured England and New Zealand, besides hosting Zimbabwe and South Africa. Pakistan Shaheens also toured New Zealand alongside the men's side, while the women's sides visited South Africa and Zimbabwe, the tour that was curtailed due to suspension in flight operations. Next month, Pakistan U19 squad will tour Bangladesh for a four-day and five 50-over-side matches. This underscores the Pakistan Cricket Board's commitment to play an active role in ensuring that international cricket remains on track in these challenging and uncertain times. Director - International Cricket, Zakir Khan: "The Pakistan Cricket Board has been at the forefront of the revival of international cricket in the post-Covid-19 world and the tour of Zimbabwe is another step in that direction. - DNA

Pakistan team clear tests in SA

JOHANNESBURG: All members of the Pakistan cricket squad have cleared their on-arrival Covid-19 tests after reaching Johannesburg on Friday. The squad will start its first training session today at the SuperSport Park in Centurion after spending Saturday as 'rest day.' While players and officials are currently in a three-day mandatory quarantine period, they are allowed to practice following negative coronavirus results. Earlier on Friday, a 34-member contingent, which included 21 players and 13 officials, departed for the country to participate in an ODI and T20I series against South Africa. The three-match ODI series will start from April 2 to April 7 while the four T20Is will be played between April 10 and 16. - DNA



India spreading fake news about Pak for fifteen years

FROM PAGE 01

"The activities of this network are part of India's fruitless attempt to cast Pakistan in a bad light," said Zaeer Aslam Janjua, Pakistani Ambassador to the EU, Belgium and Luxembourg. "It wanted to destabilize Pakistan and fuel Indian state-sponsored and sub-nationalist tendencies. We have provided extensive and irrefutable evidence in the past of India's support for terrorist groups in Afghanistan and anti-Pakistani sub-nationalist groups around the world." Fake opinions Already in 2019, the researchers at EU Disinfo Lab came across several online disinformation campaigns and a network of 265 fake media outlets in 65 countries, spreading negative content about Pakistan. The campaign turned out to be EP Today, a fake Brussels news magazine targeting MEPs and external politicians with interests in India. MPs were also regularly asked to publish opinion pieces to discredit Pakistan. The mission of the operation was to discredit countries in conflict with India - mainly Pakistan, but also to a small extent China -

and subsequently strengthen the Modi government. According to Janjua, the intention was to operate worldwide: "India has spread fake news to smear Pakistan's image and mislead the world. But the report has exposed India's activities and confirmed Pakistan's position of a systematic and organized campaign against Pakistan. This report is therefore very important. It will take a lot of time and resources before we can undo the consequences of the fifteen-year hate campaign." One step for India, two for Pakistan "We believe that access to free and truthful information is the fundamental right of every human being," says Janjua. "We share the concerns of the EU and its Member States about the misuse of the online space by government and non-state actors. Anyone involved in manipulating information and spreading fake news should be held accountable. We have approached the EU and the Belgian authorities to urge them to become acquainted with the reports from EU Disinfo Lab. And we have asked them to take action against the actors involved in the abuse of their institutions and territories, who have violated the code of conduct."

Janjua clarifies that Pakistan wants friendly relations with all its neighbors, including India, and has always been ready to work towards a solution to all pending issues, including those surrounding Jammu and Kashmir. "Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan also said during his inauguration that" If India takes one step, Pakistan would take two steps to peace. " Tricks But according to Janjua India did not listen to that. "Rather than responding positively to Pakistan's peace proposals, India has unilaterally and illegally perpetuated the special constitutional status of illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir. India also continued to plan, finance and perpetuate terrorism in our territory. Pakistan believes in a peaceful settlement of disputes with India. However, they have shown no willingness to enter into a dialogue about the open disputes with Pakistan." According to Janjua, Pakistan believes that peace is a sine qua non for the region's economic growth and development, including poverty reduction. By spreading misinformation and falsehoods, India continues to disrupt the atmosphere threatening regional

peace and security. "India must realize that it cannot cast a shadow on Pakistan's international standing, nor divert the attention of the international community from the human rights situation in India. Indian tricks to spread misinformation are doomed to failure," says Janjua. "There are already so many obstacles that make a renewed rapprochement between Pakistan and India difficult. Such actions would hamper the prospects for peace even more." And what about Kashmir? According to Janjua, Indian publications have further emphasized the despair felt by the Indian government. "It was not only an attempt to slander Pakistan, it was also a failed attempt to cast a negative light on the legitimate movement of the people of Kashmir for the right to self-determination." "There is great frustration about this among the Indian government. After all, it fails to understand, let alone recognize, the struggle for self-determination of the Kashmiri people," says Janjua. That right is enshrined in international law and United Nations Security Council resolutions. "The clash between Jammu and Kashmir can only be resolved by

implementing UN Security Council resolutions. The international community must strive for a peaceful settlement of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, taking into account the wishes of the people of Kashmir, who want lasting peace and stability in the region." Special committee On January 16 this year, the EU Disinfo Lab investigation was discussed in the Special Committee on Foreign Interference in all democratic processes in the EU in the European Parliament. "The work of the Special Committee on Foreign Interference in all democratic processes in the EU has been important and welcomed developments," says Janjua. Alexandre Ala-Philippe and Gary Machado (respectively executive director and managing director of EU Disinfo Lab, ed.) Explained in their testimonials the complex system of fake news outlets, websites, NGOs and think tanks involved in a systematic disinformation campaign against Pakistan. The European Parliament has appointed a special committee to investigate the content of the report, in particular the allegation of exploitation of EU institutions by this particular network. "Undoubtedly to be continued."

Briefs

Japan provide \$136.5m loan to Uzbekistan

DNA

TASHKENT: The Japanese Ambassador to Uzbekistan Yoshinori Fujiyama and the Finance Deputy Minister Odilbek Isoqov signed exchange notes totaling 15 billion yen (US\$ 136.5 million) on March 26, the Embassy said.

This cash, with an interest rate of 0.01% and a maturity of 15 years, of which 4 years are grace period, is provided to Uzbekistan to financially support its response to the COVID-19 crisis.

The purpose of the emergency loan is to contribute to social and economic stability and sustainable development of Uzbekistan, which have sustained serious damage due to the coronavirus pandemic. "Due to the coronavirus pandemic, economic and social activities such as humanitarian exchanges and logistics are stagnating globally. This is a problem on which the entire international community, including Japan, must work together to overcome the adverse impact and lead to development after the end of the pandemic," the Embassy added.

Kazakhstan launches drive to plant trees

FOREIGN DESK

NUR-SULTAN: The Kazakh Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources has launched its Taza Tabigat (Clean Nature) campaign aimed at planting trees across the country, reports the ministry's press service. The measures will also include cleaning national forests and water reservoirs and improving the parks.

The project began in Turkmenistan in southern Kazakhstan and will continue in the Zhambyl, Mangistau, Kyzylorda regions and in Shymkent.

The campaign follows the instructions of Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev to plant two billion trees in forests and 15 million trees in cities.

"The head of state Kassym-Jomart Tokayev in his address to the nation outlined the importance of improving the environment. Nationwide environmental measures are included in the Nur Otan Party's election programme and in celebrations to mark the 30th anniversary of Kazakhstan's independence. Other regions will hold similar events in April when the weather conditions become more favourable," said Minister Magzum Mirzagaliyev during the launch of the campaign in Turkmenistan.

Uzbekistan receives 1M Chinese vaccine

WEB DESK

TASHKENT: The Uzbek-Chinese vaccine ZF-UZ-VAC2001 was today delivered to Uzbekistan, the Ministry of Innovative Development said. According to the Sanitary and Epidemiological Service and Public Health, the delivery of the 1 million doses were received in Tashkent.

"This is a new recombinant coronavirus vaccine developed by scientists from the Institute of Microbiology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and manufactured by the pharmaceutical company Anhui Zhifei Longcom Biopharmaceutical. Its clinical trials were carried out in cooperation with Uzbek scientists," the Ministry of Innovations recalled.

During the development of the ZF-UZ-VAC2001 vaccine, the external protein of the coronavirus was synthesized by a biotechnological method, when it is introduced into the body, an immune response to this protein is formed. "This vaccine is believed to have the highest safety profile of any other type of vaccine.

It is the fourth coronavirus vaccine developed and approved in China for emergency use. To date, more than 7000 people have been vaccinated within the framework of the III phase of studies of the ZF-UZ-VAC2001 vaccine in Uzbekistan, the condition of each volunteer is being monitored.



KARACHI: Hindu community people celebrating their religious festival Holi the Spring Festival of Colors at Swami Narian Temple. - APP

UAE and China to start first vaccine production line in UAE

"The joint project is an added value to the international efforts being made in the face of the COVID-19 crisis which has been taking a toll on everyday lives across the world

DNA

ABU DHABI: Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, and the Chinese Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, have launched "Life Sciences and Vaccine Manufacturing in the UAE" - a joint project by the UAE's Group 42 and China's CNBG (Sinopharm), to initiate the first COVID-19 vaccine production line in the UAE.

Attending the launch ceremony of the new project, which was held in Abu Dhabi during the visit of the Chinese top diplomat to the

UAE, were Reem bint Ibrahim Al Hashemy, Minister of State for International Cooperation, and Ahmed Ali Al Sayegh, Minister of State. "The UAE and China today inaugurated a new chapter in their historic and distinguished relations, under the title "Strategic Partnership for Humanity," said Sheikh Abdullah in statements marking the launch. "Today we celebrate the significant milestones achieved by our strategic partnership across all levels. We are continuing the efforts that we initiated at the onset of the COVID-19 crisis. A partnership that sets an example to be emulated for collaboration

between friendly nations in times of crises," the UAE's top diplomat added. "The joint project is an added value to the international efforts being made in the face of the COVID-19 crisis which has been taking a toll on everyday lives across the world. The UAE, under the directives of our wise leadership, believes in the importance of collective action and concerted efforts in fighting such crises. We believe we should work collectively and forge ahead with our efforts to stem the fallout of the crisis and to work for ensuring the safety and stability of all peoples on earth," Sheikh Abdullah

noted. The launch ceremony started with a short video on the UAE-China cooperation during the COVID-19 crisis. Addressing the ceremony Liu Jingzhen, Chairman of Sinopharm, said, "Today we are making large strides in the global battle against COVID-19. And this pioneering project is the fruit of close cooperation and strategic partnership between the UAE and China and their leading efforts in fighting this crisis." "By taking this step, the UAE has paved the way for the registration and commercial production of Sinopharm's vaccine in an

embodiment of the significant efforts made by the two friendly nations to recover from the crisis," Jingzhen continued. "We are very proud of this partnership with G42. This project will play a significant role in confronting the COVID-19 pandemic in the UAE, the Arab region and the entire world," he added. Peng Xiao, CEO of G42, said the new project will "revolutionise the life sciences industry in the region over the coming years." "G42 and CNBG have made significant achievements since 2020 thanks to their common vision and values," he added, noting that new

technologies will allow the two sides to rapidly respond to the growing local and international demand for the vaccine in a way that will represent a significant step forward on the path toward standing up to the crisis. Sheikh Abdullah and the Chinese foreign minister then announced the official launch of the project which represents the first COVID-19 vaccine production line in the UAE. The two ministers carried a prototype of the new vaccine and took a commemorative photo on the occasion before attending a live streaming from the vaccine production site in the UAE.

Iran and China sign 25-year strategic cooperation pact

TEHRAN: Iran and China signed a 25-year "strategic cooperation pact" Saturday in the latest expansion of Beijing's flagship trillion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative as the US rivals move closer together. Negotiations for the deal, launched five years ago, sparked controversy in Iran last year and virtually no details of its contents have been released. China is Iran's leading trade partner and was one of the biggest buyers of Iranian oil before then US president Donald Trump reimposed sweeping unilateral sanctions in 2018 after abandoning a multilateral nuclear agreement with Tehran.

The China-Iran pact, which Tehran said included "political, strategic and economic" components, was signed by the two countries' foreign ministers, Wang Yi and Mohammad Javad Zarif.

"We believe this document can be very effective in deepening Iran-China relations, Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said, recalling that the pact had first been proposed during a visit to Tehran by Chinese President Xi Jinping in January 2016. Xi and his Iranian counterpart Hassan Rouhani agreed then to establish a roadmap for "reciprocal investments in the fields of transport, ports, energy, industry and services." - DNA

Chinese seed technologies to empower Pakistani industry

DNA

BEIJING: China-Pakistan cooperation in seed, the "core" of agriculture, is high on the agenda as the CPEC enters the second phase to focus on agriculture cooperation and other sectors of social welfare, according to a report published by China Economic Net (CEN). At the China-Pakistan Seed Industry Cooperation and Exchange Forum held last week, agricultural experts from China and Pakistan offered insights on how to further promote bilateral cooperation in the seed industry.

Dr Zhang Shengquan of the Beijing Academy of Agricultural and Forestry Sciences

said, "In 2012, we carried out joint R&D on two-line hybrid wheat in Pakistan, and achieved an average increase of more than 20% in wheat production, and last year, we brought that figure to 50% and even up to 70%." The potential of China's hybrid wheat is emphasised by Shahzad Ali Malik, CEO of GUARD AGRI, during his interview with CEN. GUAED AGRI was the first Pakistani agricultural company to introduce Chinese hybrid wheat, and despite the "challenge-laden" process, the company remains confident that Chinese hybrid wheat will help boost food production in Pakistan. The reasons for limited wheat production in Pakistan include low yield

potential of seed varieties, mismanagement, high temperature and drought, and severe rust damage, etc. Drought-resistant and infertile-resistant traits of Chinese hybrid wheat make it a suitable variety to be introduced in Pakistan. Dr Li Hui from the breeding team of the Hebei Academy of Agricultural and Forestry Sciences said that China's Hebei, with its natural conditions similar to those of Pakistan, has been dedicated to the R&D of drought-resistant, water-saving wheat varieties to achieve replicably stable and huge production. According to the report, nearly 30 water-saving wheat varieties bred by his team are expected to be

introduced into Pakistan through the China-Pakistan Agricultural and Industrial Information Cooperation Platform. Pakistan has long been a huge soybean importer, with its import volume increasing annually and consuming colossal foreign exchange reserves. Dr. Irfan Afzal, associate professor at University of Agriculture, Faisalabad said that Pakistan began to cultivate soybean as early as 1960s, but due to natural conditions, especially overlapping planting time of soybean and wheat, "we only have 120 days for soybean cultivation each year, but Brazil, the soybean powerhouse, has six months."



KUWAIT: Pakistan Ambassador to Kuwait Syed Sajjad Haider, visited Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) HQs and meeting with CEO Emad Sultan. Issues of mutual cooperation were discussed. - DNA

Al-Azhar condemns cartoons offending prophet in Britain

FOREIGN DESK

CAIRO: Al-Azhar, the highest seat of learning in the Sunni Muslim world, has condemned the display of cartoons insulting the Prophet Muhammad in Britain. In a statement, the Cairo-based institution's Observatory for Combating Extremism described the caricatures as a "disgraceful act" which amounts to "hate speech". "This is an unjustified provocation of the feelings of nearly two billion Muslims around the world," it said.

On March 22, a teacher at the Betley Grammar School in West Yorkshire, England, displayed offensive cartoons of Prophet Muhammad during a class. The caricatures are believed to be one of those published by French magazine Charlie Hebdo. Tens of people gathered in front of the school on Thursday and Friday to protest the drawings under police presence and called for the teacher involved in the incident to be sacked. The school has since suspended the teacher and preferred to switch back to online teaching for the day, local media reported.

Sialkot, Chinese industry collaboration urged

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Speakers at an online Innovation Summit 2021 stressed the significance of enhanced cooperation between Sialkot and Chinese industry. According to Gwadar Pro, they also put forward recommendations including making full use of the existing platform, establishing joint ventures, strengthening the collaboration of chambers of commerce and developing e-commerce. They also called for increasing the

scale of visits and exchanges on a webinar titled "Branding Pakistan: Complementarity through development of Innovative Export market of SIALKOT" under Online Innovation Summit Sialkot 2021. Hassan Daud Butt, CEO KP BOIT, said on the occasion that Sialkot has done tremendously well as an economic growth sample, however, some small gaps still need to be bridged. He requested Chinese entrepreneurs to consider the possibility of establishing joint ventures with Sialkot's industry, which has a wonderful setting and understand-

ing of how to make the best of the environment. Appreciating the contribution made by Chamber of Commerce in promoting economic development, Hassan Daud Butt proposed chambers between China and Sialkot to directly establish a mechanism, through which the process can move forward faster. "IT skills should be added to enter a new era of artificial intelligence. Computers and the Internet will directly link some cottage industries to markets in China and elsewhere," Mr. Hassan added. The importance of utilizing ex-

isting platforms to boost Sialkot exports was stressed by Peter Huang, Partner, CPEC Business Platform. He extremely maintained that the Pakistani Embassy and Consulates in China has given full play to its various functions and plays an important role in promoting bilateral trade cooperation. "Chinese entrepreneurs prefer to seek partners recommended by government agencies, and if government agencies get enough brand information, embassy or consulates will more easily recommend products to interested Chi-

nese buyers or investors." Vaqar Ahmed, Joint Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute of Pakistan, stressed that Sialkot's engagement in CPEC can be deepened. "Chinese delegations were not brought to Sialkot in large numbers, which hindered the growth of business-to-business partnerships. The business community sincerely hopes that when negotiating free trade agreements with China, they can get more consultation so that their products with competitive advantages can also enter China."

Al-Shabaab calls for attacks on US interests

DNA

NAIROBI: The leader of jihadist group Al-Shabaab has called for attacks on "American and French interests" in Djibouti, less than two weeks before the country's presidential election.

In a video released late Saturday, Ahmed Diriye - also known as Ahmed Umar Abu Ubaidah - lashed out at Djibouti's President Ismail Omar Guelleh, who has been in power since 1999 and is set to win a fifth term in elections on April 9.

The Islamist leader accused Guelleh of turning the Horn of Africa country "into a military base from where every war against the Muslims in East Africa is planned and executed".

"Make American and French interests in Djibouti the highest priority of your targets," he told followers in the video.

Djibouti's strategic location as a gateway to both Africa and the Arabian Peninsula has made it a sought-after destination for foreign military bases.

The former French colony hosts France's largest contingent in Africa - some 1,500 troops - as well as the United States' only permanent base, with around 4,000 troops.

Japan and Italy also have a presence in Djibouti, while China has had a port and military base in the country since 2017.

Djibouti is furthermore host to a contingent of African Union troops fighting the al-Qaeda linked Al-Shabaab in Somalia, where the Islamists have waged a long and violent insurgency seeking to unseat the international-backed government.

Armenia's PM announces date of resignation

DNA

YEREVAN: Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan has announced that he will resign next month while staying in office until snap parliamentary elections due on June 20, as part of an effort to curb the political crisis gripping the Caucasus country, Azeri reports citing RIA.

"I will resign in April. I will resign not to resign, but in order for early elections to take place," Pashinyan said on Sunday during a visit to northwest Armenia, according to a video published on his Facebook page.

"I will continue to serve as interim prime minister," he added. The prime minister earlier this month announced snap parliamentary polls that he said were "the best way out of the current internal political situation".

'IMF to bleed economy, masses white'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) on Sunday said IMF conditions will bleed economy and masses white as some important officials have started promoting IMF interests.

How come a state-run bank enjoy unprecedented powers and total immunity to hit the economy, masses and the business community like never before, it said. All the condition of IMF have been accepted to revive stalled programme including the unprecedented burden on the masses, said Dr. Murtaza Mughal, President PEW. In exchange of a loan of 500 million dollars, new taxes of Rs700 billion will be imposed, power tariff will be hiked to the tune of Rs900 billion and 36 tax exemptions will be reversed, he said.

Dr. Murtaza Mughal said that the SBP will be given unprecedented liberty with unquestionable powers and exceptional immunity which may not leave the bank and government on the same page resulting in serious problems. The main task of the central bank is being altered to contain inflation while the government will try to ensure development which will create divisions, he observed. The government and SBP will not remain on the same page and balance between containing inflation and triggering development will become difficult.

Briefs

323 Kashmiris martyred during 600-day siege

BUREAU REPORT

SRINAGAR: In Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, unrelenting military siege imposed by Narendra Modi-led fascist Indian government on August 05, 2019, continues to take a heavy toll on daily life of the people in the territory. A report released on the completion of 600 days to the military siege, has revealed that Indian troops martyred 323 Kashmiris including 7 women during the period. It said that at least 14,621 people including Hurriyat leaders, activists, women, students and young boys were arrested. Meanwhile, Indian troops conducted cordon and search operations in Kupwara and Kulgam districts today subjecting the local residents to harassment and intimidation.

Turkish civil society supports Aafia Siddiqui

DNA

KARACHI: Aafia Movement Pakistan leader and noted neurophysician of the country Dr Fowzia Siddiqui is currently visiting Turkey on the invitation of different Turkish political, social, human and women's rights organizations in connection with the global struggle for release of the daughter of the nation Dr Aafia Siddiqui from American detention. During this visit, Dr Fowzia Siddiqui is attending programs and receptions at Istanbul, Ankara and other cities besides giving interviews to different newspapers and TV channels.

Previous day, she met with Vice President of KADEM Women and Democracy Association Sumeyye Erdogan, who is also the daughter of the Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The meeting was held in a cordial atmosphere. On this occasion, Dr Fowzia presented her Pakistani traditional cultural gifts of Kashmiri shawl, Ajrak and Sindhi cap. Sumeyye Erdogan shared the picture and details of her meeting with Dr Fowzia Siddiqui on her Twitter account and said that Aafia was kidnapped from Pakistan in 2003 and America sentenced her for 86 years without any evidence against her, which is an inhuman act.

Amin urges PDM not to politicize climate issue

IBRAR KHAN

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister's Special Assistant on Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam has said that Pakistan has provided world a solution to the global climate change in the form of Prime Minister's Billion Tree Tsunami project. Addressing a press conference in Islamabad on Sunday, he said that said the Government's landmark initiatives to deal with the climate change like the Billion Tree Tsunami have won international acclaim, including from the World Economic Forum.

He said that Pakistan is also meaningfully contributing to shape the global Climate Change discourse, inter alia, as the Vice President of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and member of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. He said that Pakistan also Co-chaired the multibillion-dollar Green Climate Fund, established to support climate actions in developing countries, last year. He said that the Leaders' Summit on Climate Change hosted by President Biden reconvenes the U.S.-led Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate, brings together leaders from countries responsible for approximately 80 percent of global emissions or the smaller island nations which are threatened by the effects of global warming and rising sea levels.

Serena Hotels host Nowruz event in style; Nine countries take part

Nowruz promotes peace, solidarity says Begum Alvi; Nine countries established stalls on the occasion

A.M.BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Begum Samina Arif Alvi has said Nowruz promoted values of peace and solidarity between generations and within families as well as fostered reconciliation and neighborliness. Speaking at an event here to mark the celebrations of Nowruz, she said as it contributed to cultural diversity and friendship among peoples and different communities, Nowruz fitted closely with UNESCO's mandate. The Nowruz event was organized at the lush-green lawns of Islamabad Serena Hotel. CEO Serena Hotels South and East Asia, Foreign Secretary Sohail Mahmood, heads of various missions attended the event. Different countries established there stalls on the occasion and offered delicacies of their respective countries. Strict Covid SOPs were observed during the entire event.

Nowruz is also called as Noruz, Nowrooz, Nowrooz, and Nawruz, meaning "New Day," because it marks the first day of the Persian "New Year." The first lady further said, "This day is the celebration of the intangible heritage of the world." The Nowruz celebrations were organized by diplomatic community of nine countries in Islamabad including Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Pakistan and Azerbaijan.

Begum Samina said it gave her immense pleasure to attend Nowruz celebrations. "I congratulate Serena Hotels and all the participating countries on this auspicious occasion. This is the beginning of the new year and a new hope to renew our commitments towards peace and humanity."

She said Nowruz was a festivity marking the first day of spring and the renewal of nature. "It includes rituals, ceremonies and cultural events, as well as the enjoyment of a special meal with loved ones," she said adding Nowruz was celebrated for over 3000 years in the Balkans, the Black Sea Basin, the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Middle East and



Wife of Turkish ambassador presenting souvenir to the First Lady Samina Alvi.



First Lady Samina Alvi, CEO Serena Hotels Aziz Boolani and diplomats cutting cake on the occasion of Nowruz festival.



First lady visiting stall of Kazakhstan.



First Lady visiting staff of Uzbekistan.



First lady visiting stall of Kyrgyzstan.



Deputy Head of Mission Kazakhstan embassy Mr Arman performs on the occasion of Nowruz festival.

other regions. She said the participating countries had given a message of peace and a bright future awaited these countries. "At this time, we also need to step up efforts to tackle the challenges of global warming. Climate change is already happening; temperatures are rising; drought and wild fires are starting to occur more frequently; rainfall patterns

are shifting; glaciers and snow are melting, and the global average sea-level is rising. To mitigate climate change, we need to reduce or prevent the emissions linked to human activities. Climate change will affect both hemispheres of the Earth." She emphasized that it was the moral obligation of the whole world to keep our planet cool and minimize

the use of fossil fuels. She told, "in Pakistan, the government has taken initiative of planting billion trees which is indeed a good step and we need to play our role in this regard. Similarly, we also need to utilize alternate sources of energy for power generation from solar and wind." Begum Samina said our festivity and celebrations had been restricted due

to emergence of Covid-19 pandemic during last year. "I hope that the process of vaccination will complete soon and we will overcome this disease. We need to be vigilant at this time of crisis because carelessness can lead to problems." She wished everyone a prosperous and happy Nowruz by saying, "may its spirit of harmony, peace and respect towards hu-

manity serves as inspiration to us all." Parliamentary Secretary for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aftab Jehangir and Chief Executive Officer of Serena Hotels Aziz Boolani also spoke on the occasion. CEO Serena Hotels Aziz Boolani who also spoke on the occasion and thanked the guests for taking part in this event in large numbers. He said

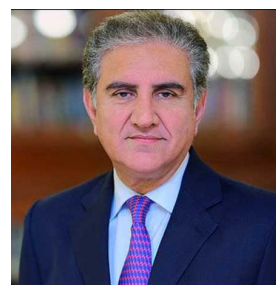
Serena Hotels, under its Cultural Diplomacy initiative, would continue to holding such events even in the prospect. Begum Samina Alvi visited the stalls set up by embassies of different countries which was followed by stage performances depicting cultures of the region. (Full coverage in the coming issue of CENTRELINE magazine)

Pakistan to support Saudia at all forums

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi held a telephonic conversation with the Saudi Foreign Minister, His Highness Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud. Conveying his profound regards for the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques His Majesty King Salman bin Abdulaziz, and His Royal Highness Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Foreign Minister Qureshi reaffirmed Pakistan's abiding fraternal ties with Saudi Arabia.

Foreign Minister Qureshi appreciated the steps taken by the Kingdom's leadership in resolving differences among the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), as well as



the recent initiative for promoting resolution of issues in Yemen through dialogue and diplomacy. The Foreign Minister underscored Pakistan's continued support for Saudi efforts aimed at promoting peace, security and prosperity in the region. He also reiterated Pakistan's support for the Kingdom's territorial integrity and sovereignty. The Saudi Foreign Minister acknowledged Pakistan's continued and steadfast support to the Kingdom of

Saudi Arabia. Praising the "Saudi Green Initiative" and the "Green Middle East Initiative" announced by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Foreign Minister Qureshi termed it as a major initiative for reducing global carbon emissions. The Saudi Foreign Minister lauded Prime Minister Imran Khan's ground-breaking measures already taken in Pakistan, in the same arena.

Govt likely to suspend train services

ISLAMABAD: Amid rising number of Covid-19 cases, the federal government was considering suspending the operation of all passenger trains throughout the country. According to sources, Pakistan Railways will allow 50 percent occupancy of passengers instead of 100 percent occupancy in trains from March 30. Currently, passenger trains are running with 70 percent occupancy throughout the country as per the new restrictions imposed by the National Command and Operation Centre (NOC) in the wake of the third wave of the pandemic. Sources said that 50 percent of passengers trains will be shut down by the end of the upcoming week and the government can suspend the operation of all passenger trains if the Covid-19 situation does not improve. — DNA

FIA arrests 7 for involvement in sugar price hike

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: FIA arrests seven people for allegedly being part of the sugar satta mafia which persistently increased sugar prices by creating an artificial shortage of the commodity. The sugar mafia earned Rs110 billion in a year by increasing sugar prices from Rs70 to Rs90 via satta, says FIA. FIA says the accused had created different social media forums and fake bank accounts to carry out illegal activities. The Commercial Banking Circle of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has arrested seven people allegedly involved with the sugar satta mafia which persistently increased sugar prices by creating an artificial shortage of the commodity,

media reported Sunday. The FIA had recently launched a crackdown against the sugar satta mafia for its involvement in money laundering. The arrested accused worked together with sugar mill owners to create the situation. During an operation, three brokers — identified as Dayal Das, Santosh Kumar, and Raj Kumar — were arrested first. In a second operation, four more people were taken into custody for their alleged involvement in the sugar scandal. According to the FIA, the accused had created different social media forums and fake bank accounts to carry out illegal activities. Sources at the FIA said that the accused were involved in creating an artificial shortage of sugar because of which the price of the commodity had skyrocketed.

266 Chinese staff back for CPEC projects

DNA

ISLAMABAD: As many as 235 personnel from PowerChina International Group Limited (PowerChina) and 31 workers from other companies, returned to Pakistan for CPEC projects with 230 boxes of anti-epidemic materials and construction equipment. According to Gwadar Pro, PowerChina indicated that this batch of staff will participate in the construction of Diamer-Bashah Dam, Lucky Coal-fired Power Station Project, Wind Power Project Group, and Thar Power Station Project. "In 2021, those projects will gradually enter the construction peak period which demands more technicians and workers," the spokesman said.

After arriving, all the 266 staff will be quarantined for 14 days before entering the construction site. The spokesman added: "At present, all the projects of PowerChina Pakistan have been operating normally. The construction has been carried out under the requirements of the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council of China (SASAC), embassies of the two countries, and the Pakistani government, while ensuring the time limit and quality. Up to now, all the projects have been smoothly constructed and have satisfied all relative parties." The personnel back to Pakistan have shown high-positivity and more than 300 staff applied to come to projects and reinforce the construction.

China, Pak need to cooperate on earth sciences

"Pak-China academic cooperation in earth sciences is not an impractical project and far from daily life"

DNA

BEIJING: CPEC needs enhanced SinoPak cooperation in field of earth sciences, said Prof. Cui Peng, the Director-General of China-Pakistan Joint Research Centre on Earth Sciences (CPJRC). He told Gwadar Pro in an exclusive interview that the "CPEC, located at the tectonic junction of the western Himalayas, is a natural museum and laboratory for earth sciences. Thus, research on geological conditions of this region is crucial for the construction of CPEC projects. What we are doing with Pakistani

scientists is aiming to ensure the security and efficiency of CPEC projects construction," he added. Cui emphasized that research on earth science can support CPEC projects and local people's well-being in four respects: providing solutions for adverse engineering and technical conditions; early warning of natural hazards; efficient utilization of mineral, marine, solar, and other natural resources; sustainable development and tackling climate change. "Pak-China academic cooperation in earth sciences is not an impractical project and far from daily life. Actually, it's closely related to people's well-being and economic development of the two countries,"

Prof. Su Lijun, Deputy Director-General of CPJRC, said. Su also cited a case of landslide on Karakoram Highway in 2010. The landslide blocked 25 kilometers of the main road and people had to cross a dammed lake with height of 118 meters by boat. In order to cope with the dilemma, scientists of CPJRC designed an advanced plan which was reckoned as impossible to implement. Finally, thanks to the plan, the landslide and dammed lake were dredged meanwhile saving \$200 million as engineering cost. Furthermore, that place has turned into a scenic spot with a beautiful lake now. Su believed that in addition to its

contribution to the construction of infrastructure projects for people's livelihood, earth science also plays a role in poverty alleviation. Geoscience can be integrated with regional poverty alleviation, which is what China is doing, and the same can be done in Pakistan. "There are two factors that lead to poverty, disease and disaster. Poverty due to disease is familial, poverty caused by disaster is regional and can be alleviated through our efforts. Up to now, CPJRC headquarter (approximately 50 acres) located on QAU campus is preparing to construct. In addition, CPJRC is cultivating a batch of earth science talents and will enroll more

Pakistani scholars to work in this field. Meanwhile, the information system and sharing platform of CPEC has been designed and its prototype has been constructed, integrating the current data resources. According to the 2021 plan of CPJRC, Su introduced that they will focus on: Deep lithosphere interaction from ocean subduction to continental; Climate change and environmental effects; Natural hazards and disaster risk reduction; Resources environment and green development. The institution also is planning to establish field observation stations in Gwadar Port and Hunza.