



Islamabad POST

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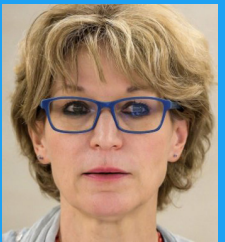
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Briefs

Developing world faces debt crisis

NEWS DESK

NEW YORK: United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the world faces intense problems of debt sustainability because of the coronavirus crisis that have not been properly understood or addressed, the Financial Times reported Monday. "The response to Covid and to the financial aspects [of the crisis] has been fragmented, and geopolitical divides are not helping," Guterres told the FT. Countries such as Brazil and South Africa had borrowed heavily from domestic lenders rather than from foreign investors, at interest rates much higher than those available to rich countries, making the dangers less visible.

PDM leaders to meet next week

MUNIR FAISAL

TAXILA: Amid political infighting between the Opposition alliance's two major parties, a meeting of PDM leaders is being scheduled next week to sort out the issues between the PPP and PML-N, former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi said Sunday. The former premier was talking to the media in Taxila while attending a wedding ceremony. He lashed out at the PTI government, saying the sitting rulers had devastated the country economically, socially and politically and the situation demanded a decisive struggle be started against the sitting regime.

O Level exam from May 10

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Education Minister Shafqat Mehmood announced on Monday that the O Level and IGCE exams will be allowed to start from May 10 instead of 15 at the request of Cambridge International Examination (CIE). Mehmood shared on Twitter that he had "received a letter from Christine Ozden, CEO Cambridge", asking the government to bring forward the O level and IGCE exams. He also shared a screenshot of the letter.

Hafeez Sheikh finally shown the door

Info Ministry being divided into two parts; Shibli to head Petroleum Ministry; Kashmir committee chairman also being changed; Fawad wants Info, Science Ministries



SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The government on Monday decided to remove Dr Abdul Hafeez Shaikh from the post of finance minister and replace him with Minister for Industries and Production Hammad Azhar, Senator Shibli Faraz confirmed. According to Faraz, Prime Minister Imran Khan had decided to bring in a new finance team in view of "the inflation that had taken place". Azhar is the third finance minister to be appointed since the PTI came to power in 2018. Prime Minister Imran "gave the portfolio of finance to Hammad Azhar who is a young

Hafeez' sacking 'victory of PDM'

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Reacting to the sacking of Hafeez Sheikh from the portfolio of finance minister, PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari declared it a "victory of PDM". "PTIMF minister needed to be elected to continue in post & senate defeat made that impossible," he added. The month of February had seen a rebound in prices of consumer items as inflation edged up to 8.7 per cent from 5.7pc in January. Non-food inflation has steadily been on the rise for the past few months due to higher energy prices.

and able minister so that he devises policies according to the ground realities of

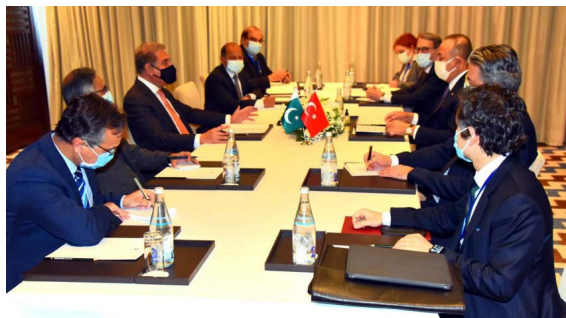
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Pakistan wants permanent solution of Afghan issue: FM

Talking with his Turkish Counterpart, he said Pakistan will continue to use its peace-making efforts

NEWS DESK

DUSHAMBE: Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi has said that Pakistan believes in permanent solution of the Afghan issue through a comprehensive political dialogue under Afghan leadership. Talking with his Turkish Counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu in Dushanbe on Monday, he said Pakistan will continue to use its peace-making efforts for



peace and stability in the region, including the Afghan peace process. Shah Mahmood Qureshi said

Pakistan and Turkey are enjoying deep fraternal ties

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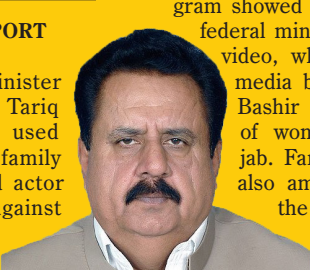
Minister uses influence to get family vaccinated

A video shared on Instagram showed the family members of the federal minister get a COVID jab

MONITORING REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Housing and Works Tariq Bashir Cheema allegedly used his influence to get his family members including famed actor Iffat Omar vaccinated against the COVID-19.

A video shared on Insta-



gram showed the family members of the federal minister get a COVID jab. The video, which was shared on social media by a close relative of Tariq Bashir Cheema, shows a group of women getting the anti-covid jab. Famous actor Iffat Omar was also amongst those who received the anti-covid vaccination.

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DOHA: A view of Pakistan Navy & Qatar Emiri Naval Force personnel during Bilateral Exercise ASAD AL BAHR II. – DNA

COVID-19 positivity ratio reaches 11.20 pc

According to details, highest positivity rate of the pandemic was recorded in Swat at 23 percent followed by Peshawar at 22 percent

SHUJAAT HAMZA

NCOC directs to further tighten lockdown

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The National Command and Operation Center (NCOC) on Monday reported that the COVID-19 positivity ratio across the country has reached 11.20 percent. According to details, highest positivity rate of the pandemic was recorded in Swat at 23 percent followed by Peshawar at 22 percent, Nowshera at 19 percent, Lahore at 17 percent and Islamabad at 16 percent.

ISLAMABAD: NCOC on Monday has decided to further tighten the lockdown to control the third wave of coronavirus. During the meeting chaired by Federal Minister for Planning and Development Asad Umar, the prevailing situation of the coronavirus was reviewed while the participants also discussed strategies to prevent further spread of the infection. Decision regarding closure of transport will be taken after holding consultation with the provinces. Earlier, NCOC had expressed concerns over increasing cases of coronavirus across the country.

15 percent tests returned positive in Faisalabad and Rawalpindi while positivity rate touched 12 percent in Malakand, Multan, Sargodha and Sialkot. Earlier, Pakistan has reported 41 deaths in the last 24 hours by novel coronavirus as the number of positive cases has surged to 659,116. The nationwide tally of fatalities has jumped to 14,256 on Monday. According to the latest figures by the NCOC 4,525 persons

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Government decides to suspend metro bus

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Government of Punjab on Monday has decided to suspend Metro bus and Orange Line train services as well as public transport from April 1 in Lahore as coronavirus cases continue rise in the city. A high level meeting under the chair of Chief Minister Usman Buzdar has decided to ban indoor and outdoor wedding ceremonies from April 1 while markets and shopping malls will close at 6pm. The meeting also decided to shut all public parks and ban dine-in services at restaurants and only takeaway will be allowed. The provincial government has made wearing of face mask mandatory.

Alvi, Khattak test positive



STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has tested positive for the coronavirus, it emerged on Monday. "I have tested positive for Covid-19. May Allah have mercy on all Covid affecteds," the president said in a tweet. He said he had only

received the first dose of the Covid-19 vaccine so far, noting that "antibodies start developing after 2nd dose that was due in a week". "Please continue to be careful," Alvi added. First Lady Samina Alvi later shared that the president has "mild symptoms but is in good spirits".

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"Aces Meet 2021-1" commences

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Multi-National air exercise "ACES Meet 2021-1" has started at an Operational Air Base of Pakistan Air Force on Monday. PAF, Royal Saudi Air Force and United States Air Force are actively participating in the exercise, while Bahrain, Egypt and Jordanian air forces are invited as observers, said a PAF news release received here, adding, Deputy Chief of Air Staff (Operations), PAF Air Vice Marshal Waqas Ahmed Sulehri was the chief guest at the opening ceremony of the exercise. Addressing the exercise participants he said, "International exercises are new neither for the participants nor for the Airpower Center of Excellence. However, this particular cycle of ACES Meet is unique because participating air forces bring along a vast experience of combat operations.

No iftar gatherings, Aitekaf at Holy Mosques

DNA

RIYADH: The Saudi government has announced that there will be no iftar gatherings or Aitekaf at the Grand Mosque in Makkah and the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah during Ramadan, according to a report by the Saudi Gazette. Head of the Presidency for the Affairs of the Two Holy Mosques Sheikh Abdul Rahman Al-Sudais said that the presidency would provide worshippers at the Grand Mosque with ready-made meals for iftar — meals at dusk when the fast is broken. The distribution of meals for sehri — meals at dawn before the fasting time starts — would not be allowed at the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah, he added.

PM Imran welcomes MBS' green initiatives

Expressing deep respects for King Salman bin Abdulaziz, the PM said the vision of Crown Prince closely aligned with his government "Clean and Green Pakistan" initiative

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan Monday appreciated Saudi Arabia's environment friendly initiative of planting 50 billion trees in the region, and offered sharing Pakistan's experiences and lessons learnt from an identical programme. The prime minister, in a letter to Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman, spoke high of the Saudi government's plans for launching the "Saudi Green Initiative" as well as rallying the region for the larger "Green Middle East Initiative" aimed at protecting the nature and planet. "The two initiatives, which inter alia include plantation of 10 billion trees in the Kingdom and its further upscaling to 50 billion in the region as part of the Green Middle East Initiative; expansion of protected areas

to more than 30 percent; protection of marine and coastal environments; and generation of 50 percent of the Kingdom's energy from renewables by 2030, are highly commendable," the prime minister said. "Have offered our support on these as there are many complementarities with our "Clean & Green Pakistan" & "10 Billion-Tree Tsunami," he said on Twitter while sharing the copy of letter written to the Saudi Crown Prince. Expressing deep respects for the Custodian of Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz, the prime minister said the vision of Crown Prince closely aligned with his government "Clean and Green Pakistan" initiative, which was investing in nature-based solutions to address climate change impacts in the country. Imran Khan told the Sau-

PM Imran Khan, MBS discuss bilateral ties

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan Monday received a telephone call from the Saudi Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Mohammed bin Salman and discussed the bilateral ties. The Crown Prince inquired about the Prime Minister's health and wished him speedy recovery. The prime minister also inquired about well-being of the Crown Prince since he had recently undergone a surgical procedure. He also highlighted Pakistan's "10 billion Tree Tsunami" initiative, which was underway in the whole country, and its potential dividends to restore ecosystem and to combat climate change. – DNA



di Crown Prince that after successfully planting 1 billion trees from 2014 to 2018, his government's "10 Billion Tree Tsunami" initiative was well underway across the whole country. "We are also expanding our protected areas - over 15 percent land and 10 percent marine area - by 2023," he remarked. He said his government's initiatives have demonstrated that planting trees not only protected nature and restores ecosystem to fight climate change, it also expanded eco-tourism and created thousands of green jobs for the youth as well as local communities. "We are also committed to shifting our energy mix towards a clean and low carbon trajectory. Like the Kingdom's vision, we are targeting 60 percent of our energy to be clean energy by 2030, which will require a major expansion of solar,

wind and hydro power generation capacity in the country," he said. Imran Khan said Pakistan cherished its cordial and brotherly relations with the Kingdom and extended its support for Saudi Arab's "Green" initiative. Imran Khan said as the two countries maintained close cooperation on climate change issues at all multilateral forums, a meaningful and structured bilateral engagement could help advance a shared vision and create mutual, beneficial opportunities for partnership. He viewed that the challenge of climate change called for greater international collaboration and a shared aspiration for sustainable development. "The world has no choice but to tread this green pathway and define a new development paradigm for the 21st century," he stated.

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Complete lockdown in Punjab cities with 12% positivity rate
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Briefs

Masood asks Biden to help end plights of Kashmiris

DNA

MUZAFFARABAD: The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) President, Sardar Masood Khan has called upon the new US administration to play its role in ending plights of the people of Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK).

"The least the US can do is to ask India to cease and reverse illicit transfer of the Indian Hindu population to the Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK) and stop killing unarmed Kashmiris in the occupied territory," the President said in an interview to a national periodical.

He asserted that Washington has to revise its brief on Kashmir. It thinks that 900,000 Indian military and para-military troops are fighting "terrorists" in Kashmir. But that is a false premise constructed by India to delude the world.

The US, he said, should call for an end to repression and restoration of civil liberties and fundamental freedoms in IOJK. Being promoter of the right to self-determination throughout the last century, the US should not stand in the way of Kashmiris's freedom of choice for their political identity as envisaged and mandated by the relevant UN Security Council resolutions.

ACE registers case against ex-PML-N lawmakers

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: The Anti-Corruption Establishment (ACE) has registered a case against the former provincial minister, Ahmed Hunjra, from Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N), former NA lawmaker Mehmood Hunjra, former chairman of district council Afzal Hunjra for illegally occupying the land of Leshariwala Jungle.

The ACE officials said that raids are being conducted for arresting the accused following the registration of the first information report (FIR) as they occupied the forest land for the last 25 years which caused financial loss to the national exchequer up to Rs50 million annually.

The DC said 2,370 acres of forest department land near Head Taunsa Barrage was occupied by the three Hunjras. Moreover, the ACE also registered case against the staff and officers of irrigation, wildlife and forest departments.

The deputy commissioner said that Lashariwala Jungle is expanded on 3,750 acres of land in Kot Addu which was retrieved by the occupiers. The reference stated that the Lashariwala Jungle will be transformed into a Safari Park.

SC commutes sentence of juvenile offender

DNA

LAHORE: The Supreme Court of Pakistan has commuted the death sentence of Muhammad Anwar, a severely physically ill juvenile offender, after hearing arguments in a petition filed by justice Project Pakistan (JPP). A three-member bench of the apex court comprising Justice Manzoor Ahmed Malik, Justice Mansoor Ali Shah, and Justice Amin ud Din Khan relied on the ossification test conducted under the orders of the Home Department Punjab on March 21, 2002 to commute the death sentence. Anwar's birth registration records and computerised national identity card confirm his age to be below 18. The order reads: "It is declared that convict Muhammad Anwar was a juvenile at the time of commission of offence within the meaning of section 7 of the Juvenile Justice System Ordinance, 2000 and is entitled to the benefit of Presidential Order dated 13.12.2001." While hearing the petition the bench has repeatedly emphasized on taking every precaution to save a man's life. ASC Anwar Hussain represented Anwar before the court.



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaiser in a meeting with Advisor to Prime Minister of Parliamentary Affairs Dr. Baber Awan, Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Syed Fakhar Imam and Federal Minister for Science and Technology Ch Fawad Hussain. – DNA

Crackdown intensified against SOP violators in Faisalabad

Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ali suddenly checked the implementation of Corona SOPs at various banks and plazas and took action on violation of Corona SOPs

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: The district administration has registered FIR against eight persons in a single day for non use of face masks and violating Corona SOPs, including three banks, plaza management and 4 persons at public points (General Bus Stand and shopping mall Tandlianwala) while sealed two mobile shops at katcheri bazar. In addition, people without face masks present in the Roundabout clock tower were made to stand as punishment facing towards clock tower for some minutes. Deputy Commissioner Muhammad

Ali suddenly checked the implementation of Corona SOPs at various banks and plazas and took action on violation of Corona SOPs at Bank Al Habib, Habib Bank, Faisal Bank on Bilal Road besides plaza and directed to register FIR against management. Assistant Commissioners City and Sadar Syed Ayub Bukhari and Umar Maqbool was also with him. The Deputy Commissioner said that the third wave of Corona is increasing day by day and against those who do not implement SOPs and do not wear face masks they have to face FIR beside arrest now, therefore, while proving to be a responsible citizen,

make sure to use the face mask in any case to avoid legal action. He also checked the wearing of face masks by the passengers at the General Bus Stand and two motorcyclists were handed over to police for not wearing face masks. The Deputy Commissioner asked the citizens to use face masks while going out of the house for the protection of their health and that of their families. Meanwhile, the Assistant Commissioners also took action on the violation of Corona SOPs at different places.

Vaccination drive against polio
As many as 1.329 million children under 5 years of

age would be administered polio vaccine drops in the Faisalabad district during the on going Anti Polio Campaign which would be continued till 2 April and total 3549 teams will be on duty for this purpose. Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ali administered polio drops to children and monitored the performance of static teams at General Bus Stand and other localities. CEO DHA Dr. Bilal Ahmad, SDRTA Zameer Hussain and other officers of the health department were also present on the occasion. Deputy Commissioner went inside the buses and checked the finger marking by the polio

teams and confirmed from parents about vaccination of their children. He also checked the presence of polio teams at different points besides checked the record. He said that repeated anti polio campaign were being carried out to completely root out the chance of polio virus. He urged upon the parents to get their children vaccinated during the anti polio campaign for complete eradication of polio virus in the country. He directed the health department officers for effective monitoring of the campaign to achieve the 100 % target. Deputy Commissioner directed that polio teams should be pres-

ent on static points at passengers transport stands, busiest intersections, markets, hospitals, dispensaries, motorway, railway station, recreational places and other sites. He said that strict monitoring would be carried out to the campaign and no negligence would be tolerated during the campaign of anti polio in the entire district. CEO said that monitoring officers were supervise the campaign to check the performance of polio teams. He informed that all resources have been utilized for the publicity of anti polio campaign including making the announcements at street level through Mosques.



ISLAMABAD: Federal minister for energy, Omar Ayub chaired a meeting with Danish technical energy team along with Lis Rosenholm, ambassador of Denmark to Pakistan. – DNA

LHC issues notice to NAB on Khawaja Asif's bail plea

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) issued on Monday a notice to the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) to submit comments on a petition moved by PML-N MNA Khawaja Asif seeking post-arrest bail. A two-member bench, headed by Justice Sarfraz Dogar, took up the bail petition. After a preliminary hearing, the bench put the corruption watchdog on notice to file its response to the bail petition of the former foreign minister by next hearing. The court put off the hearing until April 14. Asif through his counsel Barrister Haider Rasul Mirza filed the petition which stated that the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) had arrested him from Islamabad last year on December 29. He contended that the corruption watchdog apprehended him despite the fact that he had provided it all the relevant records regarding his assets. Besides, the same record is also available with the ECP and Federal Board of Revenue (FBR). Khawaja Asif pleaded with the bench to order his release on bail. – DNA

CDA initiates operation against Afghani Basti

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) administration started in a large scale operation against an illegal Afghan basti in Sector C-12, demolished several illegal structures. During the operation, very valuable 50 kanals of government land has also been handed over. According to details, the Capital Development Authority (CDA) administration is conducting continuous operations against illegal constructions

and encroachments. In this regard, a mega operation has been launched against illegal constructions and occupation in Sector C-12 under the supervision of the Enforcement Department of the CDA. Land mafia occupied CDA's billions of rupees worth of government land in Sector C-12 and built an Afghan Basti.

CDA directed to fasten pace of work
Administration of Capital Development Authority (CDA) has directed to fasten the pace of ongoing developmental work at Islamabad

Expressway. CDA has written to WAPDA and SNGPL to shift different pipe lines of 6 inches somewhere else for ensuring the timely completion of the said project. According to detail, CDA is committed for providing best travel facilities to the citizens. Work is underway for the betterment of road infrastructure, construction of new roads, avenues, ways, and bridges. Developmental work is underway at Islamabad Expressway. Two more lanes are being added at Expressway till T

Chowk. On the other hand, pace of work on PWD underpass will be fastened and the project will be completed till the May of 2021. Similarly, almost 50% work on Korang bridge has also been completed. This project will be completed till October 2021. Slip overs will be opened for managing the flow of traffic so that traffic flow may not be affected during work. Railways officials have been approached for the expansion of Railways Bridge. Railway officials have assured for early completion of construction of bridge.

Passenger van crushes six children to death

DNA

KHAIRPUR: At least six school children were killed when a speeding passenger van ran them over in Sindh's Khairpur on Monday.

According to the police, the accident occurred near Kot Lahu town of the Khairpur district. Three of the children died on the spot while the rest succumbed to their injuries at a hospital.

On getting information, local people rushed to the spot of the accident and shifted the deceased and injured to the nearest hospital on their own. They lamented a lack of response from the authorities concerned. Later, enraged family members of the deceased children and local residents staged a protest demonstration on Mehran National Highway, blocking it by setting fire to tyres. They chanted slogans against the district administration and transporters.

'Holi' celebrated in Attock city

FAISAL MUNIR

ATTOCK: The Hindu and Sikh communities celebrated 'Holi' a festival of colours to welcome spring here on Monday at Valmeci Mandir.

The festival is celebrated every year in February or March and signifies new beginnings leaving behind winter and welcoming spring.

In this regard, a special gathering was held at Valmeci Temple of Attock. Special sermons were delivered, preaching love and peace while prayers were offered for prosperity of Pakistan. Sweets and meals were distributed among all community members.

Talking to media persons on this occasion, Pandit Sarwan Kumar said that the festival of colours rejuvenates the spirit of fun, freedom, love, respect and happiness to blend myths with religion for promoting harmony. Felicitating the Hindu community on the festival, he said it welcomes spring, brings joy, festivity and happiness for all sections of the society and promotes celebration among all communities.

Stepfather arrested for role in rape

STAFF REPORT

FAISALABAD: Police on Monday arrested the stepfather of a five-year-old on charges of raping and murdering a five-year-old girl. The girl was found murdered in the city a couple of days ago, with a subsequent postmortem report stating she was subjected to sexual violence before the murder. The report had said the girl was choked to death. Cuts from a sharp object were also found on her body. Police said it took the victim's stepfather into custody on suspicion of his involvement and during the course of the interrogation, the suspect revealed he had raped and murdered the child.

Balochistan employees block Quetta roads

DNA

QUETTA: A traffic jam was reported near Quetta's Secretariat Chowk after Balochistan government employees blocked it during a protest on Monday.

The protesters, all members of the Balochistan Employees Grand Alliance, said that they will not move till the government meets their demands. They have demanded a 25% increase in their salaries. "We will not move till the government issues a notification on the salary increase and hands it to us," a protester said. The prices of commodities are going up by the day and we can't afford them anymore, another government employee said.

The protesters have started marching towards the Edhi Chowk. People in Chaman staged a protest against the dumping of garbage near their houses on Bypass Road. They claimed that the trash has been dumped by the municipal corporation.

Masajid to remain open during Ramzan

MEHMOOD ABDULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Sahibzada Noor-ul-Haq Qadri said the country-wide Masajid would remain open during the holy month of Ramadan-ul-Mubarak under strict adherence to Covid-19 prevention guidelines aiming to control the spread of deadly virus. Speaking at a Hizf-o-Qirat contest as chief guest, he advised the faithful to follow the precautionary measures while performing the religious obligations sans dropping the guard against the coronavirus pandemic. The culture of Quran recitation was being promoted in the country by discouraging the culture of



singing and dancing. In the Hizf-o-Qirat contest, a total of 14 Huffaz and Qurra from out of 48 were selected for recitation of the holy Quran during Qayam-ul-Lail in Faisal Masjid during final nine nights of Ramadan-ul-Mubarak. The contest was held in Conference Hall, Dawah Academy, Faisal Masjid. The selected Huffaz would recite the holy Quran from Esha prayers till Sehri, Responding to a question, the minister said the preparations of hajj would be completed in light of directions of Saudi government. The government was waiting the consent of Saudi Government for inking Hajj agreement. And the hajj agreement would be inked after receiving green signal from the Saudi government.

Briefs

PNCA declares talent hunt contest result

IBRAR KHAN

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) on Monday announced the results of week-16 of PNCA talent hunt music edition. According to results the first Jury award was claimed by Abdul Rehman, second by Ahmed and third by Akash Gill. While an award titled People's Choice was bagged by Hassan Nouman. Announcing the results through a video message, Director General PNCA Fozia Saeed said the contestant Muhammad Bilal, Maqbool and Sabir Khan also performed well, adding that PNCA would give them an opportunity to perform in its functions. PNCA has started this programme for the promotion of classical and semi-classical to folk, modern tunes and pop singing among the younger generation and to groom their hidden talent at the National Art Gallery. Renowned professionals in different specialized music fields were taking auditions of registered participants at PNCA. DG PNCA further said the Talent Hunt programme was attracting a large number of young music aspirants as hundreds of participants has shown interest for registration of the said programme to explore their skills.

Police launch search operation

SHAHEEN HANIF

RAWALPINDI: Police on special directive of City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi on Monday launched a search operation in Munawar Colony and adjoining areas in the jurisdiction of Morgah Police Station, said a police spokesman. He informed that heavy police contingent, Elite Force, Special Branch personnel and Ladies police under the supervision of SHO Morgah Police Station conducted an operation in the area and searched 114 houses while 271 persons were checked and several interrogated. Police also checked particulars of 63 tenants during the search operation. According to Superintendent Police (SP) Potohar, the search operations to net criminals and proclaimed offenders were regularly being conducted under National Action Plan in different areas of the district particularly to ensure law and order.

Punishment is not for revenge: Chohan

FAISAL MUNIR

ATTOCK: Provincial Minister for Prisons Fayyaz ul Hassan Chohan Monday said, Punishment is not for the revenge, but to lesson the crime and reform the criminal. The motto of PTI's government is to make prisoners useful members of the society and for the purpose reforms are being made in prisons across the Punjab. Addressing a press conference in Attock, Chohan said that regular meetings of high officials of prisons are held to ensure better facilities to the prisoners and to reform their lives. 29000 prisoners are imprisoned in 43 prisons across the province completing their sentence for different crimes, said Chohan adding welfare of the jail staff is also among the priorities of this govt. He said that financial assistance to needy staff of the prisons is being given while Prisons Foundation Fund has also been restored. He said that during his tenure as minister prisons, he made 13 visits of different jails to know the actual condition of the prisons and the prisoners as well. On the special directives of the Chief Minister Punjab, provincial ministers are visiting different districts to ensure facilities to the people and to solve their problems on priority, he said.



RAWALPINDI: President of Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) Nasir Mirza presenting a souvenir to the Ambassador of Nepal during his visit to RCCI. – DNA

Nepal envoy for direct flights to promote trade

RCCI President Mohammad Nasir Mirza gave a short summary on RCCI current and ongoing programs. Tourism, Pharmaceutical and IT are key sectors where possible joint ventures can be made

ZUBAIR AHMAD

RAWALPINDI: Ambassador of Nepal Tapas Adhikari, has stressed that Pakistan International Airline (PIA) should explore the possibility of starting direct flights between Islamabad and Kathmandu that would help in promoting two-way trade between the two countries. Both the countries enjoy cordial relationships and with resumption of flights this will further strengthen the close trade ties between the two countries. The ambassador made these remarks during his visit to the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) here on Monday.

RCCI President, Mohammad Nasir Mirza, Senior Vice President Osman Ashraf, Vice President Shahraiz A Malik and members of the executive committee were also present on the occasion. He said that trade promotion exchange of delegation would help



both countries to improve the bilateral trade ties. He said that Pakistan and Nepal have great scope to enhance cooperation in the tourism sector as both countries possess the highest peaks in the world.

Both countries are an important members of SAARC and stressed that Pakistani business community should visit Nepal while he would also try to bring a delegation of Nepalese businessmen to Pakistan for promoting business

linkages between both countries. Speaking at the occasion, RCCI President Mohammad Nasir Mirza gave a short summary on RCCI current and ongoing programs. Tourism, Pharmaceutical and IT are key sectors where possible joint ventures can be made. Pakistan and Nepal should focus on developing strong business linkages between their private sectors in order to explore all untapped areas of bilateral trade and economic relations as the current volume of trade was far less than the actual potential of both countries.

He informed that RCCI has been organizing a Made in Pakistan exhibition in Nepal and expressed hope that once we get out of COVID-19 we will resume the expo.

Govt urged for reconsidering amendments in NEPRA Act

RAJA PERVAIZ

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) on Monday appealed the government to reconsider amendments in NEPRA Act and amend it in accordance with the aspirations of business community. The amendments made in the NEPRA Act through an ordinance to put in place a mechanism for automatic hike in electricity tariff of about Rs.5.36 per unit (34 per cent) over the next 27 months.

Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, President, ICCI said that power tariffs in Pakistan were considered highest in the region, which increased the cost of doing business and rendered local products uncompetitive in world markets. He was of the view that under the Circular Debt Management Plan (CDMP) of the government envisaged in the ordinance, the average uniform power rate would gradually go up to over Rs.21 per unit, excluding taxes, duties, surcharges and other add-ons in the bills from its current level of over Rs.15 per unit.

He said that according to some reports, the automatic power tariff hike by NEPRA would put an additional burden and hike in the cost of doing business and enhance inflation for the common man. Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan said that the Prime Minister Imran Khan was striving for promoting the ease of doing business to make Pakistan an attractive country for business and investment activities. The business class was the backbone of the economy, he urged the and urged the government to take

the business community on board while making key economic decisions with consultation with them that would prove help in development of economy. He urged the government to make changes in the ordinance in consultation with the business community to remove its negative implications for the business and economic activities. Fatma Azim Senior Vice President and Abdul Rehman Khan Vice President ICCI said that after the amendment in NEPRA Act, the power consumers will also to face burden.

RDA conducts raids against illegal housing schemes

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA), on the special directive of Director General (DG) Abdul Sattar, has conducted raids at different areas and collected huge amount of illegal housing schemes and unauthorized construction. The enforcement staff of Metropolitan Planning and Traffic Engineering (MP&TE) Directorate along with Land Use and Building Control (LU&BC) Wing of RDA has sealed an under construction building at Plot No. 20 in Eidghar Scheme Asghar Mall Road. An FIR has also been lodged against Usman Qureshi, Managing Director of an Illegal Housing Scheme namely Rudn Enclave. LU&BC Wing also displayed Pana Flex against illegal buildings namely Dominion Mall Bahria Town Phase-8 and Minara Heights Project, GT Road advising the citizens not to invest in any illegal project which is not approved by the authorities concerned of RDA. The MP&TE Directorate has also issued challans to five illegal housing schemes namely Faisal Qayyum, Rawal City, Amazon City, Iqra City and Khayaban-e-Iftikhar. The authority issued notices to Hamdard City and Morgah subdivision whereas fees/charges amounting to Rs 85.10 million were collected from various private housing schemes. On the directives of the DG, the Building Control Wing was conducting crackdown against illegal, unauthorized commercial and residential construction activities including plazas, shops, schools and other illegal buildings. The RDA spokesman informed that the DG had directed the authorities concerned to take strict action against encroachments, illegal and unauthorized construction and commercial activities in residential areas without any discrimination. The RDA had advised the citizens not to invest in any illegal and unauthorized project, he added. – DNA



ATTOCK: Provincial Minister for Prisons, Fiaz-ul-Hassan Chohan, chairing a meeting held at Deputy Commissioner office. – Photo by Faisal Munir / DNA

DC directs to ensure SOPs observance

All possible safety measures were being taken to protect the citizens and the authorities concerned had been directed to ensure strict implementation of the SOPs

SHUJAAT HAMZA

RAWALPINDI: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rawalpindi Capt. (R) Anwar ul Haq on Monday urged the citizens to wear face masks which help stop the spread of coronavirus and also directed the authorities concerned to accelerate raids to check Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) violations. He informed that Rawalpindi district administration officers, under their ongoing campaign launched to check implementation of coronavirus SOPs issued by the Punjab government, inspected 18 mosques and madaras besides conducting 41 raids at public transport vehicles. He said fines amounting to Rs 60,000 were imposed on the rules violators

and 15 vehicles were also impounded. Similarly, 14 bus terminals were raided to check implementation of the SOPs while the violators were penalized with Rs 12,000 fines, he added. He said 66 public parks were also inspected and Rs 2900 fines were imposed on those who breached the SOPs. 134 shopping malls, markets and plazas were checked under efforts being made by the administration to contain spread of coronavirus and 71 violators were imposed fines amounting to Rs 99,500. The raiding teams also checked 21 marriage halls and 123 restaurants while a marriage hall and 15 restaurants were sealed for violating the guidelines issued by the government and penalized with fines amounting to Rs 164,500. The DC urged the citizens to follow the coronavirus SOPs and adopt all possible precautionary measures against coronavirus. All possible safety measures were being taken to protect the citizens and the authorities concerned had been directed to ensure strict implementation of the SOPs. He informed that the officers concerned had been instructed to remain on the frontline to fulfill their



strict implementation of the SOPs. He informed that the officers concerned had been instructed to remain on the frontline to fulfill their

Kidnapper held, abductee recovered

RAWALPINDI: The police on Monday claimed to have arrested an accused involved in kidnapping of a person for Rs 30 million ransom and recovered the abductee safely. According to SHO, Westridge police station, the police team after hectic efforts managed to arrest the accused namely Pirzada who had abducted a person namely Asadullah for Rs 30 million ransom. He informed that on the complaint of the abductee's brother Sabaz Ali, a case was registered in Westridge police station and police started investigation. Superintendent Police (SP) Potohar Syed Ali constituted a police team under his supervision which made hectic efforts to trace the culprits and safely recovered the abductee, he added. Asadullah informed the police that he borrowed Rs 600,000 in 2003 from Feroz Khan, a moneylender, who was father of the accused Pirzada. The accused demanded Rs 30 million saying the amount was interest of the loan which he had taken from his father and abducted him for not paying the amount. City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi Muhammad Ahsan Younas appreciated SP Potohar, SHO Westridge and the police team for successful raid and recovering the abductee safely. – DNA

PSF to carry out research on PPEs

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Science Foundation (PSF) has decided to carry out indigenous research to better understand and address challenges pertaining to 'Effect of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Waste on Environment and its Management in Pakistan'. The concept proposals have been invited from the Research and Development (R&D) Professionals, Researchers, Scientists or Technologists or Engineers from Higher Education Commission (HEC) recognized public and private sector universities, public sector R&D organizations and industry. The research is being carried out under the PSF project "Competitive Research Programme" and the last date to submit the concept proposals is April 7, an official of PSF told media. The Principal Investigator should be from HEC recognized University or public sector R&D organization/private industry can be taken onboard for pilot scale/commercial trials, production and marketing activities. The research programme involve Consortium Research Grants (involving multiple organizations/institutions from multiple professions/disciplines), Triple Helix Model (Research in collaboration with industry) and Individual Grants (R&D Professionals, Researchers, Scientists/Technologists/Engineers), the official mentioned. The concept proposals must be prepared on idea of Development of Solutions through Indigenous Research and Innovation having potential to develop Technology-driven R&D solution.

IHCBA granted time to identify accused

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday rejected the plea of 21 lawyers for restoration of their licenses in misconduct case and granted more time to Islamabad High Court Bar Association (IHCBA) to identify the accused involved in vandalizing the IHC building. A larger bench of IHC headed by Chief Justice Athar Minallah heard the misconduct case against 21 lawyers in IHC attack matter. Chief Justice Athar Minallah remarked that all bars had admitted this incident shouldn't be happened and condemned it, adding that the attackers were not outsiders. Shoaib Shaheen Advocate pleaded that the lawyers who had no connection with the incident shouldn't be punished. The lawyer contended that the first information report (FIR) of the incident had been registered and nominated accused had been arrested following it. The chief justice said that the bar had to take decision regarding what to do to stop such practices in future. Shoaib Shaheen argued that bar had condemned the incident, adding that it was creating an impression that the judiciary was weakening the lawyers. To this, the bench said that bar should itself give name of the accused involved in the incident.

Briefs

Dr. Ismat to serve as add'l secy BISP

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Ismat Tahira, a BS-21 has been given the additional charge of Additional Secretary Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) with immediate effect, said a notification of Establishment Division (ED).

Dr. Ismat Tahira, an officer of Pakistan Administrative Service, (PAS) is presently serving as Additional Secretary, Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Division has been assigned the additional duties for three months period or till the posting of a regular incumbent; whichever is earlier, said a notification issued here.

Similarly Farhan Aziz Khawaja, a BS-21 officer of PAS, presently awaiting posting in Establishment Division, is transferred and his services are being placed at the disposal of National School of Public Policy (NSPP), on deputation basis, on standard terms and conditions, with immediate effect and until further orders.

While Tauqeer Ali Akbar (OMG/BS-18) presently serving Government of Baluchistan, is repatriated and directed to report to Establishment Division with effect from 27-03-2021, the notification added.

Pink Residency reference adjourned

RAJA PERVAIZ

ISLAMABAD: An Accountability Court (AC) on Monday adjourned hearing till April 8, in Pink Residency reference connected with fake accounts scam against Omni Group's Abdul Ghani Majeed and others. AC-II Judge Muhammad Azam Khan heard the graft reference filed by National Accountability Bureau (NAB). The court granted one-day exemption from hearing to Khawaja Abdul Ghani Majeed on his lawyer's request. During hearing, the judge continued recording the statement of prosecution witness Waheed Akhter. The court instructed the defense lawyer to also conduct cross-examination with the witness on next hearing. The prosecution witness Abdul Khateeb was also summoned on April 8, for testimony by the judge. After this, the hearing was adjourned to next date.

IESCO issues power suspension schedule

DNA

ISLAMABAD: According to Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO)'s spokesman, System Maintenance is in process. Therefore power supply of below mentioned feeders/areas will be temporary suspended as per given schedule:
On Dated March 30th From 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM Gharyal, I-14/3, Chakral, Gulvana, Thakra, Kot Dhakim, KTM2, RTM, G-10/2, G-10 Center, EOBI, Bella Road, G-10/4, ICT, Ittawar Bazaar, Isolation Hospital, Lohi Bhair, RCCI 1,2,3,4&5, Chowk Pandori, Sihala, Chakri, Arsalan Poultry Farm, SPD, Parial, Navy 1&2, Sohan Garden 1&2, River Garden Feeders From 09:00 AM to 04:00 PM Syed Kasran Feeder From 10:00 AM to 12:00 Noon, Margalla Feeder From 10:00 AM to 01:00 PM Kot Sarang, Dhok Pathan, Tahi, Sagri, Fazal Ahmad Shaheed, New Chua, Kallar, Nara, Kallar City, Ghousia Colony, National Market, Gulzar-e-Quaid, Jamia Masjid, Dhok Najo, Banni, Zafar-ul-Haq, People's Colony, Chearing Cross, Officer Colony, Jhangi, Noon, Mohanpura Feeders, From 09:00 AM to 12:00 PM, Dharnal, Kot Sarang, Nika Kalan, Chaji Mar, Moorat, Jund-2, Mahfooz Shaheed, Gagan Feeders From 09:00 AM to 01:00 PM, Highway, Chara, Ghauri Town, NIHT, Pindi Point, Nangle, Beirut, Kotli Sattian, Golf City Feeders From 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM Capt. Nisar Shaheed, MES I&II, Bhaini, Mangla Cantt, Gadari Feeders and surrounding areas will be remain without power.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Jordan Ibrahim Almadani taking interest in various items displayed at a stall on the occasion of Nowruz Festival, at Islamabad Serena Hotel. – DNA

Baloch people demand respect and inclusive governance

Hussein Wadela, a Balochitan National Party (BNP) leader commented that the real problem for Baloch leaders is not that of economy, but autonomy. Balochistan's wealth is underground, but we have no control or authority over it

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: All that the Baloch in Gwadar want is respect and equitable living. While they crave for development, they are also fearful of being outnumbered by outsiders in the coming years. They believe the Gwadar Port, Free Industrial Zone and the new international airport – currently under construction – promise new opportunities but they want an equitable share for themselves too. These apprehensions and demands resonated at a round table dialogue "Balochistan Development but How" in Gwadar, participated by local politicians, local stakeholders, fishermen, youth, and journalists at the Gwadar Press Club in cooperation

with the Center for Research and Security Studies (CRSS). Hussein Wadela, a Balochitan National Party (BNP) leader commented that the real problem for Baloch leaders is not that of economy, but autonomy. Balochistan's wealth is underground, but we have no control or authority over it. It seems that after seven decades, we have learned nothing and until the center listening to the sons of Baloch soil, we collectively won't get anywhere. Baboo Gulab, the former Nazim, Gwadar, said that in addition to challenges in literacy, Baloch people continue to struggle with means of support, fishermen in particular need guidance, technical and financial support as well as assurances on livelihoods.

The whole process of development through CPEC projects, he argued, would be better and smoother if it was inclusive and took on board local input. "The indigenous population has no say in what happens to the land where they live. There are no measures to ensure that current developments and infrastructure expansion is made digestible, understandable, and thus acceptable to locals," he argued. Senator Akram Dashti seconded Gulab's viewpoint, saying local consultations were completely missing from the process and hence no ownership of the new infrastructure that is coming up in and around Gwadar. Lack of access also fuels fears among common people that the "development may be designed to exploit and occupy our resources," he said.

The development of the Gwadar port should have led to employment, economic empowerment, and prosperity. The aforementioned points about unemployment, lack of benefits from existing development, literacy rate, and the need to respect Baloch people both through decent treatment and genuine democratic consultation were echoed by many speakers at the venue, including Ejaz Baloch, the Provincial General Secretary of the PPP, Majid Sorabi of the BNP, Usman Kalmati of the PMLN, Younas Anwar of the Gwadar Mahigeer Ittehad, Yousaf Faryadi of the PPP, Tahir Jamil, a school teacher, Noor Gina of the BNP, and Khair Mohammad of the Baloch Students Organizations (BS).

Younas Anwar, in particular, highlighted the issues that fishermen of Gwadar have been facing particularly since the launch of the CPEC projects; the average monthly incomes of fishermen families have declined from 40,000 to 15,000 or less. "We feel we are being treated as "Dalits" (untouchables) and looked down upon as inferior", Younas said in a voice loaded with emotions. He also reiterated a commonly circulating complaint that the under construction Eastern Expressway has restricted access for the locals to the sea and also affected fish breeding as well as shrimp habitats. Additionally, the fish catch by the small boats has diminished because of the fishing trawlers from Iran and Sindh

which come and sweep the waters, leaving little fish for the locals. Most of the participants also complained of a disconnect between Gwadar locals and the Chinese companies operating in the region. They mostly work through Pakistani contractors from other regions. This also results in lower wages for the Gwadar residents, who are paid less than what the contractors report to their Chinese principals. Participants demanded legislation by the provincial and federal governments to protect the rights of Gwadar communities as well as prevent further acquisition of lands by outsiders. We don't want to be outnumbered by outsiders in the coming years and hence need protection, they said.



ISLAMABAD: Wife of the Italian ambassador taking interest in various items displayed at a stall on the occasion of Nowruz Festival, at Islamabad Serena Hotel. – DNA

Police to continue crackdown against criminals: SSP

SHAHEEN HANIF

ISLAMABAD: Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) (Operations) Dr. Syed Mustafa Tanvir on Monday said crackdown against criminals would continue to bring perpetrators to justice. All the available resources would be used to reduce crimes in the city, he said, a news release said. Meanwhile, the police arrested 16 outlaws including four members of bike lifters and recovered stolen motorbikes, narcotic and weapons from their possession. Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Mubarak ali constituted special police teams under the supervision of SHO Shams colony Aamir Abbas along with other officials. This team arrested four bike lifters namely Ahmed Hussain, Hamza, Abdullah and Yousaf and recovered two stolen motorbikes and weapons from their possession. Likewise, Koral police arrested three accused and recovered stolen valuable from their possession. Ramana police arrested accused Noor Muhammad and recovered one 30 bore pistol from him. Similarly, Sihala police arrested two accused Wasif Saleem and Muhammad and recovered two 30 bore pistols along with ammunition from their possession. Bhara Kahu police arrested accused Qamer and recovered one 30 bore pistol from him. Sabzi Mandi police arrested accused Israr Hussain and recovered 220 gram Ice from him.

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) on Monday launched five-day tree-planting campaign on the university premises, following the government's 10 Billion Tree Plantation Campaign to tackle threat of environmental degradation and massive deforestation. The campaign was organized by the University's Department of Agricultural Sciences. The tree planting campaign will continue till April 02. Addressing the launching ceremony of the campaign, Vice Chancellor AIOU Prof. Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum said the government has launched the 10 Billion Tree Tsunami Campaign to tackle the threat of environmental



degradation and massive deforestation which is a highly significant and commendable initiative to make Pakistan green and pollution free. "It is our national responsibility to plant and preserve trees to transfer clean and green Pakistan to our future generations", said the Vice Chancellor. The office of the VC, AIOU has directed deans of all the

CDA to plant 100000 saplings along Srinagar highway

MEHMOOD ABDULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Capital Development Authority (CDA) will plant 100,000 different species of trees along 12 kilometer Srinagar highway from Golra interchange to Zero point. A CDA official told media that civic body has planted 15000 saplings during last few days under spring tree plantation drive. Special slopes have been made at the green belt on both sides of the road upon special directions of CDA Chairman, he said. Trees of height up to 10 to

12 feet would be planted on these slopes, he said adding, trees have been planted on both the sides of road opposite to G-12, G-13, and G-10. He said during the sections and phase, trees would be planted opposite to G-9, and G-11. Whereas, missing trees and grass have been replanted between Golra interchange and Zero point. Landscape of all the loops of Peshawar Mor interchange has been completed, he informed adding, landscaping of Golra interchange would be started in the next phase.

DC starts anti-polio drive

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The five-day anti-polio campaign kicked off in the entire district here on Monday to cover more than 885,000 children below five years of age. Deputy Commissioner (DC) Capt. Anwar Ul Haq inaugurated the drive by administering drops to children at the district health authority office. Speaking on the occasion, the DC directed officials concerned to set up check posts at entry points of the city in order to vaccinate every child coming from outside. He said that anti-polio drive would not be compromised despite the prevailing COVID-19 situation and directed the officials to bring down the refusal and non-attended polio cases to the possible lowest level. Anwar said that polio was a national issue and it was the responsibility of all to play an effective role to make the country polio free. The DC advised parents to come forward and play their role to ensure vaccination of their children to eliminate the disease. On the occasion, Chief Executive Officer District Health Authority Dr. Faiza Kanwal briefed that around 2964 polio teams including, 307 fixed points, 129 transit points, 240 Union council medical officers, and 663 area charges are participating in the drive to make the campaign a success.

4 fireworks dealers arrested

RAWALPINDI: The police have arrested four fireworks dealers during a crackdown launched here on Monday. According to a police spokesman, in line with special directives of City Police Officer (CPO) Muhammad Ahsan Younas, Mandra police team led by Station House Officer (SHO) launched a crackdown against fireworks dealers and managed to net four namely Zulqarnain, Attique, Usman and Hashim and recovered an ample quantity of fireworks items from their possession. He said the arrested suppliers were going to deliver fireworks items to different parties. He said that no one would be allowed to violate the law adding, violators would be treated with iron hands. Separate cases have been registered against the fireworks dealers, he added. – APP

RWMC, Albayrak to start sanitation

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: On the directions of Managing Director Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC), Awas Manzoor Tarrar, the RWMC and Albayrak's communications team carried out multi-dimensional cleanliness drive at Affandi Colony, Sadiqabad, Dhoke Kala Khan, Bilal Khan, Dhoke Kashmirian and Rehmanabad to aware public regarding COVID-19 SOP's. The Company's spokesman told media on Monday that on the occasion of Pakistan Day, the routes of the parade were cleaned besides carrying out special cleanliness operation in the three days rain spell in the city. The communications team of RWMC fixed an awareness camp outside Jamia Masjid Ghousia, Rehmanabad and disseminated the message of cleanliness and distributed anti-COVID pamphlets among the general public. They were requested to follow the SOP's regarding coronavirus i.e. to wash hands with soap for 20 seconds, maintain distance, wear mask, avoid gatherings, cover nose and face if there was flu or cough. The general public was also informed not to burn the waste, dump it in the containers or hand it over to the waste specialist of the companies. Precautionary measures regarding dengue fever were also highlighted. PR teams also held meeting with mosque clerics and requested to disseminate the message of cleanliness among the prayers/worshippers in the Khutbat-e-Jumma or Khutbat-e-Eidain.

AIOU initiates 5-day plantation drive

Old world order

EVER since President Biden's arrival into the Oval Office, traditional US rivalries have reached yet another pinnacle of hostility. The back and forth with Russia and China has continued—and the Biden Administration has left no opportunity to issue condemnations for alleged human rights abuses in both states. The only difference this time is that China is now perceived by the US as the most major threat. But it is clear from the US President's statements on Friday, that the bipolar world from the Cold War decades might soon be our new reality, if the acrimony continues to take rise.

While this has been obvious for several years, what is more surprising is that even regional and global developmental projects initiated by Beijing have struck a nerve within the policy circles of Washington. The Belt and Road Initiative in particular, has been seen by the US as a threat, and it looks to be seeking out support from its traditional allies in the 'west' in the UK and Europe to come up with a competing plan.

This however, is easier said than done. China's BRI has been decades in the making, and actually comes from a necessity to develop global routes that benefited both China and states along the route immensely. CPEC for instance, grants China a crucial route into the Indian Ocean. A better strategy would be to invest in cooperation and take advantage of all that BRI has to offer. Much like India in Asia, the US is deliberately pushing itself against cooperative tendencies globally. President Biden must look to strike a different note compared to his predecessors. International politics should move past old hostilities, and chart a new course together, instead of in competition.

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti
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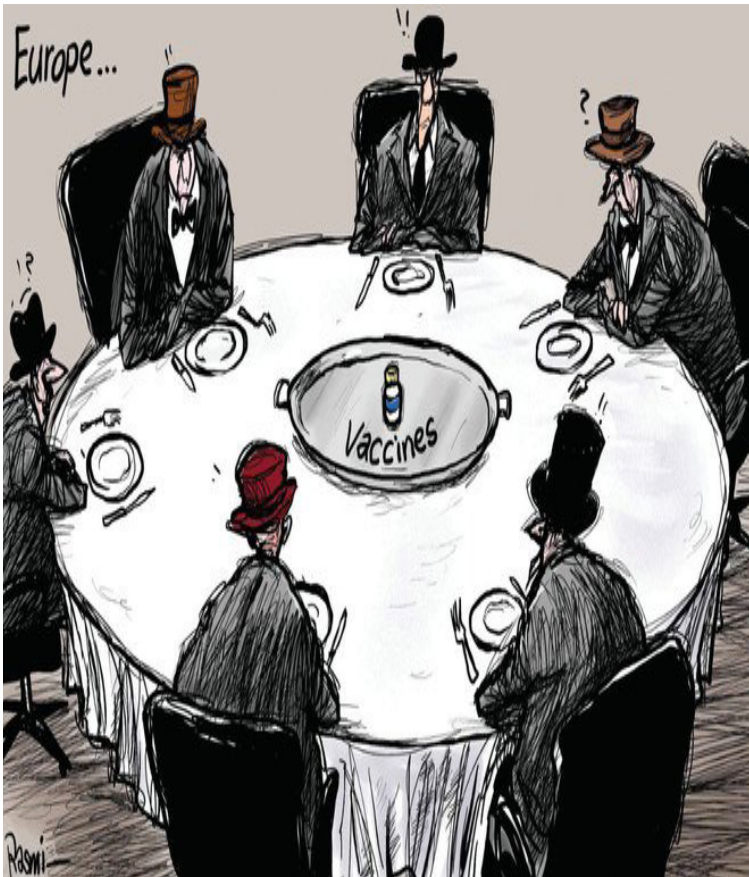
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Pre-Ramzan hike

AS the holy month of Ramzan is around the corner, the prices of essential commodities have seen a sharp hike. It seems this time like every year, the unnatural food inflation in the month of Ramzan will challenge the authorities' resolve to keep the prices of basic items in check. Contrary to the tall claims to punish the hoarders, the authorities, in reality, look to be helpless every time such a scenario arises.

The recent increase in perishable and non-perishable items' rate suggests that the government will fail once more to implement its writ in the market. Undoubtedly, the price hike will affect the lower- and middle-income households the most. This yearly trend is problematic on part of market forces.

Besides, it is not that the officials do not have any knowledge of this. They can easily identify the root cause of this peculiar soaring of prices. Indeed, supply chain disruptions also cause a shortage of goods, but mostly, hoarding at critical moments, often a result of wholesalers and retailers colluding, is why the government fails in regulating the markets during peak demand times. The provincial governments have to intervene to provide relief to the ordinary man during the fasting month.

With regulation, monitoring and digitisation, the government can keep the greedy market players in check. Any combination of these tools can help the officials keep the markets steady and accessible to ordinary folks. If the government gets distracted by things political, the back of the average citizen will break in the long run, as the ministry of finance is already expecting a further rise in inflation in the coming months.

ASEAN and Pakistan: Role of Indonesia

Dr M Ali Hamza



Established in 1967, ASEAN is an economic unification including 10 member states in Southeast Asia. The member states are Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. Population of the ASEANs was about 655m people in 2019. The ASEAN Way's: methodology or approach to solving issues, emphasis on consultation, consensus, and non-interference, forces the organization to adopt only those policies which satisfy

IN last 4 decades the velocity of Pakistan foreign maneuvering was slow and range was limited. There could be multiple reasons like domestic socio-economic and socio-political upheavals, unwanted engagement in war against terrorism, and pressure of masters who claimed to be friends. But foreign office under the present government has revamped the entire game plan to pace-up foreign relations on one hand and diversify the diplomatic friendships on the other. Newly introduced dimension to proceed with foreign relations is our shift from geo-political stance to geo-economic stance. As Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on National Security Division and Strategic Policy Planning Dr Moed Yusuf has repeatedly mentioned that instead of the conventional geo-strategic lens, Pakistan is focusing to leverage its geo-economic position by partnering with the world under the economic security model. In Moed's words "Pakistan is on a path to become global economic hub and targets to become a melting pot of competing global economic interests", and these words seem to be well grounded. In consonance to the said, Pakistani government under popular Prime Minister Imran Khan is considering Southeast Asia as a feasible test bed for the conduct of an extended foreign policy that is synonymous with Mr Khan's idea of Naya (new) Pakistan. Early indications suggest that the Khan's government has shown a genuine enthusiasm to advance Pakistan's policy toward ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) by stepping up both multilateral and bilateral engagements with the region. But the question is 'who would be advocating us in ASEAN? Prior getting to the question let us have a brief about ASEANs and, their need to connect with Pakistan.

Established in 1967, ASEAN is an economic unification including 10 member states in Southeast Asia. The member states are Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. Population of the ASEANs was about 655 million people in 2019 (8.5% of the world population). The ASEAN Way's: methodology or approach to solving issues, emphasis on consultation, consensus, and non-interference, forces the organization to adopt only those policies which satisfy the lowest common denominator. ASEAN is a major partner of SCO (Shanghai

Cooperation Organization), maintains a global network of alliances, and is considered by many as a global powerhouse. Today ASEAN is a leading voice on regional trade and security issues, involved in numerous international affairs, and hosts diplomatic missions throughout the world. Such important economic amalgamation like ASEAN cannot afford to ignore CPEC. The CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor) is a leading regional integration initiative between China and Pakistan. The project also opens opportunities to all interested regional stakeholders, among which CARs (Central Asian Republics): Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan, are one of the most important in geo-political and geo-economic terms. Located in a landlocked but resource-rich region, CARs need better access to regional markets and CPEC presents a strategic opportunity to transport their goods more easily and gain competitiveness in regional and global markets. Likewise CPEC also provides a pathway to ASEAN in connecting with China and CARs. Here comes the two way deal; We need You, You need Us.

Among the 10 members of ASEAN, Indonesia and Malaysia are the top choices as mediators between ASEAN and Pakistan. With Malaysia Pakistan is already having close cordial connections, but what about Indonesia? Indonesia is the strongest country in ASEAN with reference to GDP and GDP per capita data. It is the most populous Muslim country with much commonality to Pakistan in terms of culture, and values. Both countries are members of the OIC (Organization of Islamic Cooperation), SCO and Developing 8 Countries.

During the Indonesian Revolution, Muhammad Ali Jinnah: the founder of Pakistan urged Muslim soldiers serving in British army to join hands with Indonesians in their fight against the Dutch Imperial colonization. As a result, 600-Muslim soldiers left the colonial forces putting their lot at stake, and allied with Indonesians. Out of these 600 soldiers, 500 died in war. As recognition of the assistance of Muslim soldiers from Pakistan, during the Indonesian Golden Jubilee celebration on August 17, 1995, Indonesia conferred Independence War Awards to the living ex-Pakistani soldiers and awarded the highest honor 'Adipura' to the founding father of Pakistan Muhammad Ali Jinnah and the government

of Pakistan. Pakistan's relationship with Indonesia greatly developed during the time of Mr Sukarno: first president of Indonesia and Gen. Ayub Khan. During the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965, Indonesia offered to provide Pakistan with military help, and seized 'Andaman and Nicobar Islands' of India so as to distract it from the Kashmir front.

Then a bad patch appeared around the globe, an emerging super power shattered the political and diplomatic map of the world. Foes turned friends and friends fell apart. This was the time when Pakistan's foreign policy shrink for few countries, grew dependent of some, and lost its positive global footage. It was almost 4 decades of this bad patch, but then CPEC dawned. Realizing the projected value of CPEC many countries are attracted to restore or reset the diplomatic relations with Pakistan. In response Pakistan foreign policy is using a lens with wider spectrum: so far it seems. Therefore in last few years we observe that Pakistan has signed a memorandum of understanding on defense cooperation with Indonesia. One of the key terms of the memorandum is an offer for Indonesia to take part in joint-manufacturing between Pakistan and China of the JF-17 fighter jet. The exchange of military personnel for training between Indonesia and Pakistan also increased. In 2018, the two sides agreed to strengthen, expand and diversify military cooperation through all available forums. Moreover the two countries have a standing preferential trade agreement, the Indonesia: Pakistan Preferential Trade Agreement. The Indonesian ambassador to Pakistan: Mr Adam M Tugio has categorically mentioned that Pakistan is strategically located at the juncture of South Asia, Central Asia and Middle East and has vast potential to emerge as a hub of regional and economic activity.

As a leading member Indonesia is having great influence in ASEAN and also looks after evolving from regional power to becoming a major player in global affairs. Pakistan needs to support Indonesia in achieving her long-aimed goals through establishing connections and in return expect to earn dividends. Considering these fresh realities, we need to refresh our bilateral relations with Indonesia and the Govt. of Pakistan should take some quick moves in this direction. Before others spoil, let's coil around our new friends.

Why is social media silencing Kashmiri voices?

Farhan Mujahid Chak



As such, our organisation champions the democratic principles of freedom, equality and the inherent dignity of all human beings, irrespective of race, religion, gender or creed. It aims to lobby, facilitate and work for the moral, educational, economic, cultural and political uplifting of Kashmiri society on both sides of the ceasefire line and among the diaspora

FOR decades, India has sought to obfuscate what is happening in Kashmir. Since 1947, it has worked hard to appropriate Kashmir's history, culture, and identity and distort them. It has sought to muffle Kashmiri voices speaking out against the oppression of the Kashmiri people and whitewash its crimes. With the advent of social media, Kashmiris found a much-needed platform for free expression where they were able to share their plight with the world. Kashmiri solidarity pages proliferated and conversations about the Kashmiri struggle moved online. But this newly found freedom did not last long. Social media platforms, under the pressure of the Indian government, started shutting down Kashmir-related pages and the accounts of Kashmiri activists. In 2016, amid a crackdown on protests in Kashmir, Facebook took down pages focusing on Kashmir and posts about the ongoing events. Journalists reported that videos of police brutality were blocked. Academics and intellectuals also saw their accounts disabled. Following the Indian government's abrogation of Kashmir's special status on August 5, 2019, and the imposition of a brutal lockdown, social media platforms were quick to censor content on Kashmir once again. As Kashmir was cut off from the world, with the internet and mobile communications suspended, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter started to remove posts, block videos and shut down accounts trying to shed light on the dire situation in the region.

Since then, the Indian government has partially lifted the lockdown on Kashmir, but social media platforms have continued to purge Kashmir-related content. In the latest episode of censorship, Twitter shut down the accounts of Kashmir Civitas, Stand With Kashmir, the Kashmir Podcast, the account of young Kashmiri academic Ifat Gazia, and my personal Twitter account @fchak in March. By removing content and accounts critical of India's policies in Kashmir, Facebook and Twitter are complicit in suffocating those Kashmiri voices that are resisting the military occupation and settler-colonialism of their land. By censoring these voices, social media networks are curtailing the right to freedom

of speech. Our organisation, Kashmir Civitas is a non-governmental civil society and strategic advocacy entity registered in Canada and committed to the socio-political, and economic empowerment of the peoples in the disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir. It is an open, transparent organisation that peacefully challenges the false narratives that India has been propagating about the disputed region. It campaigns for the fundamental right of self-determination for the Kashmiri people. No democratic polity or principled individual, group or nation would credibly deny that right. Moreover, the organisation's foundational decree is not only premised on the Kashmiris' inalienable rights as enshrined in the United Nations Charter, but is based on the principles expressed in a total of 18 United Nations (UN) resolutions on Kashmir, including Security Council Resolutions 39 and 47, adopted in 1948. Both unequivocally recognise the inherent right of self-determination for the Kashmiri people and provide for the status of Kashmir to be decided in a free and fair plebiscite under the auspices of the UN.

Our organisation firmly believes that the Kashmir dispute is not a bilateral issue between Pakistan and India. Rather, it is an international issue. Still, the most important stakeholders are the Kashmiri people – the "state subjects" of the disputed territory, who have every right to resist, by all lawful means, the colonisation of their land by Indian occupation forces.

As such, our organisation champions the democratic principles of freedom, equality and the inherent dignity of all human beings, irrespective of race, religion, gender or creed. It aims to lobby, facilitate and work for the moral, educational, economic, cultural and political uplifting of Kashmiri society on both sides of the ceasefire line and among the diaspora. We would like Facebook and Twitter silence those who are speaking truth and fact, then lionise those who operate in deceit? We sent several inquiries to Twitter, but they never explained to us why our account was shut down. Then, suddenly, it was reinstated, as were the other suspended accounts.

Twitter's censorship comes amid India's unprecedented campaign to silence Kashmiri voices, strip the

Kashmiri people of their rights and remove the Kashmir issue from the international agenda altogether. Since the abrogation of Kashmir's special status in 2019, which removed its self-governance rights and paved the way for the settlement of non-Kashmiris on Kashmiri land, more troops have been deployed to the region. Repression has increased. Journalists trying to report on the situation in Kashmir have faced censorship and intimidation, while politicians, activists and even ordinary citizens, including children, have been arrested by the thousands.

Even before this escalation, Kashmir was the most militarised place on the planet. Currently, more than one million Indian soldiers are deployed in the valley. The Kashmir issue is one of the longest unresolved conflicts on the agenda of the UN. More than 95,000 people have been killed since the early 1990s, and around 6,700 unmarked and mass graves have been uncovered. An untold number of women have been harassed and sexually assaulted.

It is in this dire situation that platforms like Twitter and Facebook are choosing to side with the repressive Indian government, which – amid its rising authoritarianism – still claims to be democratic.

Among the most admirable aspects of democracy – along with freedom, equality, pluralism and inclusion – is the empowerment of civil society which holds the powerful to account. A free, vibrant civil society is not only able to curb the abuse of power, but also to promote healthy civic engagement and participation, which is the bedrock of democratic, participatory polities. By shutting down the accounts of collectives like Kashmir Civitas and Stand With Kashmir, Facebook and Twitter are siding with undemocratic forces that seek to silence not just Kashmiris but anyone who dares to oppose them. Although the accounts are now reinstated, we must remain vigilant and ensure that power does not remain unchecked. By doing the bidding of the Indian government, Twitter and Facebook have gone against their own "commitment to freedom of expression" and to "defending and respecting the user's voice".

– Courtesy: Al Jazeera

Briefs

Jawad Zarif meet Afghan counterpart

FOREIGN DESK

DUSHANBE: Foreign Minister Mohammad Jawad Zarif made the remarks in a meeting with his Afghan counterpart Mohammad Hanif Atmar on Monday on the sidelines of the Ninth Conference on the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process in Tajikistan. During the meeting, the Iranian Foreign Minister reviewed the latest state of cooperation between the two countries, noting that the efforts of some parties to disturb the public opinion were a sign of dissatisfaction of some countries with Iran-Afghanistan's close relations. Referring to the lifting of some consular restrictions on Afghan nationals, Zarif said the aim of the measures was to combat the smuggling of Afghan nationals to Iran and stressed the need to continue efforts to clarify the presence of Afghan nationals in Iran. Zarif also called for the continuation and development of constructive cooperation and consultations between the two countries in political and economic fields. Atmar also stressed Afghanistan's full readiness to form a joint commission between the two countries in the coming weeks.

Pak wants permanent solution...

From Page 01

based on shared religious and cultural values and establishment of high level Strategic Cooperation Council has transformed these relations into a strategic partnership. Appreciating Turkey's continued support on Kashmir issue, the Foreign Minister described it as a source of encouragement for the oppressed Kashmiris. He said that 'Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process' is a testament to Turkey's peace efforts. The Turkish Foreign Minister appreciated Pakistan's efforts for peace in Afghanistan and assured full support from his country in all efforts for peace and security in the region. Both Foreign Ministers made detailed discussion on the Afghan peace process and termed the 9th Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process Conference as welcome step for peace in Afghanistan. The Foreign Minister is visiting Dushanbe to attend the 9th Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process Conference.

Arif Alvi, Khattak test positive

From Page 01

She said that she tested negative for Covid-19 and was quarantining. "We had our vaccine 1st dose done but it takes time to build immunity & I request everyone to please continue to get vaccinations done & practice SOPs," she tweeted. Meanwhile, Sindh Governor Imran Ismail announced that Defence Minister Khattak had also been diagnosed with the virus. "Get well soon PK," wrote Ismail, who himself contracted and recovered from the virus last year. The president and defence minister's positive diagnosis comes a little over a week after Prime Minister Imran Khan and first lady Bushra Bibi tested positive for the coronavirus.

Myanmar violence 'unacceptable'

UNITED NATIONS: United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called Monday for a united global front to pressure Myanmar's military junta following the "absolutely unacceptable" weekend killings of more than 100 anti-coup protesters. "It is absolutely unacceptable to see violence against people at such high levels, so many people killed, and such a stubborn refusal to accept the need to liberate all political prisoners and to make the country go back to a serious democratic transition," Guterres told a news conference. "We need more unity... (and) more commitment from the international community to put pressure in order to make sure that the situation is reversed," he said. — APP



ISTANBUL: Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee Gen. Nadeem Raza and his delegation visited Turkish defence company, Baykar specialising in UAVs and Production Center. — DNA

UNRWA calls for support to help Palestine refugees

UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini addressed attendees: 'Today, 90 per cent of the nearly 440,000 Palestine refugees who remain in Syria live in absolute poverty'

DNA

BRUSSELS: On the 5th Brussels conference on "Supporting the Future of Syria and of the Region", the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) reiterates its call to support Palestine refugees who are in Syria and in neighboring countries. The United Nations and the European Union co-chair the annual conference which brings together governments and international organisations and Syrian civil society. Since the start of the conflict, many UNRWA installations inside Syria, such as schools and health centers, have become inaccessible or sustained severe damage. Forty per cent of UNRWA classrooms have been lost and almost 25 per cent of the Agency's health centres are currently unusable due to the conflict. UNRWA in Syria has also lost 19 staff members during the 10-year conflict.

UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini addressed attendees: 'Today, 90 per cent of the nearly 440,000 Palestine refugees who remain in Syria live in absolute poverty. The more than

45,000 Palestine refugees from Syria who are now in Jordan and Lebanon are also amongst the most vulnerable people as both countries struggle with the impact of COVID-19. As we painfully remember ten years of conflict, UNRWA remains dedicated to rebuilding its infrastructure to serve the Palestine refugee community in Syria.' The annual conference seeks to generate international financial support to help meet the dramatically increasing humanitarian needs inside Syria, for Syrian refugees, and for refugee-hosting communities and countries in the region.

"Some 600 families have recently returned to Yarmouk camp; they live amidst rubble in very dire conditions. Ten years of conflict, displacement, soaring inflation, loss of livelihoods and now a year of COVID-19 all make their life untenable," said Michael-Ebby Amanya, Director of UNRWA Affairs in Syria. "UNRWA assistance to Palestine refugees in Syria and in neighbouring countries is vital and often their only lifeline and their last source of support," he added. In 2021, UNRWA requires US\$ 318 million to secure emergency humanitarian assistance to Palestine refugees affected by the conflict in Syria, Lebanon and Jordan through its Syria Regional Crisis Emergency Appeal. Palestine refugees in Syria and those who fled the conflict to Jordan and Lebanon rely entirely on the Agency's services to survive their continued displacement. As most Palestine refugees from Syria are today at least twice displaced, UNRWA calls on the international community to continue to include them in all humanitarian plans and responses around the Syria crisis. While images of the destroyed Yarmouk Palestine refugee camp have become

iconic, several others of the 12 Palestine refugee camps across the country have also seen entire neighborhoods severely damaged. "Where Palestine refugees are able to safely return, UNRWA must be able to provide services while it also continues to operate health centers, schools and social services to those who have been displaced inside the country and into Jordan and Lebanon." UNRWA is confronted with an increased demand for services resulting from a growth in the number of registered Palestine refugees, the extent of their vulnerability and their deepening poverty.

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Pakistan, Qatar hold joint naval exercise

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Navy Ships ALAMGIR and AZMAT during Overseas Deployment visited port HAMAD (Doha), Qatar and participated in bilateral exercise Asad Al Bahr-II with QENF. Upon arrival at Doha, PN ships were warmly welcomed by senior officers of QENF and Defence Attache of Pakistan, said a Pakistan Navy news release received here on Monday. During the visit the Mission Commander of PN Flotilla called on various dignitaries of the host country. In addition, the planning and coordination of bilateral exercise was undertaken with Qatar Emiri Naval and Air Force officers. On completion of port visit, the bilateral exercise Asad Al Bahr-II was undertaken between PN and QENF ships HUNTER, DAMSAH and KANAN participated in the exercise along with aircraft of Qatar Emiri Air Forces (QEAF). The exercise was aimed to strengthen bilateral ties, enhance naval collaboration and interoperability among the two navies. Participation in exercise Asad Al Bahr-II is a manifestation of PN resolve to work with friendly navies to promote peace and security in the region. — DNA



DOHA: Mission Commander PN Flotilla in a group photo with Qatar Emiri Naval Force officials during Pakistan Navy ships ALAMGIR and AZMAT visit to port HAMAD. — DNA

Rights expert Agnes Callamard named new Amnesty chief

DNA

LONDON: Amnesty International announced today the appointment of Dr. Agnes Callamard, a leading international human rights expert, as its new Secretary General, effective immediately. Dr. Callamard joins the world's largest non-governmental human rights organization, having recently been the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions. In that role, she led ground-breaking investigations including into the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi. As Secretary General, Dr. Callamard will be the Chief Executive of Amnesty's International Secretariat and the principal spokesperson of the global Amnesty movement, which has some 10 million supporters, and offices in more than 70 countries. "At a time when human rights are under unprecedented threat around

the world, Dr. Callamard will lead, excite and rally the entire Amnesty movement to meet these challenges head-on," said Sarah Beamish, Chair of the International Board, in announcing the appointment. "The combination of her intellectual acuity, her deep global human rights experience, and her courageous voice makes her highly qualified to front our movement. We are delighted she has accepted this challenge to take us boldly into our next phase."

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459 killed in Myanmar since coup: rights group

YANGON: As many as 459 people have been killed in Myanmar in a military crackdown against anti-coup protests, said a human rights group on Monday. According to a report by the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, the victims include children, teachers as well as youths. The group said around 60 houses in Pyigy Dagon township were destroyed by fire on March 27, and residents in nearby neighborhoods were prevented from helping when the junta forces fired at them. As of March 28, there were a total of 2,559 people arrested, with 37 of them convicted. Myanmar: Security forces attacking civilian settlements break security cameras Earlier in the day, a civilian was killed and two others wounded during a protest in the Thaketa area of Yangon, the country's commercial capital. Junta forces fired at two journalists with rubber bullets and later detained them as they were covering the attack on anti-military demonstrators in Myitkyina area of Kachin province, locals told Myanmar Now news agency. Meanwhile, a women's group late Sunday condemned the escalating violence in Karen state, and called for immediate intervention by the international community. On March 27, soldiers launched night-time airstrikes on Day Bu No village, Lu Thaw Township, Mu Traw District, killing three civilians and injuring seven others, according to the Karen Women's Organization. "Moreover, this attack caused more than 10,000 people to flee and hide in the forest," it said in a statement. — DNA

Thailand: Anti-govt protesters defy police threat

The activists say elections held in 2019 were under rules designed to cement Gen Prayut's hold on power. Gen Prayut and his coalition government allies say the vote was free and fair

FOREIGN DESK

BANGKOK: Hundreds of anti-government protesters gathered on Monday in defiance of a threat by police to make more arrests, a day after nearly 100 demonstrators were detained for breaching public health measures against the coronavirus. Demonstrators demanded the release of jailed activists, raising prospects for another confrontation between police and protesters, who are calling for an end to military dominance of politics and reform of the powerful monarchy. "Free our friends," they shouted. Police had earlier on Monday warned they would arrest more people participating in anti-government protests. "We have prepared troops to maintain order," Pol Maj Gen Piya Tavichai, deputy head of the Bangkok police, told reporters. Pol Maj Gen Piya said 99 people

were arrested on Sunday in front of Government House, saying the arrests were necessary under a law forbidding large public gatherings to prevent coronavirus spread. Thai Lawyers of Human Rights, which is representing those detained on Sunday, said a court had agreed they could be released on bail. The mostly student-led movement has taken aim at the military for entrenching its role in civilian politics, especially since Prime

Minister Prayut Chan-ocha seized power in a 2014 coup when he was army chief. The activists say elections held in 2019 were under rules designed to cement Gen Prayut's hold on power. Gen Prayut and his coalition government allies say the vote was free and fair. The prime minister on Monday told reporters the weekend arrests were justified. "You have to look at the law. If I don't take action, there will be disruption in traffic. We are just tak-

ing back space. There have been many warnings," said Gen Prayut. Dozens of people have been detained at protests in recent months under disease control and public order laws, but Sunday's protest represented one of the largest number of arrests at a single rally. Additionally, at least nine leaders of the movement are jailed pending trial under a law against insulting the monarchy, which carries a maximum 15-year penalty for each count.

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Alaska helicopter crash leaves 5 death

FOREIGN DESK

ALASKA: The helicopter crashed Saturday evening (local time) in the Knik Glacier area, 80 km east of Anchorage, Alaska.

Searchers found the crash site and lone survivor late Saturday night after the helicopter was reported overdue, the state troopers said in a written statement. The injured person was rescued and reported to be in serious but stable condition. The crash site is Knik Glacier northeast of Anchorage. It was not clear from the trooper report on Sunday whether the helicopter crashed on or next to the glacier.

Identities of the pilot and passengers were not immediately available. Notification of the victims' families had not yet been completed, trooper spokesman Austin McDaniel said. Knik Glacier, in the northern Chugach Mountains, is a destination for sight-seeing flights and, in summer, hiking and boating tours.

Hafeez Sheikh finally...

From Page 01

Pakistan and the poor get relief", said Faraz. He said that he did not know about Sheikh's future in the government, adding that further likely changes in the cabinet will be disclosed by tomorrow. The move comes weeks after Hafeez Shaikh, who enjoyed the status of minister since December last year, lost the bid for a Senate seat to PPP's Yousuf Raza Gilani, leading to questions about his status in the federal cabinet. Shaikh, who is not a member of Parliament, was previously an adviser to the premier on finance and was appointed as finance minister in December last year. However, as per Article 91 (9) of the Constitution, he cannot remain a minister for more than six months until he is elected to one of the houses. Thus, it was necessary for him to be elected to the Senate this time around in order to continue as the finance minister after June.

COVID-19 positivity ratio...

From Page 01

tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 24 hours. Punjab remains the worst-hit province in terms of deaths followed by Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Till now 6,229 individuals have lost their lives to the epidemic in Punjab 4,491 in Sindh, 2,283 in KP, 559 in Islamabad, 344 in Azad Kashmir, 206 in Balochistan, and 103 in GB. Furthermore 264,889 coronavirus cases have been confirmed in Sindh, 215,227 in Punjab 85,531 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 56,450 in Islamabad, 19,525 in Balochistan, 12,484 in Azad Kashmir and 5,010 in Gilgit-Baltistan. Pakistan has so far conducted 10,107,095 coronavirus tests and 40,369 in the last 24 hours. 598,197 coronavirus patients have recovered in the country whereas 3,055 patients are in critical condition.

Minister uses influence...

From Page 01

All of the people getting vaccination during the video apparently look below the age of 60 years. It is pertinent to mention here that the federal government has currently allowed vaccination for people aged upto 60 years besides also vaccinating health workers in the first phase. A proper online mechanism is being devised for the people falling under the age limit to get vaccinated which included sending an SMS on 1166 carrying the NIC number. The 13-digit national identity card number should be entered in the message without any spaces or hyphen. A reply carrying a pin code would be sent on a similar number and the place and date of the anti-COVID vaccine would then be later conveyed as soon as the availability of the vaccine is confirmed. After being informed regarding the date and venue, the person getting a jab had to visit the anti-COVID vaccine centre along with the original NIC and pin code. After verification of the credentials, the person would receive the anti-COVID jab.

Briefs

SpaceX
preparing
for starship
launch

FOREIGN DESK

WASHINGTON: SpaceX is preparing for a possible launch of its prototype interplanetary Starship rocket from the company's facility in south Texas on Monday afternoon.

The company is hoping to finally perform a successful test flight after the last three attempts ended in spectacular explosions.

"I have ordered the closure of Boca Chica Beach and Hwy 4 for the purpose of protecting public health and safety during SpaceX space flight activities on March 29," Cameron County Judge Eddie Trevino Jr said in a statement.

SpaceX founder Elon Musk also tweeted on Sunday about the "Possible Starship flight tomorrow afternoon." The window for launch is 12:00 pm to 5:00 pm Central Time (1700 to 2200 GMT), and if it goes ahead, SpaceX will provide a webcast. An earlier scheduled launch was scrubbed Friday, likely because of poor weather.

SN11 is the eleventh prototype of Starship, which SpaceX hopes will one day be able to fly to the Moon, Mars and beyond.

It will be the fourth to conduct a test flight, ascending to an altitude of 10 kilometers (six miles) before returning to the ground for a soft vertical landing.

Deaths
surpass
32,000 in
Ukraine

FOREIGN DESK

KYIV: Ukrainian medical workers recorded 8,346 coronavirus cases in the past 24 hours, Health Minister Maxim Stepanov wrote on Facebook on Monday. The number of deaths caused by COVID-19 complications has exceeded 32,000, media reports citing TASS.

"Another 8,346 COVID-19 cases were recorded in Ukraine as of March 29, 2021, with 344 children and 140 health professionals contracting the disease," he noted. The authorities reported 11,932 COVID-19 cases a day earlier.

As many as 3,129 people were taken to hospitals in the past 24 hours, 2,875 patients recovered, and 178 others died of COVID-19 complications.

Most cases were recorded in the Kharkov Region (664) the Dnepropetrovsk Region (647), the Lvov Region (820), the Odessa Region (658) and the Zhitomir Region (567).

Ukraine's COVID-19 case tally has hit 1,652,409 since the start of the pandemic, 1,303,500 patients have recovered and 32,132 people have died.

Ukraine has so far conducted more than 8 million PCR tests covering about 19% of its population. As many as 24,404 tests were conducted in the past 24 hours. According to the country's Health Ministry, 198,464 people have been vaccinated by now.

Turkey, Japan
ink green
credit deal

WEB DESK

ANKARA: The Turkey Development and Investment Bank (TKYB) on Monday signed an environment-focused credit agreement worth \$170 million with the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC), aiming to support renewable energy projects.

In a written statement, the TKYB emphasized its efforts to combat climate change. "We play an active role in the realization of renewable energy investments. By the end of 2020, 57% of our loan portfolio consists of renewable energy projects and 63% of sustainability-themed loans," said TKYB General-Director Ibrahim Oztop. Citing the green-themed loan with the JBIC, Oztop said the TKYB aims to reduce the usage of fossil-fuel, as well as decrease Turkey's energy dependence by providing funding for investments that have renewable energy production licenses.



DUSHANBE: Afghan president Ashraf Ghani along with Tajik president Emomali Rahmon inspecting guard of honour in Tajikistan. – DNA

US vows consequences
for Russian actions

Blinken said officials "are in the process" of considering what sanctions or actions Washington plans to take against Moscow, and in consultation with other NATO countries

FOREIGN DESK

WASHINGTON: U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken says there will be "costs and consequences" for Russia for its allegedly malign activities against the United States.

"We will take the steps necessary to defend our interests" at the time of the U.S.'s choosing, Blinken said in a CNN interview that aired Sunday but was taped last week as he completed talks with other NATO diplomats in Brussels. He said there was "a shared

commitment" among Western allies to be "clear-eyed" about Moscow's actions and hold the Kremlin accountable.

The top U.S. diplomat said officials "are in the process" of considering what sanctions or actions Washington plans to take against Moscow, and in consultation with other NATO countries.

"We are stronger when we can do it in a coordinated way," he said.

While the U.S. and Russia agreed quickly to extend a nuclear arms control deal that was set to expire short-

ly after U.S. President Joe Biden assumed power, the U.S. is blaming Russia for other actions, including allegedly placing a bounty on U.S. troops in Afghanistan, meddling in the November election that Biden won and hacking into U.S. computer systems. Blinken's remarks in the CNN interview echoed those of Biden, who has taken a tougher stance against Russia than that of his predecessor, Donald Trump. In an interview on ABC News two weeks ago, Biden said he considers Russian President Vladimir Putin to

be a "killer." Biden said in the interview, "The price he's going to pay, well, you'll see shortly," while adding that he, Biden, wants to be able to "walk and chew gum at the same time, and there are places where it's in our mutual interest to work together." "That's why I renewed the (arms reduction) agreement with them. That occurred while he's doing this," he said, apparently referencing Putin's election interference efforts. "But that's overwhelming, in the interest of humanity, that

we diminish the prospect of a nuclear exchange." Russia has denied meddling in the U.S. election and orchestrating the cyber hack that used U.S. tech company SolarWinds to penetrate U.S. government networks. In addition, it has rebuffed reports it offered bounties to Taliban militants to kill U.S. troops in Afghanistan or tried to poison Russian opposition leader Alexey Navalny. A U.S. intelligence analysis concluded that Putin likely directed a campaign to try to help Trump win a second four-year term in the White

House. It is not clear what actions Biden could be considering against Russia; but he could invoke any of several penalties, including freezing the U.S. assets of any entities found to have directly or indirectly interfered in a U.S. election or engaged in "cyber-enabled" activities from abroad that threaten U.S. national security. In addition, a 1991 law allows the U.S. president to bar U.S. banks from lending to a country that used chemical weapons, such as is alleged in the Navalny case.

'Lebanon could sink
like the Titanic'

BEIRUT: Lebanon's influential parliamentary speaker Nabih Berri says the country will sink like the Titanic if it is not able to form a government as he opened a session to approve emergency funds to literally keep the lights on for two more months.

"The whole country is in danger, the whole country is the Titanic," Berri said on Monday. "It's time we all woke up because in the end, if the ship sinks, there'll be no one left." Lebanon is in the throes of a financial crisis that poses the biggest threat to its stability since the 1975-1990 civil war. Without a new government, it cannot implement the reforms required to unlock desperately needed foreign aid. But prime minister-designate Saad al-Hariri and President Michel Aoun have been at loggerheads for months over the makeup of a new cabinet.

On Monday, Parliament approved a loan of \$200m to pay for fuel for Lebanon's electricity company after a warning by the energy ministry that cash had run out for electricity generation beyond the end of the month.

"This should be enough for electricity for around two months or two-and-a-half," Cesar Abi Khalil, a member of parliament and former energy minister. – Foreign Desk

Massive fire rages at
Indonesian oil refinery

DNA

JAKARTA: A massive blaze broke out Monday at one of Indonesia's biggest oil refineries after a huge explosion turned the sprawling complex into a raging inferno.

Firefighters battled to contain the fire at the Balongan refinery in West Java, operated by state oil company Pertamina, as towering plumes of black smoke rose into the sky.

"There was a very loud sound and I thought it was a hurricane," one local resident, Rumaji, told AFP.

"I looked outside and the fire

was huge. The flames were shooting into the sky."

At least five people were seriously injured and about 1,000 local residents were evacuated from the scene after the fire broke out early Monday morning at a storage tank and then spread to other containers. The local disaster agency said one person had died from a heart attack after the explosion.

About 15 people were slightly injured and authorities said they were checking on the whereabouts of three others.

"To prevent the fire from spreading we've shut down operations... and are putting

our efforts into handling the blaze," Pertamina's president director Nickie Widayati said in a statement. The cause of the fire was not clear, but the company said the blaze broke out during a lightning storm. By Monday afternoon, the disaster agency said the blaze had been contained but was yet to be extinguished. Pertamina said it did not expect the fire to cause fuel supply disruptions due to its high volume of stock. "There's more than enough national supply," said Mulyono, Pertamina's logistics and infrastructure director, who like many Indonesians goes

by one name. "So people don't need to panic." Greenpeace called for a probe into the accident. "These kinds of dangerous incidents have been happening repeatedly in fossil-fuel industries," the environmental group said. "If there's any evidence of negligence or a violation of (health and safety) procedures, the government must file criminal charges to hold Pertamina accountable," it added. The sprawling plant – which opened in the mid-nineties and can refine some 125,000 barrels of oil a day – is about 200 km (120 miles) east of the capital Jakarta.



BAKU: A delegation of PAF on his visit to Azerbaijan led by Deputy Chief of the Air Staff-Training Air Marshal Aamir Masood visited the Alley of Martyrs, laid wreaths. – DNA

Pakistan Air Force
delegation visits
Azerbaijan

DNA

BAKU: On March 29, Deputy Minister of Defense - Commander of the Air Force, Lieutenant General Ramiz Tahirov met with a delegation led by Deputy Commander of the Air Force of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Air Marshal Aamir Masood, who is on a working visit to Azerbaijan.

First, the Pakistani delegation visited the Alley of Martyrs, laid wreaths and flowers at the graves of our citizens who died for the independence and territorial integrity of our country, and paid trib-

ute to their memory. The sides expressed satisfaction with the growing development of Azerbaijani-Pakistani relations and the level of strategic partnership. The Pakistani marshal congratulated the people of Azerbaijan on the victory in the Great Patriotic War, wished God's mercy to the martyred servicemen and civilians, and wished healing to the wounded.

The sides discussed prospects for military, military education and military-technical cooperation between the Azerbaijani and Pakistani air forces, as well as other issues of mutual interest.

England relaxes tight COVID-19 measures

DNA

LONDON: England on Monday started to normalize from its tight COVID-19 restrictions that had been in place since before Christmas.

Under the new rules, people will be allowed to gather in groups of six to socialize in parks and private gardens, with sports pitches, courts and outdoor swimming pools to be reopened and organized team sports to resume starting on Monday.

The government's message to "stay at home" was replaced with "stay local" as people seek

to enjoy a slight respite from the restrictions which lasted around more than three months.

"I know how much people have missed the camaraderie and competition of organized sport, and how difficult it has been to restrict physical activities – especially for children," Prime Minister Boris Johnson said.

"I know many will welcome the increased social contact, with groups of six or two households now also able to meet outdoors." However, Johnson also warned to remain cautious as people should still work from home if possible and minimize their journeys according to new ad-



vice. "We must remain cautious with cases rising across Europe and new variants threatening our vaccine rollout," he said. "Despite today's easements, everyone must continue to stick

to the rules, remember hands, face, space, and come forward for a vaccine when called," he added.

In London, where a series of recent protests saw thousands of people unlawfully gathered, Metropolitan Police reminded people that large gatherings remain unlawful.

The force said that officers would "continue to respond quickly to house parties or dangerous raves, taking enforcement action by handing out fines."

Authorities started relaxing measures as more than 30 million people – nearly half the

population – across the UK had received the first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

People are still banned from going on vacation abroad, with a £5,000 (\$6,900) fine in place against violations, as the country is cautious about the new variants of the virus.

The next step in normalization is expected to come on April 12, with pubs and restaurants to be allowed to resume services in outdoor areas and non-essential shops allowed to reopen.

The UK has suffered the highest COVID-19 death toll in Europe with 126,592 so far, according to official figures.

Indonesia's
COVID-19
cases surpass
1.5 million

DNA

JAKARTA: Indonesia has registered 1.5 million cases of coronavirus since the first case was confirmed in the country in March last year.

On Monday, the COVID-19 cases in the world's fourth most populous country rose by 5,008 within one day to 1,501,093, the country's Health Ministry reported. To date, a total of 40,581 people have died of COVID-19 and 1.3 million patients have recovered from the disease, according to the ministry's data.

Indonesia has the highest number of COVID-19 cases and deaths in the Southeast Asia region. The virus has spread to all the country's 34 provinces with Jakarta having the most cases, while East Java has the highest number of deaths.

Maharashtra
considers
total lockdown
as cases rise

FOREIGN DESK

MUMBAI: India's richest state, Maharashtra, is considering imposing a strict lockdown this week after recording the highest one-day jump in coronavirus infections of any Indian state since last March, officials said.

Maharashtra tightened travel restrictions and imposed night curfews as it reported 40,414 new coronavirus cases on Sunday, almost two-thirds of the national total, many of them in the densely populated financial capital Mumbai.

"In (Sunday's) meeting of the (COVID-19) task force, it was suggested that very strict restrictions like lockdown should be imposed immediately," the office of Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray said in a statement.

A senior official in the state government said the lockdown could take effect "in the coming days" as officials had been asked to prepare to implement it in a phased manner.

India recorded 62,714 new cases in the space of 24 hours on Sunday, the health ministry said – the biggest jump since October – as well as 312 deaths.

N Korea
accuses UN
of 'double
standard'

DNA

PYONGYANG: North Korea on Monday accused the UN Security Council of double standards as its sanctions committee criticised the country's recent missile test as a violation of United Nations resolutions.

North Korea launched a new type of tactical short-range ballistic missile last week, prompting Washington to request a gathering of the UN Security Council's (UNSC) sanctions committee. At the committee meeting on Friday, the United States called for imposing additional sanctions and tightening the implementation of existing measures, denouncing the test as a violation of UN resolutions, according to Jo Chol Su, director-general for international organisations at North Korea's foreign ministry.

Jo said the meeting was "designed to negate the right of our state to self-defence", warning it would devise a "countermeasure".

"It constitutes a denial of sovereign state and an apparent double standard that UNSC takes issue, on the basis of the UN 'resolutions' – direct products of the US hostile policy," Jo said in a statement carried by the official KCNA news agency.

"It does not make any sense that only our righteous self-defensive measure should be singled out for denunciation, when many other countries across the globe are firing all kinds of projectiles for the purpose of increasing their military strength."

Pyeongyang said on Friday it had launched a new type of short-range "tactical projectile" able to carry a payload of 2.5 tonnes, a day after the US, Japan and South Korea said that weapons tests had taken place off the country's northeast coast.

Briefs

LHC issues notice to NAB on Shehbaz's petition

DNA

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) issued on Monday a notice to the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) to respond to a petition filed by PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif seeking post-arrest bail in a money laundering case. A two-member bench of the LHC comprising Justice Sarfraz Dogar and Justice Asjad Goral heard the bail plea of the opposition leader. After an initial hearing, the court directed the bureau to file its response by next hearing slated for April 13. Shehbaz's lawyers Amjad Pervaiz and Azam Nazir Tarar contended before the court that the money laundering reference had already been filed against the opposition leader while the trial is ongoing. They said he has been imprisoned for months and therefore, the court should order his release on bail. The counsel said the corruption watchdog has already taken all relevant record from him. Besides, they added no charges of financial irregularities have been proven against him.

Jani Khel protesters, KP govt reach agreement

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Jani Khel tribe agreed to call off their protest against the killing of four young men, who they allege were tortured and killed by security forces, after successful talks with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government. The agreement between the two groups was signed at the Commissioner Office in Bannu. KP Chief Minister Mahmood Khan presided over the proceedings and counter-signed the agreement inked by Joint Qaumi (Afridi, Orakzai and Marwat) jirga and elders of the Jani Khel tribe. Compensation cheques worth Rs2.5 million were distributed among the four bereaved families. Thousands of protesters broke through a police blockade Sunday as they tried to march on the city of Bannu and then on to Islamabad to demand a government probe into the deaths of the four men. Police fired tear gas in an attempt to keep them from entering the city of Bannu. The protesters were carrying the bodies of the four young men, aged between 15 and 20, found in a shallow grave on March 21 in the town of Jani Khel, outside Bannu. "The government didn't pay any attention to us and left us alone to mourn the slain boys," Haji Mohammad Wali, one of the protesters, told Reuters by phone.

China liquor company to establish a plant in Pak

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a first, a liquor company from China will reportedly be establishing a manufacturing plant in Pakistan. Chinese company Hui Coastal Brewery and Distillery Limited got a licence to manufacture liquor, sources said, after getting registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) on April 30, 2020 with a Hub, Balochistan address. The Balochistan excise, taxation and anti-narcotics department issued the licence. The Chinese company has been launched as a joint venture with Balochistan at the Lasbela Industrial Estate Development Authority. The entire process, from manufacturing to packaging, will be carried out at its plant in Lasbela. Hui Coastal Brewery and Distillery Limited is famous for producing some of the world's most famous brands. The plan is to introduce two famous brands in Pakistan for export.

Complete lockdown in Punjab cities with 12% positivity rate

This decision was taken in the meeting of Anti-Corona Cabinet Committee of Punjab

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar announced that there would be a complete lockdown from April 1 in cities of the province where the coronavirus positivity rate had been recorded at 12 per cent or more. Amid the deteriorating situation of COVID-19 cases in Punjab, the Punjab Chief Minister Buzdar has decided to impose lockdown in cities with a rate of more than 12 per cent. This decision was taken in the meeting of Anti-Corona Cabinet Committee of Punjab on Monday. Briefing the media in Lahore, he said the third wave of the coronavirus was far more serious than the previous two. "Cities of Punjab like La-

Schools closed in six more KP districts

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) education department has closed schools in six more districts of the province that are witnessing a surge in Covid-19 cases. Minister for Elementary and Secondary Education Shahram Khan Taraki announced that schools in Abbottabad, Haripur, Bajaur, Khyber, Dir-upper, and Shangla will remain closed till April 11. He said educational institutions in 16 districts of the province have been closed till now. "The health of children is

our priority," he maintained.

On March 24, Federal Education Minister Shafqat Mahmood had announced that educational institutions will remain closed in virus hotspots of Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Azad Kashmir till April 11. He said the provincial governments will decide whether to keep schools closed or open in light of the number of infections. "Board exams for class nine and above will be held as per schedule in May and June," he added. — DNA

hore, Multan, Faisalabad and Rawalpindi are the hardest-hit. The positivity rate in Lahore has reached 21 per cent," he informed. "Still, we do not want to shut down businesses, and nor we are doing so. At the same time, however, we want people to cooperate with us because it is the matter of saving people's lives," he asserted. At the same time, howev-

er, he made it clear that complete lockdown did not mean bringing all kinds of business activities to a complete halt. As per the NCOC figures on Monday, Lahore (17%), Rawalpindi (15%), Faisalabad (15%), Sargodha (12%), Sialkot (12%), and Multan (12%) are cities with 12% positivity ratio. Punjab Chief Secretary also warned the commissioners and deputy commissioners

of registering FIRs against them in case of non-compliance with the Anti-Corona Cabinet Committee orders on lockdown restrictions. There will be a complete ban on indoor and outdoor weddings events from today (Monday). Orange Line Metro Train (OLMT) and Metro Bus Service will remain closed in the lockdown. The committee has decided to put on the

outdoor and indoor catering in restaurants and only take away service has been allowed. It has been denounced that 10 persons will not be able to gather at one point. Lahore Division Commissioner retired captain Muhammad Usman presented the suggestions before the provincial committee led by Punjab CM to contain the third wave of the coronavi-

rus in Punjab.

The Punjab lockdown restrictions have been announced a day after the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) announced imposing lockdown in Covid-19 hotspots from Monday (today) 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 attended by all provincial chief secretaries. The NCOC will be providing maps of the latest COVID-19 hotspots to the provinces. It has also empowered the provinces to clamp lockdown restrictions even before the time. All kinds of political, cultural, sports and social gatherings are banned from March 29 (Monday).

NA Speaker felicitates Gilani

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaiser while felicitating Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani for his election as Leader of Opposition in Upper House during a telephonic conversation, said that a committee of members of the Parliament is being formed for electoral reforms. Asad Qaiser urged democratic forces to play their role for supremacy of the parliament. The Speaker said all political parties in parliament must play their part for constitutional and electoral reforms. Speaking on the occasion, Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani country's problem can be solved with the stability of democracy and a united stance on national issues.

Will not let SBP become subsidiary of IMF: Ahsan

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Ahsan Iqbal has said that the incumbent government is selling off Pakistan's sovereignty. He vowed that the opposition will not let State Bank of Pakistan become a subsidiary of the IMF.

Speaking at Monday's National Assembly session, he said that we have all taken an oath to uphold the sovereignty of the Constitution. If the country is run according to the constitution, all will be fine, but if the constitution is disregarded, the country will not function properly.

Ahsan Iqbal said that Article 73 of the constitution says that imposing new taxes or changing present ones is done through a money bill, which cannot be enacted through a presidential ordinance. It is unconstitutional to impose 700 billion taxes through an ordinance. He added that if any new taxation is to be introduced, it should be presented before the elected representatives in the National Assembly and the taxes imposed through ordinance should be withdrawn.

Earlier, addressing the National Assembly, PPP leader Raja Pervaiz Ashraf said that there was no particular agenda for Monday's session of the National Assembly.

Mehbooba Mufti denied passport by India

DNA

SRINAGAR: The Indian government has refused to issue former chief minister of Indian occupied Kashmir (IoK) Mehbooba Mufti a passport over national security concerns, said the Kashmiri leader on Monday. "[Indian] Passport Office refused to issue my passport based on CID's report citing it as 'detrimental to the security of India'," said Mufti in a tweet along with the letter explaining the grounds of refusal. The Kashmiri leader slammed the Indian government over the decision, saying that the rejection shows the "level of normalcy achieved in Kashmir since August 2019".

Mufti said that the action showed that a former chief minister of IoK "holding a passport is a threat to the sovereignty of a mighty nation". Former IoK CM Omar Abdullah came out in support of Mufti on Twitter. "What a shame J&K police is going along with this farce. How is it that Mehbooba Mufti was not a threat to the nation when her party was allied with the BJP?" asked Abdullah.

Punjab medical colleges to remain closed

DNA

LAHORE: The Specialised Healthcare and Medical Department extended on Monday the closure of all the public and private medical colleges, dental colleges, nursing schools and colleges, paramedical and allied health sciences institutions until April 11.

"In continuation of this Department's notification dated 12th March, 2021, all the public and private Medical Universities/Colleges, Dental Colleges, Nursing Schools/Colleges, Paramedical/Allied Health Sciences Schools/Colleges shall remain closed from 29th March 2021 till 11th April, 2021," read a notification issued by the department.

The staff and faculty of these institutions involved in clinical duties have been instructed to perform their duties while the vice chancellors or principals concerned may decide about relieving the staff not involved in any clinical duties. It said all examinations of public and private MBBS and BDS students, nursing students, paramedical and allied health sciences students will be held as per the schedule.

Nationwide anti-polio drive begins

LAHORE: Anti-polio campaign of varied duration has been started across the country from Monday. The standard operating procedures (SOPs) will be strictly implemented during the drive for protection against the coronavirus.

In Punjab, twenty million children of two to five years of age will be administered anti-polio vaccine during five-day drive.

According to a spokesman of Punjab Health Department, one hundred twenty thousand health workers will take part in the campaign. In Sindh, nine million children under the age of five years will be administered anti-polio drops during a week-long drive. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, more than six point four million children up to five years of age will be administered anti-polio drops during five-day campaign.

According to Emergency Operation Center Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, about thirty thousand teams have been constituted which will visit door to door to vaccinate the children. Polio teams will also be available at bus stops, railway stations, Afghan refugee camps and other public places to ensure vaccination of every child.

In Gilgit Baltistan, over two hundred forty two thousand children upto five years of age will be administered anti-polio vaccine. Health Department has constituted 1690 fixed and mobile teams for this purpose.

In Azad Jammu and Kashmir, more than sixty six hundred thousand children will be administered anti-polio drops, during five day anti-polio campaign.

According to AJK Health Department, 2000 mobile teams have been constituted for the drive, while 397 fixed and 124 transit points have also been set up to make the anti-polio drive successful. — DNA

Govt to release worth \$2b Euro bond

ISLAMABAD: The government has decided to release Euro bonds of worth \$2 billion. The bonds will be released for five, 10 and 30-year terms while the government has also hired four banks namely Standard Chartered, Credit Swiss, GP Morgan and NBD Capital as consultants for the purpose.

Ahsan Mehanti, an economist, has expressed the hope that the sale of Euro bonds would pay dividends. "At the same time, reserves will increase considerably after the country receives \$500 million from the IMF and \$1.30 billion from the World Bank (WB)."

Sources in Ministry of Finance said that there will be six per cent profit on investment in the Euro Bond of five-year term; eight per cent profit on investment in Euro Bond of 10-year term and 10 per cent profit on Euro Bond of 30-year term. — DNA

Australia calls to abolish monarchy

At the end of the day, Australia's future has very little to do with the British royal family

FOREIGN DESK

MELBOURNE: It appears Australian Labor MP is seriously considering ridding the country of its alliance to the British monarchy and its place in the Commonwealth. MP Matt Thistlethwaite spoke to Express about the consideration and admitted, "I think it's time for Australians to begin a serious discussion about our next head of state."

"The Harry and Meghan interview highlighted just how out of touch the British royal family has become to the lives of most Australians. If Harry and Meghan can quit the royal family, I don't see why the Australian people can't do the



same."

"We need to begin a serious discussion about recognising our independence and maturity, the fact that we govern ourselves make our own decisions, and we should reflect that by having one of our own as a head of state."

"At the end of the day,

Australia's future has very little to do with the British royal family. The Queen said that herself, she said that this is a decision for the Australian people and I fully agree with her." "I think that the time has come for us to once again begin that serious discussion, for our political leaders to put this back on the agenda and start discussing with the Australian people how we might make a sensible transition, through an education campaign, a campaign around a referendum, and then ultimately appointing one of our own as our head of state." "An Australian is capable of performing the role of our head of state. Let's get on with appointing one of our own to perform this role."

China supports Pakistan in peaceful diplomacy

The spokesperson remarked that seeking peace and development is the common aspiration of countries in the region

IP REPORT

BEIJING: Expressing warm congratulations on 82nd Pakistan Day, Chinese Foreign Ministry said on Monday that China supported Pakistan in pursuing peaceful diplomatic policies and it would work with Pakistan to inject more positive energy into the regional peace and stability as well as development. "China expresses warm congratulations on the 82nd Pakistan Day. We believe that Pakistani Government and people will make further progress on national building and revitalization," Chinese Foreign Ministry's Spokesperson Zhao Lijian said during his regular briefing held at the International Press Center.

While taking note of the positive remarks delivered by President Dr. Arif Alvi about China on Pakistan Day Parade last week, he said, "We highly appreciate that. China also values the All Weather Strategic Co-operative Partnership between the two countries." In the speech, President Alvi had said, "China is our closest and friendliest country." "President Alvi also noted in his speech that Pakistan would focus on development and peaceful coexistence with other countries and he urged world especially South Asian countries and their leaders to abandoned hatred, bias and religious extremism to jointly safeguard regional peace and stability," he added. The spokesperson remarked that seeking peace

and development is the common aspiration of countries in the region. On Pakistan's peaceful diplomatic policies and its efforts to help secure peaceful solution of Afghan issue, he said, "China supports Pakistan in pursuing peaceful diplomatic policies and we support the peace and reconciliation process of Afghanistan." On the relations between Pakistan and India, he said, "We are happy about the active interactions between Pakistan and India." He said that China would like to work with Pakistan to inject more positive energy into regional peace and stability as well as development. "I would like to take the opportunity of the 70th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic ties to work with Pakistan to fight Coro-



na virus and carry forward our traditional friendship to expand our all dimensional cooperation and build a closer China-Pakistan community of shared future in a new era," he added. Pakistan and China are celebrating the seven decades of friendship and establishment of diplomatic relations this year and launched a series of more than 100 activities in the

both countries. Last week, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi held a telephone conversation with the Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi. The Foreign Minister thanked for Premier Li Keqiang's thoughtful message wishing Prime Minister Imran Khan speedy recovery from COVID-19. State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi also wished swiftest recovery to Prime Minister Imran Khan. Foreign Minister Qureshi underscored that Pakistan had devised an elaborate plan of vaccination across the country as part of its endeavours to combat the pandemic. To reinforce Pakistan's capacity to effectively and expeditiously fight the pandemic, Foreign Minister Qureshi discussed with his Chinese

counterpart the supply of COVID-19 vaccine from China to Pakistan during March-April 2021. State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi reassured that China will continue to firmly support Pakistan in its fight against the pandemic and accord highest priority to the requirements of its time-tested friend. Foreign Minister Qureshi also expressed gratitude to China for earlier gifts of Pakistan 1.5 million doses of Chinese vaccine, underlining that it had played a pivotal role in protecting precious human lives. Both Foreign Ministers reaffirmed their resolve to further deepen Pakistan-China "All-Weather Strategic Co-operative Partnership". The two sides also agreed to maintain high-level exchanges.