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5+1 talks in Geneva may be a last chance: TRNC FM

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Baku urges joint efforts against terrorism

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Briefs

PM Imran recovers from corona

STAFF REPORT
ISLAMABAD: PTI leader Senator Faisal Javed said Tuesday Prime Minister Imran Khan has "completely recovered" and has resumed official duties partially, 10 days after he tested positive for the infection. The development comes after former finance minister Dr Abdul Hafeez Shaikh, President Arif Alvi, and Defence Minister Pervez Khattak tested positive for the virus. The senator said the prime minister has partially resumed official duties and is following the doctors' and international guidelines.

Hammad Azhar takes charge

DNA
ISLAMABAD: A notification for the appointment of Hammad Azhar as the new finance minister was issued by the Cabinet division Tuesday, media reported. Azhar has been given an additional portfolio of this ministry. He will still also be the federal minister for industries and production. A day earlier, senior PTI leader Senator Shibli Faraz, in a statement, informed about the change and said that Azhar would carry forward the vision of the prime minister. Prime Minister Imran Khan had conveyed to former finance minister Hafeez Sheikh to step down from his role.

Asad for following NCOC plans

DNA
ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Asad Umar asked all the provincial ministers to employ all administrative tools for across the board implementation of instructions issued by the NCOC to contain the spread of COVID-19. In his separate letters to the Chief Ministers of Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, Asad Umar who is also Chairman of NCOC said during the ongoing 3rd wave, the enforcement of SOPs had remained weak.

No military solution of the Afghan issue

FM Qureshi attends Hear of Asia Conference in Dhushanbe; says Pak ready to play its role for peace in the region

NEWS DESK
DUSHANBE (TAJIK-ISTAN): Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi on Tuesday said Pakistan would continue to support a peaceful and stable Afghanistan through a political instead of a military solution to the conflict. In his address at the 9th Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process (HoA-IP) Ministerial Conference in the Tajik capital, the foreign minister called for a united approach by regional countries to help restore prosperity of the Afghan people. Qureshi termed the Heart of Asia Process an important platform to bring together partners and supporting countries who wanted to achieve the common goals



DHUSHANBE: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi speaks at Hear of Asia Conference of peace, stability and prosperity in Afghanistan. For Pakistan, he said, Afghanistan was an important neighbour and brotherly country with strong historical ties. "Pakistan desires peace and development in Afghanistan more than any

other nation," he said. He recalled the historic development of signing of the US-Taliban peace agreement in February 2020 and the positive role played by Pakistan in this regard. The progress made so far has certainly provided a historic opportunity for the Afghan leadership to find a "negotiated, inclusive, broad-based and comprehensive solution" to the problem. Qureshi said as part of the efforts to engage extensively with Afghan leaders, Pakistan consistently called for a constructive dialogue and engagement to achieve positive results. "Our message to all is to carry forward this process through good faith, solid and fruitful dialogue," he said.

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RAWALPINDI: Mrs. Androulla Kaminara Ambassador of European Union (EU) called on General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) at GHQ. - DNA

Abbas wishes Alvi early recovery



DNA
ISLAMABAD: President Mahmood Abbas, President of the State of Palestine sent his best wishes for a speedy recovery from Covid-19 to President of Pakistan. Our thoughts and prayers are with the President and all those affected by coronavirus around the country.

Pakistan values its ties with EU, others: COAS

The visiting dignitaries also appreciated Pak role in regional stability, especially Afghan Peace Process

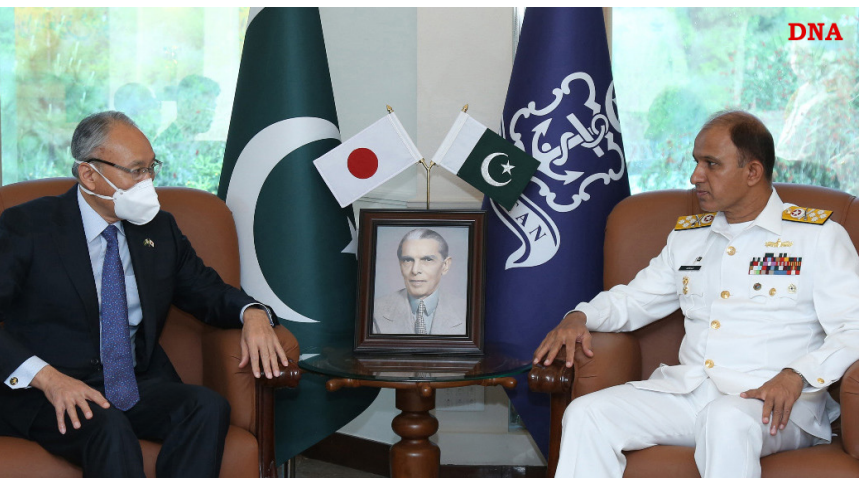
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
ISLAMABAD: Mrs. Androulla Kaminara - Ambassador of European Union (EU), Ms Wendy Gilmour - Canadian High Commissioner & Ms. Lis Rosenholm, Ambassador of Denmark called on General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) at GHQ, today. During the meeting, matters of mutual interest, regional security and enhanced bilateral cooperation with European Union (EU) and Canada came under discussion. COAS said that Pakistan values its relations with EU countries & Canada and we earnestly look forward to enhance mutually beneficial multi-domain relations based on common interests.

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Chinese envoy calls on Gen Bajwa

STAFF REPORT
RAWALPINDI: Nong Rong, Ambassador of China to Pakistan called on General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) at GHQ, today. During the meeting, matters of mutual interest, progress on CPEC and regional security were discussed. Visiting dignitary appreciated Pakistan's sincere efforts for bringing peace and stability in the region, especially the Afghan Peace Process.

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Amjad Khan Niazi in a meeting with Ambassador of Japan Kuninori Matsuda, at the Naval Headquarters. - DNA

Japanese envoy welcomes countrywide polio drive

Japan has been supporting Pakistan in its effort to eradicate polio from Pakistan with a cumulative amount of \$229 million since 1996

KHAYAM ABBASI
ISLAMABAD: MATSUDA Kuninori, Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, appreciated the start of Nationwide Immunisation Campaign for a polio-free Pakistan, which started yesterday and will continue until April 2. Ambassador MATSUDA hopes that the campaign will be implemented successfully and it will lead to a polio-free Pakistan in the near future. He paid tribute to the polio workers and hopes that the polio workers will be safe from COVID-19 amid the growing third wave in Pakistan. Japan has been supporting Pakistan in its effort to eradicate polio from Pakistan with a cumulative amount of \$229 million since 1996. Ambassador MATSUDA said, "Japan has been cooperating with Pakistan in collaboration with international organizations to eradicate polio from Pakistan as one of the most important areas of Japanese cooperation and will continue helping Pakistan in the future."

COVID-19 claims 100 more lives

ZUBAIR AHMED
ISLAMABAD: The national tally on Tuesday of total active COVID-19 cases recorded 48,566 with 4,048 more people tested positive for the deadly virus out of 46,269 tests conducted during last 24 hours. Around 100 corona patients have died during past 24 hours, 92 of whom were under treatment in hospital and eight out of the hospital in their respective quarantines or homes, according to the latest update issued by the National command and Operation Centre (NCOC). During the last 24 hours most of the deaths had occurred in Punjab followed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Out of the total 100 deaths occurred during last 24 hours, 33 of the deceased had died on ventilators. The maximum ventilators were

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NCOC has completely failed: Shahid Khaqan

Shahid Khaqan Abbasi has said that NAB was established to suppress opposition

STAFF REPORT
ISLAMABAD: Former prime minister and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Shahid Khaqan Abbasi on Tuesday said National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) had completely failed to control the spread of coronavirus. Talking to the media outside the Accountability Court (AC) in Islamabad where he had gone in connection with LNG reference hearing, he said nowhere in the NCOC declaration was there a mention of the coronavirus vaccine. "Nowhere in the world is the sale of vaccine allowed. It is only in Pakistan where profit is being earned through its sale," he alleged. The PML-N leader further said it was unfortunate that the entire family of a minister was administered the coronavirus vaccine. He regretted that it was strange that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government had realized after two and a half years that its finance minister was 'incompetent'. Shahid Khaqan Abbasi has said that NAB was established to suppress opposition. He said that political system in the country is being pressurized.

Army Chief visits logistic facilities

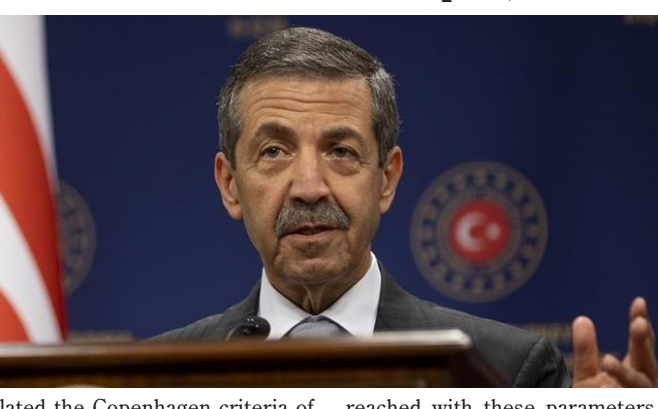
COAS appreciated the capacity enhancement of depot

DNA
RAWALPINDI: General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) visited a Logistic Installation in Rawalpindi, today. COAS was briefed regarding various facilities being developed, construction of new sheds and up gradation of existing infrastructure. COAS appreciated the capacity enhancement of depot, adopting modern procedures and performance/commitment of the depot in provision of rations and other commodities at Rawalpindi station and complete Corps Area of Responsibilities (AOR). Earlier on arrival, COAS was received by Lieutenant General Azhar Saleh Abbasi, Chief of Logistic Staff.

5+1 talks in Geneva may be a last chance: TRNC FM

TRNC to get international recognition beyond expectations; EU has last chance to correct its past mistakes; relations with Pakistan are excellent; our Islamabad office gets same treatment we get in Ankara; TRNC shall be opened for international tourists from mid April; status quo in Verosha area to be eliminated

EXCLUSIVE
ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI
LEFKOSA: Foreign Minister of Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) Tahsin Ertugroglu has said that there is no common ground. There cannot be a common ground so long as we're treated unequally as we have been all these years," he said in an exclusive interview to Daily Islamabad POST, CENTRELINE magazine and DNA News Agency. He further said, after decades of negotiations based on the idea of reunifying the island through the creation of a federal state, the approach should be abandoned in favor of a two-state solution, a position in line with the stance of the new president of the TRNC, Ersin Tatar. Tatar was elected in October by supporting a two-state solution, a policy backed by motherland Turkey.



Further dilating upon 5+1 meeting the minister said this meeting is not an open-ended negotiation process. Ertugroglu also rejected calls by Greek Cypriot leader Nicos Anastasiades in January for the EU to play a role in the discussions, which in the past have also involved Turkey, Greece and former colonial power Britain. We do not accept the European Union representative presence in the meeting with an observer status. The Greek side is member of the EU and they pursue their own interests in various mechanisms within the union, therefore the EU cannot be impartial. The meeting title is 5+1 and 1 means the United Nations so EU has nothing to do with this meeting. He said the EU committed a grave mistake by admitting the Greek side to the European Union as member. Now it is time for the EU to correct its mistake. In fact by admitting Greek side as a member, the EU blatantly vio-

lated the Copenhagen criteria of membership. "We will attend the meeting in good faith and if the other party responds in the same way, there will be a forward-looking opportunity", the minister added. Minister Tahsin Ertugroglu further said the UN parameters, which have been on the agenda for years on Cyprus have not yielded results so far and it has emerged that an agreement cannot be reached with these parameters. To insist on the available parameters such as federal model will end on deadlock. Turkish Cypriot side's views of a solution model are based on the cooperation of two sovereign states with equal rights living side by side. After the collapse of talks in Crans Montana due to the Greek Cypriot's willful intransigence, the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres also stated that new views and options on the Cyprus issue could come to the table. If it is necessary to give more time for both sides and stakeholders to help find some common ground, then we can surely give this initiative another chance but one thing is for sure that this process should not be open-ended. There has to be an understanding within next few months. If there is no agreement, then TRNC will go for international recognition. We are sure there are many countries in this world who do not accept Greek side stand point on the issue. However, I would make it clear here that once these negotiations fail, then we will sit with our motherland Turkey to devise future course of action. We have all along been in constant touch with motherland Turkey therefore in this scenario ostensibly Turkey will be kept in the loop. To a question about Pakistan-TRNC relations Minister Teh-

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Briefs

Gandapur again found violating Covid SOPs

DNA

DI KHAN: Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Ali Amin Gandapur, who has developed the habit of breaking rules, organised a public gathering at Dera Ismael Khan on Tuesday in a clear-cut violation of the coronavirus-related standard operating procedures (SOPs). Not only this, but he also taught his minor son the skills to drive a car. And when somebody objected to it, the minister replied that when it was his area, his car and his son, why somebody should object to it. The district administration, only a few days ago, had imposed section 144 to prevent the gathering of five or more people in view of the pandemic. But Gandapur openly flouted the law, and the authorities acted as mute spectators.

This is not the first time that the federal minister has been found breaching the law. Only a few days ago, he was seen in a video with his son sitting on the driving seat, while he was sitting next to him and enjoying the ride. Not only that, he continued to make the footage of his son's driving too.

Ruet-e-Hilal Committee meets on April 13

SHAHEEN HANIF

ISLAMABAD: A meeting of the Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee has been convened on April 13 for the sighting of the moon of Ramadan, 1442 AH. According to a notification issued by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, the moon sighting committee's chairman Maulana Abdul Khaiber Azad will chair the meeting in Peshawar. On Monday, Minister for Religious Affairs Noor-ul-Haq Qadri cleared that mosques across the country will remain open in the holy month of Ramadan. He said the government will ensure the strict enforcement of the standard operating procedures (SOPs) during Ramadan to prevent the spread of the virus. In Ramadan last year, the government had restrained people above the age of 50, children and those suffering from flu and cough from offering prayers at mosques. Meanwhile, Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has predicted that there is good chance of sighting the new moon of Ramadan 1442 AH on the evening of April 13 (Tuesday). The new moon of Ramadan, 1442 AH will be born on crossing conjunction point at 07:32 PST on 12 April, 2021 (Monday), weather department said in a statement. According to astronomical parameters, there is 'good chance' of sighting the new moon of Ramadan, 1442 AH on the evening of Tuesday 13 April i.e. 29th of Shaban, 1442 AH, the met office said.

Pakistan's first electric bus hits the road in Karachi

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Sindh Transport Minister Syed Owais Shah launched on Tuesday Pakistan's first electric bus in Karachi. Speaking to the media after the launching ceremony, he said more electric buses will be brought to the city's roads in cooperation with the private sector. As many as 100 electric buses will hit the road by the end of this year, he announced. Minister for Science and Technology Fawad Chaudhry took to Twitter to congratulate the Sindh government, specially Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah and his ministry, on their "remarkable step to add electric bus in Karachi Commuters system". He said his ministry fully supports the Sindh government in this "futuristic approach" and expressed the hope that the Punjab and KP governments will also take the same route as soon as possible. Last year in December, the federal cabinet had approved Pakistan's first Electric Vehicle Policy.



Prime Minister Imran Khan chairs meeting on Gilgit Baltistan Development Package at Islamabad. – DNA

ADB approves \$300 mln to boost clean energy in Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$300 million loan to finance the construction of a 300-megawatt hydropower plant that will increase the share of clean energy in Pakistan and improve the country's energy security. The plant will add 1,143 gigawatt-hours of clean energy annually to the country's energy mix, enhancing the energy sector's reliability

and sustainability. The plant, which will incorporate seismic strengthening and climate-proofing measures, will be built on the Kunhar river near Balakot City in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province and commissioned by 2027. "Pakistan is highly vulnerable to climate change, with water resources and energy particularly at risk from floods, droughts, high temperatures, and other extreme weather events," said ADB Principal Energy Specialist Adnan Tareen in

a statement. "In line with Pakistan's climate change adaptation and mitigation priorities, this climate-resilient hydropower plant will boost the country's clean energy generation while effectively utilizing its vast water resources." Pakistan is rich in hydropower resources but only around 16% of its identified hydropower potential has been harnessed. The country's power sector is reliant on imported fuel-based power generation and is

burdened with a stressed transmission and distribution network. To balance the energy mix and reduce its dependence on imported fuel, the government has committed to increase its untapped renewable energy potential in hydro, solar, and wind. Balakot Hydropower Plant will also generate economic activity and improve the skills of local communities. During construction, the project will generate more than 1,200 jobs, about 40% of which will be sourced lo-

cally, and provide livelihood skills development for women. A community development program will help to improve livelihood opportunities for affected households and adjacent communities, including women and vulnerable segments of the population. This will help to build economic resilience and improve the capacity of affected people to cope with climate change, natural disasters, and other risks. The plant will substantially

increase the revenue of the state-owned Pakhtunkhwa Energy Development Organization, which is responsible for operating hydropower plants in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It will help reduce average daily load shedding in the province and serve the national demand. The government will invest \$175 million in the project. It has also requested a \$280 million loan in project co-financing from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

Chairman CDA chairs DWP meeting

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) chaired the meeting of Development Working Party (DWP) at CDA secretariat in Islamabad on Tuesday. The project of Khayaban-e-Iqbal service road and expansion of roundabout beside F-10 road approved during the meeting. The project of Rs 205.102 million will resolve the traffic issues and control the intensity of road accidents. The development of residential apartments for at the cost of Rs 15184 million for the residents of slums and people have low income in Frash Town was also approved during the meeting. Under this project, 1560 apartments

will be constructed in the first phase. They would be auctioned by CDA to get the developmental cost. In the next phase, 400 apartments will be constructed which will be allotted to the residents of slums of other areas. In the third phase, 2000 apartments will be constructed which would be registered with Naya Pakistan Housing Authority to give them to low salaried people. The project of expansion and upgradation of signalized intersection connecting Murre road to Serinagar Highway with the cost of Rs 361.60 million was also approved during the session. PC1 of the developmental work of sector D 12 with the cost of Rs 2628.990 million was also approved during the meeting.

CM Buzdar inaugurates projects worth billions

DNA

CHINIOT: Punjab Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar has on Tuesday inaugurated and laid foundation of projects worth billions of rupees in Chiniot. Speaking to media on the occasion, the chief minister said solving public problems is the government's foremost priority and development packages are being given to all districts. Usman Buzdar announced to build a 250-bed hospital in Chiniot along with four projects of road construction. He said the provincial regime wants equal progress in the entire Punjab and has given a package of Rs 10 billion to

Chiniot and Faisalabad. Meanwhile, addressing local representatives and district officers here at Rest House, Chief Minister said that in past, less developed districts of the province were ignored but the PTI government has decided to provide separate development package for each district and in this regard elected public representatives of every district and tehsil were being taken on board. He said that 67-km long Chiniot-Faisalabad road via Sargodha would be constructed under public-private partnership with an estimated cost of Rs 12.70 billion, while Chiniot district would share Rs 4.5 billion in the project. CM said that Pindi Bhattian-Chiniot road would soon be constructed, adding that a Cardiology department would be set up in the proposed 250-bed DHQ hospital Chiniot. CM Buzdar said that district police complex, district complex would soon be established in the city and for this purpose land was being allocated. He highlighted that four-

tion stone of Govt Boys Degree College in Kalowal Lalian costing Rs 250 million, Govt Degree College for Women in Mangwana costing Rs 250 million, sewerage scheme costing Rs 230 million in Bhawana and tehsil headquarter hospital in Bhawana had been laid. The CM also inaugurated uplift schemes costing Rs 411.7 million in the city. Usman Buzdar said that state land in Chiniot district was being retrieved from squatters. He said the Punjab government had announced a package of Rs 7 billion for setting up Ramazan Bazaars in the province where commodities would be available for people on the rates of year 2018.



He highlighted that four-

Hashoo Group to open another Hotel One

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: The new hotel will attract both leisure and business travellers to explore the historical city of Bahawalpur. To recreate the charm of travelling to a contemporary city with a royal past, the new Hotel One will be opening its doors soon to travellers in Bahawalpur, the City of Nawabs. In this connection, a ground-breaking ceremony was attended by Mr. Haseeb Gardezi, Chief Operating Officer - Hashoo Group Hospitality Division, Mr. Waqar Qureshi, Director Development - Hotel One, and Mr. Makhdoom Murtala Muhammad, the franchisee of Hotel One in Bahawalpur. Hashoo Group is the leading and largest chain of hotels in Pakistan who own and operate the five-star Pearl-Continental, Marriott and the select-service Hotel One brands in Pakistan. Located on Ahmedpur Road, this will be the second Hotel One in the City of Nawabs and will feature 50 elegant rooms, offer all-day dining at an in-house restaurant and cater to banquet and conference facilities at multi-purpose halls. Moreover, the upcoming hotel will be located in the business district of Bahawalpur. Upon construction, the hotel will reflect the historic architectural heritage that the iconic city of Bahawalpur is famous for. Bahawalpur was once a princely state of Pakistan located in Punjab, famous for its timeless grandeur and was the city of residence for the royal families. Bahawalpur is now known for its monuments dating back from that glorious era.

Nurses protest for acceptance of demands

PESHAWAR: Scores of male and female nurses from across the province gathered near Provincial Assembly and staged a protest for acceptance of their demands under the banner of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nurses Alliance here on Tuesday. The nurses demanded service structure and stoppage of deduction from salary in case of necessary leaves. They said nurses should be allowed limited private medical practice and their Health Professional Allowance be fixed in accordance with their pay scale. The nurses were also demanding an increase in internship seats from 100 to 1000 and a stipend of at least Rs 50000 for internship courses. They also demanded legislation in MTI hospitals for the nurses. – APP

FBR begins probe into sugar dealers

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: In the midst of a sustained sugar shortage in Punjab, sugar dealers have come on the radar of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR). An investigation has been launched against the sugar dealers to get to the bottom of the shortage. According to details, consumers in Lahore are finding it difficult to procure sugar and flour. Babar Center remained closed even on the 9th day and sugar trading could not start. Following the suspension of sugar supply, it is being sold in the black market. Following the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), FBR has also started investigating the taxes of 37 sugar dealers. It has also started scrutinizing the bank accounts and assets of registered sugar dealers. According to sources, FBR has automatically registered unregistered sugar dealers earning billions of rupees. As of March 30, the price of sugar in the wholesale market has reached Rs 110 per kg. Similarly, a 20 kg bag of flour is no longer available in the market. The unavailability of flour and sugar has worried both retailers and consumers, who say the situation is grave and that both commodities will disappear before Ramadan. According to sources, the shortfall of sugar in the city's market has reached 216,000 bags. However, no coherent governmental system to restore the supply has been observed.



SARGODHA: A worker giving final touches to traditional stove at his cooking workplace. – APP

APNS thanks CM KP, others officials for accepting demand

KARACHI: The All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS) thanked Mahmood Khan, Chief Minister KP, Kamran Bangash, Special Assistant to Chief Minister on Information, Arshad Khan, Secretary Information and Imdadullah Khan, Director General, Information for accepting the demand of APNS for timely payments of provincial government advertisements. Sarmad Ali, President and Ms. Naz Afreen Saigol Lakhani, Secretary General, APNS in a joint statement, have stated that on the consistent efforts of Haroon Shah, Chairman, APNS KP Committee for the years 2019-2021, the KP government has agreed to evolve a mechanism for timely and regular payments to media in the first week of every month. This measure will go a long way in helping the newspaper industry in the KP province as the member publications were facing acute liquidity problems due to delayed payment by the provincial departments. The APNS is confident that the announcement will be implemented in letter and spirit and the member publications will get their due payments by the appointed date. The APNS appreciates this gesture of the KP Government which was made possible with the consistent efforts of Haroon Shah and the cooperation extended by DG Information, Mr. Imdadullah Khan. – DNA

DC Faisalabad urges to implement corona SOPs

The Deputy Commissioner strongly urged to implement the SoPs and said that people should not go out of their houses unnecessarily to ensure their health

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ali suddenly went different busiest chowks and checked the implementation on wearing face mask and punish the people those were travelling without face mask and stood them with the walls for few minutes. He emphasized on the use of masks to avoid the dangers of corona virus and directed that precautions be taken seriously. The Deputy Commissioner strongly urged to implement the SoPs and said that people should not go out of their houses unnecessarily to ensure their health. The Deputy Commissioner said

that the district administration has taken precautionary measures to protect the citizens from Corona virus but social co-operation is essential to be safe from the virus. ACs Umar Maqbool and Syed Ayub Bukhari were also with him. Meanwhile Deputy Commissioner informed that as many as 736 shopping malls, plazas, restaurants, marriage halls and private schools have been sealed for non compliance corona SoPs/lock down. He directed the Assistant Commissioners to implement the corona SoPs in the markets and bazars and submitted FIRs for non wearing face masks. It was informed that in 2 days 131 FIRs have been registered against violators for not

wearing face masks. Polio campaign reviewed Deputy Commissioner

Muhammad Ali chaired a meeting to review the progress of ongoing Polio



campaign. He directed that every effort should be made to make the anti-polio campaign a hundred percent success and complete the daily target as per the microplan so that no child up to the age of five years could be deprived of vaccine. CEO Dr. Bilal Ahmed, representative of the World Health Organization and officials from other departments were also present. Reviewing the progress of implementation on the campaign, the Deputy Commissioner urged the polio teams to fulfill their responsibilities in a more efficient manner and said that the presence of polio teams at public transport stands, railway

stations and other important public places should be ensured and children should be vaccinated. He urged the health department to take immediate steps and address the issues raised by the World Health Organization (WHO). The Deputy Commissioner clarified that the sudden checking of the implementation of the campaign would continue and the concerned area in-charge would be responsible for the shortcomings. During the meeting, the CEO gave a briefing on the implementation and monitoring of the campaign and said that on first day 420220 children vaccinated.

Briefs

SOPs being followed during anti-polio drive

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: The five-day anti-polio campaign which kicked off in the entire district on Monday to cover more than 885,000 children below five years of age was in full swing.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Health Authority Dr. Faiza Kanwal informed media that 2964 polio teams, 240 health centers, 307 fixed centers, allied hospitals, and tehsil headquarter hospitals were participating in the drive.

The CEO said that Standard operating procedures (SOPs) regarding COVID-19 were being followed to ensure the safety of polio teams during the drive. She said polio drops were also being administered at transit points to ensure that all children be immunized below five years of age.

Kanwal said that staff deployed for the campaign have been instructed that no negligence in this regard would be tolerated. "The parents should cooperate with special teams so that the set target could be achieved," she added.

IESCO issues power suspension schedule

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO)'s spokesman, System Maintenance is in process. Therefore power supply of below mentioned feeders/areas will be temporary suspended as per given schedule:

On Dated March 31st From 09:00 AM to 02:00 AM Chara, Club-1, Mahfooz Shaheed, Orchard, Filtration Plant, Scheme II, Pandorian, Model Town, Pepsi, Sarwar Shaheed, Sawan Industrial, RCCI Express, Eid Gah, Raja Sultan and surrounding areas Feeders from 08:00 AM to 10:00 AM Officer Colony, HPT, I-16/3, FOECHS, I-16 Center, I-16/1, PHA Flats, I-16/3 Sector, Lakh Road, Amir Hamza, I-16/2, I-16/4, Pind Hoon, I-14/3, I-14/4, Noon Feeders from 09:30 AM to 12:30 PM, PWD-1, FECHS, Lohi Bhaier Feeders from 10:00 AM to 12:00 Noon, Margalla Feeder from 09:00 AM to 01:00 PM, Banni Gala, Khanna East and surrounding areas from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM, Kot Sarang, Dhok Pathan, Tahi, Gangal, Gulshanabad, and surrounding areas from 09:00 AM to 04:00 PM Syed Kasran Feeder from 08:00 AM to 02:00 PM, Capt. Nisar Shaheed, MES-I&II, Binnie, Mangla Cantt, Gadari Feeders and surrounding areas will be remain without power. IESCO management apologizes to its esteemed customers for the power outage.

RPO pins ranks onto promoted police officers

RAWALPINDI: Regional Police Officer (RPO) Rawalpindi Imran Ahmar on Tuesday pinned ranks of senior positions onto police officers in a simple ceremony organized here at the RPO office. The ceremony was attended by Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rawalpindi Capt. (R) Anwar ul Haq, City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi Muhammad Ahsan Younas and other police officers. The RPO pinned the ranks of Senior Superintendent Police (SSP) onto recently promoted SSP Operations Rawalpindi Rana Shoaib Mehmood and SSP Investigation Rawalpindi Muhammad Faisal. Establishment Division has issued a notification regarding promotion of the police officers.

The RPO congratulating the newly promoted police officers, told them that their responsibilities for better policing had increased. "You have ample experience of police service; therefore, you will have to guide your juniors for better policing," he said. — APP



ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed inspecting the mega screen of Safe City Islamabad Project during his visit to the Police Headquarters. — DNA

Tourist police for capital on the cards: Sh. Rashid

The minister said around eight drones would be procured for the ICT police to ensure better surveillance in the capital city

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed said on Tuesday that efforts were afoot to launch a tourist police to ensure safe and secure environment for the visitors thronging the federal capital for recreational activities. Addressing a news conference, he said around 240 cops would be deployed at 24 recreational spots to

facilitate the tourists in the federal capital. The minister vowed to transform the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) police into an exemplary force by improving its performance. The capital police would serve as a role model for other federating units, he added.

The minister said around eight drones would be procured for the ICT police to ensure better surveillance in the capital city.

Islamabad population had grown exponentially and existing police stations were not enough to fulfill its residents' needs, he said while hinting at improving the force strength.

Sheikh Rashid announced that a Safe City Authority would be set up in Islamabad. A law would be introduced in the Parliament for issuance of various kinds of challans through safe city cameras, he added.

The minister said 25 more vehicles in the fleet of Rescue 1122 Ambulance service would be inducted to respond emergency situations in efficient manner.

To a query, he said a list of frontline personnel was being furnished to ensure their anti-COVID-19 vaccination at the earliest. He underlined the need for increased coordination between the police of twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad

for curbing the crimes in effective manner.

Sheikh Rashid said political forces on both sides of the Line of Control should make efforts to ease tension between India Pakistan, adding it would not work until the resolution of Kashmir dispute.

He also termed the Kashmir a "jugal vein" of Pakistan. "Usman Buzdar [Chief Minister of Punjab] will not go anywhere as he enjoys

full confidence of Prime Minister Imran Khan," he said while responding to a query. He said the multiparty alliance of the opposition, Pakistan Democratic Movement, had collapsed, adding the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf government would complete its five year tenure. Earlier, the IGP Islamabad apprised the minister over functioning of safe city cameras installed at various points in the city.

Experts call for Pakistan, Uzbekistan academic co-op

Institutions agreed that student exchange programs between Punjab University and Nukus State Pedagogical Institute Uzbekistan

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: An online meeting was held between the Management of Regional Integration Center, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Nukus State Pedagogical Institute named after Ajiniyaz, Uzbekistan and Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad.

During the meeting students of the Nukus State Pedagogical Institute were introduced to the University of the Punjab, Lahore. Dr. Fozia Hadi Ali, Director, Regional Integration Center, University of the Punjab, Lahore explained the departments, degree programs and the criteria of admission to the students



who wish to secure an admission in the University of the Punjab, Lahore. The students were enthusiastic to continue their studies in Pakistan and inquired

regarding their programs and areas of interests. All institutions agreed that Student Exchange programs between University of the Punjab, Lahore and

the Nukus State Pedagogical Institute Named after Ajiniyaz, Uzbekistan will help in strengthening the academic linkages between both countries.

NCGSA announce 15 m Research Fund in Space and Tech domain

RAJA PERVAIZ

ISLAMABAD: NCGSA has invited proposals from faculty members and researchers to conduct research with focus on sustainable socio-economic development of Pakistan through Space Science, Technology and its Applications. NCGSA; a project of Higher Education Commission (HEC) led by Institute of Space Technology is a consortium of seven research laborato-

ries in seven universities of Pakistan. According to an official source, the research proposals have been invited from faculty members and researchers of Higher Education Institutions and Research and Development organizations of Pakistan. The research grant will be provided on competitive basis in the different domains resulting in sustainable products/prototype/ solutions with potential of commercialization and leading to contribution in the socio-economic development of Pakistan.

The research domains include Remote Sensing and Geographic Information Science; Small Satellite Technology; Positioning, Navigation and Timing; Astronomy, Astrophysics and Astrobiology, Space Popularization and Outreach and Space Applications and Advanced Systems. Full time faculty members/researchers of public or private HEIs or Research and Development organizations of Pakistan are eligible to apply for the research project.

Tableeghi Jamaat postpones Islamabad ijtema

MEHMOOD ABDULLAH

ISLAMABAD: The Tableeghi Jamaat has agreed to postpone their upcoming annual ijtema (congregation) in Rawalpindi, as cases of the novel coronavirus continue to surge across the country. The Jamaat's decision to suspend their gathering which was originally scheduled to begin from April 1 and conclude on April 4 — was announced by Minister for Interior Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed in a tweet. "I am very grateful to the Management of 'Tableeghi Jamaat' that ON MY REQUEST, they have postponed their annual 'IJTEMA' in Islamabad, scheduled from 1st to 4th April. The request was made in view of the increasing cases of COVID-19 in the City. #NCOCCOVID19," he tweeted. Islamabad has seen a rise in coronavirus cases as the third wave of the virus intensifies across the country. As per latest data from the National Command and Operation Centre, Islamabad has 6,126 active coronavirus cases while the number of dead from the infection has risen to 563.

PARC to use "Miyawaki Techniques" for forest

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: PARC executed Miyawaki Method for the plantation of urban forestry under its agro-forestry program today on March 30, 2021 at Rangeland Research Institute, NARC. Chairman PARC Dr. Azeem Khan inaugurated the Urban Forestry Model while DG NARC, Engr. Shamim ul Sibtain Shah, Member (NR), Dr. Sarfraz Ahmad, Magbool Shahbaz, Director Rangeland Research Institute NARC along with other high officials was also present.

Dr. Azeem Khan Chairman PARC highlighted the importance of forest cover in sustainable climate resilient agriculture. He added that PARC has started vigorous plantation under Miyawaki techniques; a pioneering method developed by the Japanese plant ecologist Akira Miyawaki. To increase the forest cover in Pakistan rapidly this techniques is introduced. It promises solutions to the environment issues, by rapidly and efficiently restoring degraded land, absorbing carbon dioxide emissions and preserving biodiversity creating dense native forest in the process.

Quaid portrait installed at Islamabad Expressway

The new portrait completed at a cost of over Rs 50 million, giving the founding father's message of Unity, Faith and Discipline

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) has installed a weather resilient and colorful portrait of Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah at a mound along the Islamabad Expressway. The new portrait completed at a cost of over Rs 50 million, giving the founding father's message of Unity, Faith and Discipline. Minister for Interior Sheikh Rashid Ahmed has inaugurated

the portrait the other day. The previously installed portrait was collapsed last year in August due to windstorm.

According to an official of the CDA, the new one was designed by a renowned designer Jamal Shah. It was capable of competing with the harsh weather, he added, while pointing out its 50 feet length and 60 feet width. Meanwhile, the residents of twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad seemed jubilant over re-erection of the Quaid's portrait as many

flocked the Expressway to have selfies. Talking to APP, Zahid Khan, a resident of Police Foundation, who travels at the Islamabad Expressway daily, said the portrait was quite beautiful and better than previous one. He said such initiatives were imperative to restore the beauty of Federal Capital. It would also have good impact on the people of other provinces, coming to Islamabad for various purposes, he added. He, however, took exception to the cost of portrait, saying "Over

Rs 50 million cost for this initiative is very high." Earlier, Capital Development Authority (CDA) has directed formations concerned to expedite the pace of ongoing developmental work at Islamabad Expressway. CDA had written 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 to T Chowk. On the other hand, pace of work on PWD underpass will be expedited and the project will be completed till the May, 2021. Similarly, almost 50% work on Korang Bridge has also been completed. This project will be completed till October 2021.

RDA seals six buildings

IBRAR KHAN

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) on Tuesday sealed six under construction apartment buildings at Elite Reverie Housing Scheme. According to a RDA spokesman, the Land Use and Building Control (LU&BC) team on the directives of Director General (DG) Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) Capt. (R) Abdul Sattar Isani conducted operation against illegal and unauthorized buildings and sealed six under construction apartment buildings at pavilions 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 and 7 at Elite Reverie Housing Scheme (Eighteen Islamabad project) here.

These buildings were being constructed in violation of approved layout plan, he said adding, the Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) authorities took action in accordance with the law and sealed the under construction buildings.

RDA is conducting a grand operation against the rules violators, illegal construction and land mafia. Building Control Wing has been actively conducting operations against illegal and unauthorized commercial cum residential construction activities including plazas, shops, schools and other illegal land use encroachments, he added.

The spokesman said that the DG had directed the authorities to take strict action against encroachments, illegal and unauthorized constructions and commercial activities in residential areas without any discrimination.

FO prays IHC to dismiss case of Asad Khattak

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office on Tuesday submitted its comments against the petition of Veena Malik's ex-husband Asad Khattak regarding shifting of their children to Pakistan from Dubai and prayed the court to dismiss the case. The foreign office adopted the stance in its reply that Asad Khattak had hid facts in the case and attached controversial material with his petition. It further said that Veena Malik had submitted copy of National Identity Card for Overseas Pakistanis (NICOP) of her children to Pakistan High Commission in Dubai. She also provided the copy of certificate regarding the guardianship of children issued by Rawalpindi court.

The reply further said that the passports were issued to the children under the Pakistani laws, adding that children were issued emergency travel documents after submission of passports. Chief Justice Athar Minalah, hearing the case, directed to share the copy of foreign office's comments to petitioner Asad Khattak and adjourned hearing of the case till April 20. It may be mentioned here that Asad Khattak had stated in his plea that Pakistan High Commission had assisted Veena Malik to shift his children to Pakistan despite the Dubai court had restricted their travel.

Operation Director to hold online Katchary

SHAHEEN HANIF

ISLAMABAD: The Operation Director Islamabad Electric Supply Company will hold online Katchary on Wednesday to address the consumers' complaints. According to IESCO spokesman, online katcharies were being conducted regularly. As per the schedule, the Operation Director IESCO would hold online Katchary at telephone No.051-9253105. He will attend complaints/suggestions of customers from 10:30 am to 12:30 pm. IESCO requested valued customers to participate in open katchary for immediate solution of their complaints.

Briefs

CTO directs wardens to act against wrong parking

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Rawalpindi Rai Mazhar Iqbal has directed the circle and sector in-charges and traffic wardens to take strict action on overloading and wrong parking. According to a City Traffic Police (CTP) spokesman, the traffic officers and wardens had been directed to take action in accordance with the law on overloading and wrong parking which create traffic problems on the city roads.

The transporters had been warned of strict action on the violation, he said adding, vehicles of the violators would be impounded besides imposing heavy fines.

He said the overloaded heavy vehicles not only put the drivers at risk but the passengers and other road users as well. He informed that the traffic police have been taking action in accordance with the law against the rules violators. He said, traffic wardens and field officers had also been directed to take strict action against double and wrong parking of vehicles which create hurdles in smooth flow of traffic.

The Wardens directed to make all out efforts particularly in congested areas to ensure smooth flow of traffic.

He urged the motorists not to park vehicles in wrong way on the roads which causes inconvenience for other road users.

He said, CTP had made special arrangements to control traffic on the city roads aimed at avoiding traffic mess.

He said, wrong parking which was one of main cause of traffic mess on the roads would not be tolerated, adding, the vehicles and motorcycles found parked out of parking area would be impounded.

Police net four POs

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Police on Tuesday claimed to have arrested four Proclaimed Offenders (POs) allegedly involved in different cases. According to Rawalpindi police spokesman, special raids on the directive of City Police Officer (CPO) Muhammad Ahsan Younas were conducted by Rawalpindi police to net POs, court absconders and other outlaws.

Rawat police managed to net four POs namely Muhammad Asad, Muhammad Sajjad, Muhammad Khalid and Muhammad Iqbal alias Kalu who were wanted in different cases. He said, the police crackdown against criminals would continue and the outlaws would be sent behind the bars.

He said, the CPO had directed the police to launch crackdown against POs and take action in accordance with the law against criminals particularly the most wanted.

Four arrested with illegal weapons

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi Police in crackdown against illegal weapons rounded up four persons from different areas and recovered weapons from their possession, the police spokesman said on Tuesday.

He informed that Race Course, Sadiqabad, Taxila and Chontra police on the directives of Rawalpindi City Police Officer (CPO), launched a crackdown and arrested four persons namely Haider Ali, Muhammad Asim, Pervaiz Khan and Asif Shah and recovered illegal weapons including three 30 bore pistols and one 7mm rifle from their possession.

He said, Rawalpindi district police were conducting operations against law violators without any discrimination.

The spokesman said the police would continue their operations against criminals and lawbreakers and they would be sent behind bars.

New Air Chief makes first visit to Naval Headquarters

Chief of the Air Staff was received by Naval Chief. A smartly turned out contingent of Pakistan Navy presented Guard of Honour. The visiting dignitary laid wreath at Shuhada Monument and was introduced to Principal Staff Officers at Naval HQ



ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: The newly appointed Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu visited Naval Headquarters after assumption of

Command and met Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi. Upon arrival at Naval Headquarters, Chief of the Air Staff was received by Naval Chief. A smartly turned out contingent of Pakistan Navy presented

Guard of Honour. The visiting dignitary laid wreath at Shuhada Monument and was introduced to Principal Staff Officers at Naval Headquarters. Later, the Air Chief called on Chief of the Naval Staff at his office. During the



meeting, Chief of the Naval Staff congratulated Chief of the Air Staff on assuming Command of Pakistan Air Force. The Naval Chief said that Pakistan Navy and Pakistan Air Force will continue the endeavours

to enhance synergy and seamless integration in all important operational and other inter-services undertakings. The Naval Chief expressed his well wishes that Pakistan Navy and Pakistan Air Force will further progress and attain greater heights un-

der the able Command of Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu. Air Chief Marshal also assured PAF's full support and pledged to work together in making the defence of the country impregnable.

17861 active Covid cases reported

KHAYAM ABBASI

RAWALPINDI: With an addition of 181 more COVID-19 positive cases during the last 24 hours, the number of total cases have reached to 17861 including 16358 belonged to Rawalpindi and 1503 from other districts. According to a daily situation report issued by the district administration here Tuesday, 15134 patients having positive results were discharged after recovery while 4487 including 2687 were quarantined at homes and 1800 in isolation. "Presently 195 confirmed patients were admitted to various facilities of the city including 25 were admitted in Holy Family Hospital, 33 in Benazir Bhutto Hospital, 113 in Institute of Urology, 20 in Fauji Foundation Hospital, 3 in Rukhsana Memorial Hospital and one in Hearts International Hospital," he added.

It updated that patients reported during last 24 hours, 25 belonged to Rawal Town, 47 Potohar town, 46 Rawalpindi cant, 29 Gujar Khan, 9 Taxila, 3 Murree, 22, Kahuta, 2 Kotli Sattian, 4 Kalar Syedan, 11 Islamabad, 2 Chakwal, and one from Sahiwal, Attock and Kahuta ehal.

The report elaborated that 14 patients were on the vent in critical condition, 97 stable, and 84 in moderate condition while 8 died during the last 24 hours with 6 belonged to Rawalpindi and 2 others.

Pollen count increases up to 8,128 in Capital

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) Spokesman Dr. Khalid Malik on Tuesday said pollen count has increased up to 8,128 per cubic meter of air and its concentration reached to high level in federal capital. Talking to APP, he said the pollen concentration will further increase during next few days in Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

Normally, it touches the extreme limits of around 45,000 per cubic meter of air at the peak of the blossom season, he added.

He said Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) issued an alert for the allergy patients to remain extra careful during pollen season especially in twin cities.

The most abundant pollen types in Islamabad are from 08 plant species including Paper Mulberry, Acacia, Eucalyptus, Pines, Grasses, Cannabis, Dandelion and Alternaria out of all these plants Paper Mulberry shares about 97% of the total pollen and its concentration, he said.

PMD will continuously publish pollen concentration data throughout the pollen season on its website and print and electronic media on daily basis. -APP

Online Bethak part-2 held with "Uncle Sargam"

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) organized online Bethak part-2 with legend of Puppetry Arts Syed Farooq Qaiser, popularly known as Uncle Sargam here on Tuesday.

During the event, Director General Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) Dr. Fauzia Saeed acknowledged the skillful abilities of Farooq Qaiser which she opined remarkable in all times.

Farooq Qaiser shared his life experience and distinctions in the field of puppetry. He said puppetry was a thousand years old art of the region and his shows were never censored.

Discussing his personal life he was of the view that Pakistan is the only country that he loved to work with passion and full potential other than any other country. However, he said that he was offered handsome pay from various countries of the world.

DG PNCA asked him about his fan following. The versatile style artist replied that his biggest fan was his wife as so many times she saw him out of from the bedroom and writing drama scripts during late night hours.

IIU, KP universities to foster academic co-op

ISLAMABAD: International Islamic University (IIU) and universities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) will foster academic cooperation to promote quality education at higher education level.

This was agreed by President IIU, Dr. Hathal Homoud Alotabi and Governor KP, Shah Farman, during a meeting held at Governor House on Tuesday. Both the dignitaries discussed issues of mutual interest and matters pertaining to education such as research and academic excellence and agreed to boost academic cooperation between IIU and KP universities. They also discussed importance of distance learning, initiatives for promotion of quality education and role of universities in societies building were discussed.

IIU President briefed the Governor KP on IIU's vision, future plans and strategy for academic excellence and said that IIU will be keen to enhance its bilateral ties with the universities of KP. The meeting was also attended by IIU Vice President (AF&P) Professor Dr. N.B. Jumani.

Speaking on the occasion, Governor KP appreciated the role of IIU in society building and services and assured of maximum cooperation to promote quality education. He said universities must promote exchange of experiences through mutual cooperation.

Talking on bilateral relations, the Governor said that Pakistan attaches great importance to relations with Saudi Arabia as both are time tested friends. He added that brotherly ties between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia go back decades and those are getting stronger by every passing day. - DNA

EPA fines Rs10,000 to restaurant in Beverly Center

IBRAR KHAN

ISLAMABAD: Director General Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) Farzana Altaf Shah on Tuesday fined a continental food chain in Beverly Center for violating plastic bags ban.

The restaurant was serving the food items packed in polythene bags to its customers whereas the government has imposed a strict ban on using single-use polythene or plastic bags since March 1 to end plastic pollution.

An official of EPA told APP that there was no compliance in enforcing ban on plastic bags as this time other than shopkeepers, vendors, retailers, manufacturers and entrepreneurs, users or general public

found carrying plastic bags were also being fined. She added that as per the law a common user to be fined Rs5, 000, retailers Rs10, 000 and manufacturers Rs100, 000. The fine would be doubled in case of repeated violations, she added.

The EPA has urged the masses to report plastic bags ban violations on Islamabad City App developed by the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration with a special tab of polythene violation, she said. The joint team of ICT administration, Pak-EPA and Ministry of Climate Change was strictly carrying out inspection visits in the Capital to enforce the ban.

"It is very easy to use and people should report violations on this smart ap-

plication. Simply take a picture and pin its location via Google map and enter its name and address for prompt action," the EPA official explained.

She underscored that plastic bags were equally detrimental for human health, ecology and biodiversity. A plastic bag was highly damaging to the environment and the sole reason for urban flooding in mega cities of the country, the official added.

It merits mention here that a World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Report has revealed that every individual around the globe was consuming 25 grams of plastic which is equal to the size of a credit card. The food item or beverage packed in a plastic bag or packaging made of polythene material had traces

of plastics after getting dissolved into it as it causes a chemical reaction with the food product that gets transferred into human body, the report said.

The plastic waste dumped into oceans was lying undecomposed for many decades and would take 500 years to vanish from the environment, it added.

A global study on the plastic pollution also highlighted that by 2050 there will be more plastic bags than aquatic life in oceans if the use of plastic bags dumping went unbridled.

The country produced 55 billion plastic bags annually which had increased enormously since 1992 where the ban on polythene bags has become imperative to purge the nation from its menace for plastic free environment.

19 students of AIOU win Pak-Scottish scholarships

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Nineteen needy but brilliant female students of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) have won "Pak-Scottish" scholarship offered by British Council.

It is pertinent to mention here that British Council had offered Pak-Scottish scholarship to promote women's education in Paki-

stan in which a special quota was allotted for female students of AIOU who were doing their M.Phil. and Masters in various academic disciplines. British Council on the recommendations of the Open University has provided 19 scholarships to deserving and bright students of the university.

These scholarships will cover tuition fee, hostel accommodation and transport fee of the scholarship

awardees. British Council will bear the educational expenses for 2 years. Prof. Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum, Vice-Chancellor AIOU, while congratulating the students said, awarding scholarships to our students was in fact an expression of confidence in the quality of education provided by AIOU. This scholarship is a blessing for intelligent and needy people in the situation of Covid".

He further added, that no one in the country should be deprived of education merely because of poverty. For financial assistance of the needy students, the university had also allocated a handsome amount from its own resources, he added. Dr. Quyyum thanked the British Council for promoting women's education in Pakistan and providing scholarships to the Open University students.

Intra-city PSVs to run at 50pc capacity: DC Islamabad

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Commissioner Islamabad Muhammad Hamza Shafiqat has announced that the intra-city Public Service Vehicles (PSVs) would run on the Federal Capital's roads and avenues with 50 per cent capacity only.

Talking to the media, he said road permits of the inter-city vans were being reduced to 70 from 100 to halt the coronavirus transmission to other cities from the federal capital. Admitting the anti-COVID-19 standard operating procedures' (SOPs) violations committed by some public transporters in Islamabad, he said strict action was being taken against the violators to ensure commuters' safety.

The DC said the PSVs with more than 20 seats would be mandated to ply on the capital city's roads with only 10 passengers.

He said the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration was taking serious cognizance of the SOPs' violations at bus stands, ensuring mask-wearing and use of hand sanitizer at each and every terminal.

Hamza said prime focus of the local administration was on pursuance of Non-Pharma-

ceutical Interventions. Administrative actions such as smart lock-down, implementation of the SOPs, sealing of hot spots and 50 per cent attendance at all the offices were being taken to curb the coronavirus spread during its third wave, he added. He said the administration had already sealed multiple areas in the federal capital, whereas more localities for smart lock-down were under consideration.

The DC added that constant monitoring of various areas including Tarlai, Tramri, Bara Kahu and different sector of G series were underway. To a query, he said metro bus capacity would also be reduced to fifty per cent in the coming days.

Meanwhile, citizens of twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad have complained about the slackness of local transporters, who were not ensuring the coronavirus health guidelines at the passenger vans in order to mint money.

Nasir Khan, a commuter at Faizabad bus station, called for stern action against the local transporters, who were violating anti-coronavirus SOPs at Public Service Vehicles (PSVs) with impunity and posing serious threat to the lives of commuters.



ISLAMABAD: Hon'ble Chief Justice Of Pakistan Justice Gulzar Ahmed in a group photo with the delegation of High Court Bar Association Rawalpindi in Supreme Court. - DNA

Covid positivity ratio reaches 12.31% in Capital

Covid cases are jumping up for the past two weeks and urged the citizens to strictly follow COVID-19 Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to prevent the disease in the wake of a sudden increase in the number of infections in the country

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to Prime Minister on National Health Services, Regulations, and Coordination Dr. Faisal Sultan Tuesday said that the COVID-19 case positivity ratio has become doubled in the past few days reaching 12.31% in the federal capital.

Talking to the media, Dr. Faisal said that the overall case positivity ratio in the country was 8.83% while 10.43% in Punjab, 8.55% in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 2.98% in Sindh, 2.15% in Balochistan,

8.98% in AJK and 2.33% in Gilgit Baltistan. He said that Covid cases are jumping up for the past two weeks and urged the citizens to strictly follow COVID-19 Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to prevent the disease in the wake of a sudden increase in the number of infections in the country.

"We regularly monitor positivity ratio at national, provincial and city level and when it increases it incurs burden on healthcare capacity. Pressure is mounting in the federal capital, Peshawar, Karachi and major urban centers of Punjab."

He said that keeping in view the disease risk certain restrictions were imposed focusing on high-risk sectors with mass gathering, however, he said that an overall poor administrative compliance of guidelines and actions was seen and requested all provincial administrations to seriously take note of this.

He said that there are certain variants of the virus originating from African States where travel restrictions are being imposed to contain disease spread. He said that senior citizens walk-in registration was introduced for above 70 year age citizens

and now they can visit for vaccination from all listed vaccination centers.

He said that this time is not of any complacency rather strict compliance of SOPs. "COVID-19 is a deadly virus but we can control it just as we controlled it by following the Standard Operating Procedures during the first wave."

Dr. Faisal said that the government is seeking full cooperation of the citizens in adhering to the Standard Operating Procedures. "We can save precious lives including those of our near and dear ones by taking preventive

measures."

He asked the citizens to wear a mask, maintain social distance, wash hands with soap frequently and avoid crowded places.

He urged the healthcare workers and those eligible to get vaccinated to protect themselves as well as their loved ones.

He said that better services are being ensured at COVID-19 vaccination centers to facilitate the senior citizens.

He said that keeping in view the interest of senior citizens for COVID vaccination, the staff and number of centers are being increased.

Dangerous Third Wave

THE government has finally decided to ban public gatherings only after the COVID-19 situation in the country has gotten out of control. It took more than 4700 new infection cases and 57 deaths reported in a day to knock some sense in the authorities to tighten restrictions and counter the third wave.

While it is good that the government is showing some action, what is beyond comprehension is that the ban on wedding ceremonies will commence from April 5. What is holding the authorities back from not implementing an immediate ban on such gatherings? Even by a conservative estimate, it is clear that every day wasted means at least another 3000 positive cases.

The delay can cost us dearly. In many cities, all the ventilators allocated for COVID patients have already been occupied. Waiting till April 5 can prove catastrophic for hospitals. The new COVID strain, the leading contributor to the pandemic's third wave, is much more virulent. It is pushing more patients into critical care, as the data available with the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) suggests. It is far more dangerous than the earlier strains as it also affects children.

Also, the gravity of the pandemic's intensification can be gauged from the government's deliberations over restricting intercity travel, which has already started to implement in the capital. The daily reporting of more than 4000 cases means that we have to take precautions with utmost seriousness. Similarly, given the prevalent situation, the government has no option but to take the strongest action now.

Admittedly, the country cannot afford a complete lockdown. However, the authorities can ensure restriction of movement and impose a blanket ban on all kinds of congregations till we flatten the curve. We have succeeded in levelling it before; we can do it now provided the government does not kneel before those who see even smart lockdowns as harmful for their businesses.

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Another Reshuffle

THE Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) government has made Cabinet reshuffles in the center a near regular occurrence. And sure enough, there are reports that another one might soon be in the offing. There are indications that the Prime Minister's complete recovery from coronavirus and return to work will also bring about this reported change.

What is interesting to note is that there are indications that more lawmakers from the coalition—particularly MQM and BAP—might also be granted portfolios. This is necessary for the PTI to keep its allies from considering support for opposition movements. More seats at the table is a good first step in making smaller members of the coalition feel like they are adequately represented.

But beyond this, the reshuffle—like others before it—is also predicated on performance. And yet, it is still unclear how replacing one portfolio for another in the case of poorly performing ministers and advisors is likely to lead to an overall performance boost. The best the ruling party can hope to achieve with this strategy is allow for lawmakers doing well to take over ministries that the Prime Minister wants to focus on. This only helps specific portfolios while deliberately neglecting others.

This way, ministers that have made it to Cabinet are all but guaranteed a portfolio, no matter how poorly they are doing, taking away any incentive for improvement. A better tactic would be to instead completely remove ministers PM Khan is not happy with. Other competent members from within the ruling party can take their place.

The government needs to manage its time and resources better in this regard. The fundamental thought behind the ruling party's action is understandable, but the execution itself leaves a lot to be desired. New faces in the Cabinet can take away performance lags. A reshuffle only readjusts them.

Indian PM Modi's visit to Bangladesh

Zamir Awan

Bangladesh is a Muslim country and an active member of OIC, whereas the Modi-led Govt in India is totally anti-Minorities, especially Muslims. The trade imbalance is also a point of disagreement between the two nations. The Government of Shaikh Hasina Wajid is pro-India, especially PM Modi was having close links with her father's insurgency in the 1970s. PM Modi also confessed his alleged involvement in acts of subversion, up-risings, and terrorism, against the government of that time, at his young age of 20-22. Masses are anti-India, especially anti-Modi, due to his extremist and discriminatory policies toward minorities, especially against Muslims

INDIAN Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Bangladesh on 26-27 March 2021. The Visit was conducted under high security. Bangladesh Government deployed huge force to protect PM Modi. And the government took extra measures, including suspension of Mobile Phone service, Internet Service, Social Media suspension (Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, to keep the law and order situation under control. The visit was canceled last year due to the reason that opposition parties threatened the government with severe protests and blockage of the Airport. Ultimately, the previous year PM Modi, under the excuse of Coronavirus, canceled his planned Visit, but this year, even the pandemic is more serious, yet visited Bangladesh.

India was under immense pressure from President Joe Biden Administration for its poor record of Human Rights Violations, discriminatory Amended Citizenship Act, Treatment of its minorities, and poor religious freedom status. The US has been asking India to improve its relations with its neighbors, too. In fact, India has hostile relations and disputes with all its neighbors, including Bangladesh, China, Nepal, Myanmar, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Maldives etc. President Trump favored PM Modi and over-looked many serious concerns based on his personal friendship with him. Still, President Joe Biden feels embarrassed to openly support India with such ailing democracy and a poor record of human rights and hostilities with all neighbors. PM Modi's Visit was a first step toward improving its relations with neighbors, which also turned to be counterproductive.

A significant contention area has been the construction and operation of the Farakka Barrage by India to increase the water amount in the River Hooghly. Bangladesh insists that it does not receive a fair share of the Ganges waters during the drier seasons and gets flooded during the monsoons when India releases excess waters. See also Sharing of Ganges Waters. There have also been disputes regarding the transfer of the Teen Bigha Corridor to Bangladesh. The Indian state of West Bengal surrounds part of Bangladesh. On 26 June 1992, India leased three bigha land to Bangladesh to connect this enclave with main

land Bangladesh. There was a dispute regarding the eternal nature of the lease.

Terrorist activities carried out by outfits based in both countries, like Banga Sena and Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami Bangladesh have consistently denied India a free-of-cost transit facility to India's landlocked North Eastern Regions. Although India has a narrow land link to this Northeastern region, which is famously known as the Siliguri Corridor or "India's Chicken Neck," less than 27 kilometers (17 mi) wide, it remained as the only bridge between the northeastern part of India and the rest of the country.

Illegal Bangladeshi immigration into India. The border is porous, and migrants are able to cross illegally, though sometimes only in return for financial or other incentives to border security personnel. In 2019, the Indian Parliament passed the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), [35] following which Bangladesh's Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen and Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan cancelled their trips to India. Later, minister Shahriar Alam also canceled his Visit to India. Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was critical of the CAA, describing it as "not necessary." The discriminatory Amended Citizenship act, which cancels the Indian Nationality of millions of Bangladeshi who migrated to India in the 1970s. India wanted to deport all of them back to Bangladesh by force.

Continuous border killing of Bangladeshi people by Indian border guards, aiding illegal immigrants, helping in armed dacoity, fake money transfer, and illicit drug trades by both Indian and Bangladeshi people are the major problems between Bangladesh and India. Both Bangladesh and India made claims over the same seawater at the Bay of Bengal before settlement of the issue.

There was a minor glitch in their relationship when former Indian Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh accidentally mentioned that Bangladeshis are anti-Indian, during an informal press meet.

Deaths of Bangladeshi citizens on the Indo-Bangladesh border became one of the embarrassments between the two nation's bilateral relations in recent years. The so-called 'shoot-to-kill policy by India's Border Security Forces (BSF) that, according to Human Rights Watch, killed nearly 1,000 Bangladeshis between 2001 and 2011 has remained at

the core of the talks between Bangladeshi and Indian officials visiting each other. Indian officials visiting Bangladesh, including the Indian foreign ministers and BSF chiefs, numerous vowed to stop BSF shootings. Still, Bangladeshi nationals, comprising mostly illicit border crossers, have continued to be shot dead by the Indian troops.

Border disputes and demarcation of the exact border are yet pending. Historically, Bangladesh has not accepted the partition of Bengal into east and west Bengal, whereas Indian occupation of part of Bengal is not accepted and still keeps ill-feelings. Bangladesh is friendly with China and beneficiary of Chinese mega Initiatives BRI, whereas India opposes BRI and confronts China, and exerts pressure on Bangladesh to be anti-China.

Bangladesh is a Muslim country and an active member of OIC, whereas the Modi-led Government in India is totally anti-Minorities, especially Muslims. The trade imbalance is also a point of disagreement between the two nations.

The Government of Shaikh Hasina Wajid is pro-India, especially PM Modi was having close links with her father's insurgency in the 1970s. PM Modi also confessed his alleged involvement in acts of subversion, up-risings, and terrorism, against the government of that time, at his young age of 20-22. Masses are anti-India, especially anti-Modi, due to his extremist and discriminatory policies toward minorities, especially against Muslims. Public protests were witnessed all over the country, especially the cities where PM Modi has visited; the agitations were more intense and severe. In the clashes between the law enforcement agencies and masses, reports of killings, injuries, and fire incidents were reported. Initially, on the first day of his Visit, four deaths were reported, but the number of casualties kept on growing; unofficial figures are up to 89 deaths and outnumbered injuries, with several severe and may be fatal. PM Modi's Visit to Bangladesh may also be a high price for Shaikh Hasina Wajid's government as the public anti-Modi sentiments are growing exponentially and blaming the government for hosting him. The widespread anti-Government protests are on-going, even that PM Modi has returned back to India already.

— The views expressed in the article are writer's own.

Iran-China accord ushers in major geopolitical shift

Osama Al-Sharif



The impact of the deal on the struggling Iranian economy will be enormous and will lessen the effects of US-imposed economic sanctions. The proposal for a strategic alliance between China and Iran was made by Chinese leader Xi Jinping in 2016, but Iranian leaders hesitated to embrace it for fear that it would affect the newly signed nuclear deal

THE 25-year comprehensive strategic cooperation agreement between China and Iran, which was signed in Tehran on Saturday, is a major breakthrough for the two countries and will have long-term effects on the geopolitical balance of the Gulf and the region as a whole. After five years of negotiations, the inking of the deal, which covers various economic, political and security issues, comes at a time when relations between Beijing and Washington are at their worst. It also puts Tehran in a strong bargaining position in relation to the shaky nuclear deal and the West's attempt to renegotiate and expand it.

The agreement, parts of which remain undisclosed, will release \$400 billion of Chinese investments over 25 years in return for a regular supply of low-cost Iranian oil.

The impact of the deal on the struggling Iranian economy will be enormous and will lessen the effects of US-imposed economic sanctions. The proposal for a strategic alliance between China and Iran was made by Chinese leader Xi Jinping in 2016, but Iranian leaders hesitated to embrace it for fear that it would affect the newly signed nuclear deal. But this week's signing of what amounts to a treaty testifies to the failure of the Trump administration's policy of "maximum pressure" on Iran. It leaves Donald Trump's successor, Joe Biden, in a difficult position vis-a-vis rejoining the nuclear agreement unconditionally, as Tehran demands.

The pact, which will allow China to put 5,000 security and military personnel on Iranian soil, is a regional game changer. Before China, Tehran had signed a 10-year cooperation agreement, especially in the nuclear field, with

Moscow in 2001 that has since been extended by five years twice. Two years ago, Iran joined naval exercises with Russia and China.

The latest accord will allow China to have a presence in the Gulf region, as well as Central Asia. In return, Iran will have access to Chinese technology and investments in its poor infrastructure. The two parties will invest in a free industrial zone close to the Strait of Hormuz. The Chinese have been strengthening their economic ties with other Gulf countries for years. Beijing has signed cooperation agreements with the UAE and Kuwait and has good working relations with Saudi Arabia.

The latest accord will raise red flags in Arab Gulf capitals. Iran continues to be a major source of instability in the region and its alliance with Beijing will only embolden the hard-liners in Tehran and Qom.

Israel too will be feeling uneasy about the Chinese move. Both Russia and China, co-signatories to the nuclear deal, have supported Tehran's position and openly violated US sanctions. The deal is a major step in China's ambitious multibillion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative, which is expected to allow it to become the largest global economy in a few years.

So far there has been no reaction from Washington. The signing of the accord will put the Americans and Europeans in a difficult position diplomatically. The Iranians are likely to stay firm in their rejection of any proposal to renegotiate the nuclear deal or expand it to cover Tehran's long-range missile program and its regional behavior.

The signing of the deal came just days after a failed US-China meeting in Alaska, which saw a bitter war of words break out between

the two nations. Biden appears to be following in Trump's footsteps by taking a hard stand against Beijing.

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

The recent accord will be seen as another attempt by a foreign nation to fill the vacuum left by the US in the region. Already, Russia has established a number of military and naval bases in Syria and is active in Libya. Turkey, which has a military base in Qatar, is also not shy about its territorial ambitions in northern Syria and Iraqi Kurdistan.

Unlike the US, China continues to be dependent on Gulf oil. It is certain we will see increasing Chinese activity in the region as America reduces its presence. Beijing has made it clear that its alliance with Iran will not affect its ties with the Gulf countries.

Countries in the region will be under pressure, primarily from the US, not to get closer to China. The region, like in the 1950s, will be caught in a new cold war between China and Russia on the one hand and the US and its European allies on the other. This requires a careful diplomatic balancing act by countries in the region as we witness major geopolitical aftershocks.

— Views expressed by writers in this section are their own and do not necessarily reflect point-of-view

Briefs

Myanmar rebels threaten to 'fight back'

FOREIGN DESK

YANGON: Three armed rebel groups in Myanmar are threatening to "fight back" if the military does not stop killing anti-coup protesters, as neighbouring Thailand allowed more than a dozen Myanmar people fleeing violence to cross into a border village for medical care. In a joint statement on Tuesday, the Ta'ang National Liberation Army, the Myanmar Nationalities Democratic Alliance Army and the Arakan Army (AA) said if the military continued to "kill the people, we will cooperate with the protesters and fight back". The warning came as the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP), a monitoring group, said security forces have killed at least 510 people since the February 1 power grab. The total killed on Saturday, the bloodiest day of the protests, had risen to 141, its figures showed.

Amid the rising death toll, one of the main groups behind the protests, the General Strike Committee of Nationalities, called for the country's myriad ethnic minority forces to help those standing up to the "unfair oppression" of the military in an open letter on Monday. Tuesday's statement from the three armed groups indicates that the call may be gaining more traction.

Chinese envoy calls on Gen Bajwa

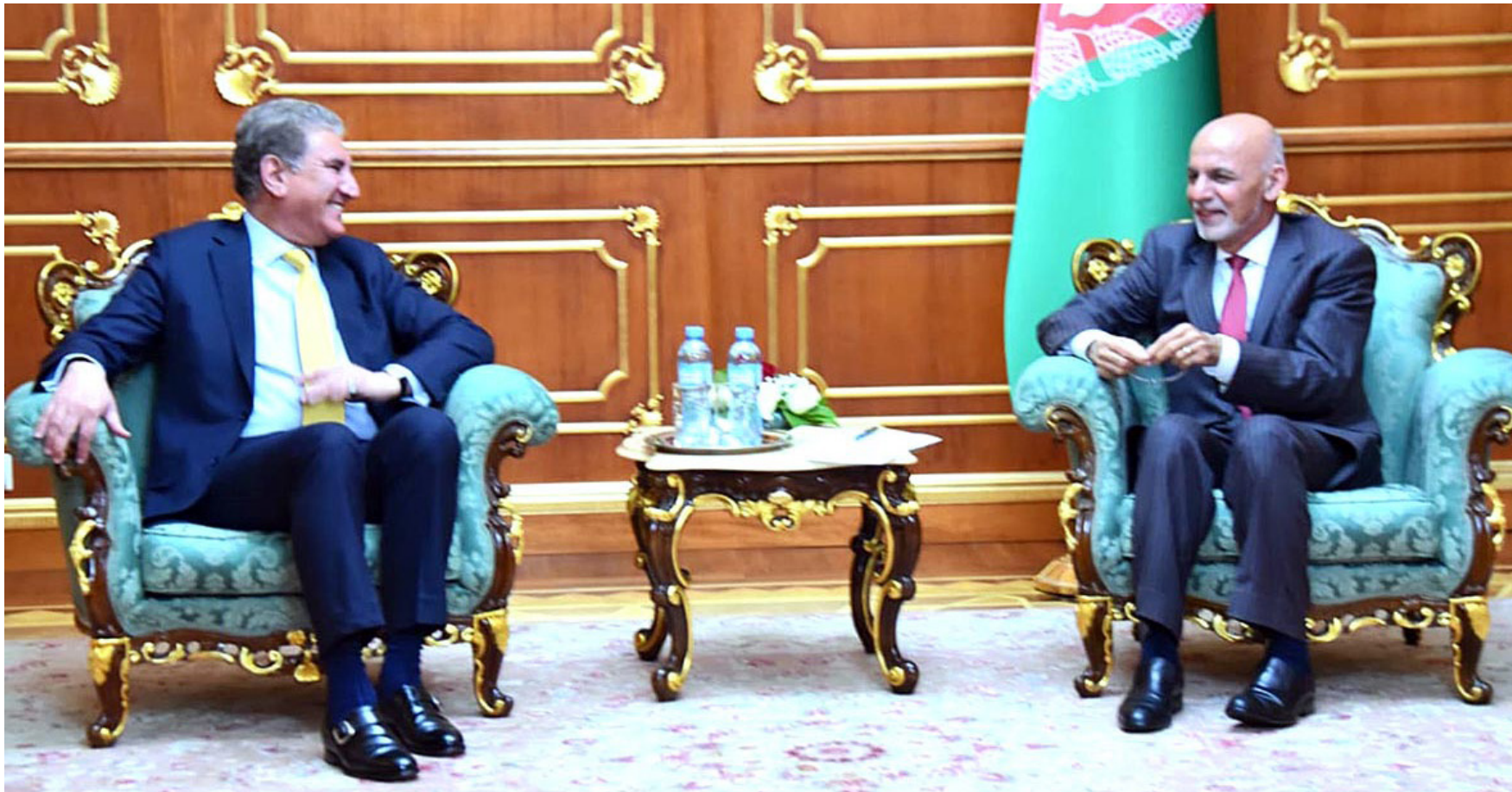
From Page 01

COAS thanked the dignity for China's contribution towards fight against COVID-19 in Pakistan and said that Pakistan Army greatly values its friendly relations with the China. Lieutenant General Faiz Hamid, Director General Inter Services Intelligence was also present during the meeting.

OVID-19 claims 100 more lives

From Page 01

occupied in four major areas including Multan 67 percent, Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) 67 percent, Gujranwala 60 percent and Lahore 63 percent. The maximum Oxygen beds (alternate oxygen providing facility other than ventilator administered as per medical requirement of COVID patient) were also occupied in four major areas of Gujrat 74 percent, Gujranwala 85 percent, Peshawar 81 percent and Swat 84 percent. Around 413 ventilators were occupied elsewhere in the country while no COVID affected person was on ventilator in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Gilgit Baltistan (GB) and Balochistan. Some 46, 269 tests were conducted across the country on Monday, including 9,030 in Sindh, 23,664 in Punjab, 6,002 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), 6,126 in Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT), 466 in Balochistan, 257 in GB, and 724 in AJK. Around 600,278 people have recovered from the disease so far across the country making it a significant count with over 90 percent recovery ratio of the affected patients. Since the pandemic spread, a total of 663,200 cases were detected including the perished, recovered and under treatment COVID-19 patients so far. About 14,356 deaths were recorded in country since the eruption of the contagion. Around 4,495 have died in Sindh, out of which four were died in hospital on Monday. 6,319 died in Punjab with 66 deaths occurred in the hospital and seven out of hospital in last 24 hours. 2,319 died in KP with 17 died in hospital on Monday, 563 died in ICT during past 24 hours, 207 died in Balochistan with one in the hospital, 103 in GB and 350 in AJK with two in hospital on Monday. A total of 10,153,364 corona tests have been conducted so far, while 631 hospitals are equipped with COVID facilities. Some 3,749 corona patients are admitted in hospitals across the country.



DUSHANBE: Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi called on Afghan President Ashraf Ghani on the sidelines of the 9th Ministerial Conference of the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process. – DNA

FIFA warns Pakistan of suspension over PFF issue

Separately, a PFF spokesperson told media that both the FIFA and the AFC strongly condemned Saturday's incident, which they said "regretfully caused severe disruption in the ability of the normalisation committee to deliver their mandate"

DNA

KARACHI: The international football governing body has warned Pakistan of possible suspension if the "illegitimate occupation" of the headquarters of its counterpart in the country did not end and its control not given back to the Normalisation Committee (NC) by Wednesday evening. Fatma Samoura, the secretary-general of the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), has penned a strongly-worded letter to the chairperson of the Pakistan Football Federation's (PFF) NC, Haroon Malik, expressing "great concern" over "the unfortunate incidents" last week by Syed Ashfaq Hussain Shah's group.

Shah – who won the PFF elections held on the orders of the Supreme Court of Pakistan in 2018 – on Saturday stormed the PFF's headquarters in Lahore in a hostile takeover, forcing Malik, the NC's chairperson, to leave and taking over the control of all matters. The FIFA, as well as the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), have never recognised Shah as the PFF's elected president or representative. In her letter, Samoura said the international body "would like to remind all relevant parties, in particular the individuals who invaded the PFF premises, that the normalisation committee of PFF is the sole executive body of PFF recognised by FIFA". During the hostile takeover, the "PFF officials and employees had to be evacuated af-

ter the offices had been invaded by a group of protestors, who support Mr Syed Ashfaq Hussain", she noted. The FIFA "strongly condemns" the incidents and "considers such actions to be totally unacceptable", she added. It also demanded that the NC's officials be handed over control of the headquarters by Wednesday evening or the body would take action against the PFF, which included a possible suspension. The hostile takeover "constitutes an undue interference in the affairs of the Federation, therefore violating the obligations imposed on PFF". "Should the illegitimate occupation of the PFF headquarters not be lifted and the office bearers recognised by FIFA not be permitted free access to the building by Wednesday 31 March

2021 at 20:00 (Lahore time), at the latest, in order for them to carry out their mandate as instructed by FIFA, the matter shall be immediately submitted to the Bureau of the Council for decision, which might include the suspension of PFF," the FIFA's secretary-general wrote. Samoura reminded that Pakistan's suspension would mean that the PFF would immediately lose all of its membership rights, which include the right of national teams and clubs of the FIFA's counterpart in the country to participate in any international competitions, as well as benefits from its financial and development programmes. Separately, a PFF spokesperson told media that both the FIFA and the AFC strongly condemned Sat-

urday's incident, which they said "regretfully caused severe disruption in the ability of the normalisation committee to deliver their mandate". "As per the decision of the Bureau of the FIFA Council, the normalisation committee is the sole entity recognised by FIFA, and has been appointed to manage the activities of the PFF until 30 June 2021 as per its current mandate," they added. The spokesperson reiterated Samoura's demands "that the parties that have occupied the PFF headquarters immediately hand back the premises to the normalisation committee or the matter will be referred to the Bureau of the FIFA Council". The consequences "may include suspension of the PFF as per FIFA statutes," they stressed.

Global leaders push for pandemic treaty

DNA

GENEVA: World leaders pushed Tuesday for a new international treaty to prepare for the next global pandemic – and avoid the unseemly scramble for vaccines hampering the Covid-19 response.

Leaders from 25 countries, the European Union and the World Health Organization (WHO) sought to get the ground rules down in writing to streamline and speed up the reaction to future global outbreaks. The treaty would aim to ensure that information, virus pathogens, technology to tackle the pandemic and products such as vaccines are shared swiftly and equitably among nations. "The time to act is now. The world cannot afford to wait until the pandemic is over to start planning for the next one," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a virtual press conference. Without an internationally-coordinated pandemic response plan, "we remain vulnerable", he warned. The call came in a joint article published in international newspapers on Tuesday, penned by leaders from five continents. The signatories included Germany's Angela Merkel, Britain's Boris Johnson, France's Emmanuel Macron, South Korea's Moon Jae-in, South Africa's Cyril Ramaphosa, Indonesia's Joko Widodo and Chile's Sebastian Pinera.

No military solution of the Afghan..

From Page 01

The foreign minister said besides the historic opportunity, several challenges for the Afghan nation lied ahead and warned of the "spoilers inside and outside Afghanistan". He expressed deep concern over the growing incidents of violence across Afghanistan, fearing that ISIS or al-Qaeda could gain a foothold in the country.

He said destruction of infrastructure and the lack of economic opportunities could jeopardize the benefits of the Afghan peace process. Qureshi emphasized on taking forward and strengthening the Doha peace process and called upon the international community to secure investment in Afghanistan to achieve the goals of prosperity. The minister proposed a number of steps towards Afghan peace including an immediate ceasefire to reduce violence, financial assistance by international community for post-conflict development, long-term planning for Afghanistan's economic development and creating a conducive environment for Afghan refugees to return home with dignity. The foreign minister mentioned that besides facilitating the peace process, Pakistan was providing all possible assistance to Afghanistan and had already pledged one billion dollars for its development and reconstruction. He said Pakistan had spent about US\$500 million on infrastructure and capacity building projects in Afghanistan and also introduced a new visa regime to facilitate travelers. Despite the pandemic, he said, Pakistan opened five border crossings to facilitate travelers and trade from Afghanistan. Pakistan has also activated the Gwadar port for Afghan transit trade, he added.

Qureshi said Pakistan was keen to move forward on regional connectivity and energy projects such as CASA-1000 and TAPI and mentioned that the Trans-Afghan railway project connecting Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan was being pursued to promote trade, tourism and people-to-people exchanges. He said China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as the flagship project of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) was open with beneficial prospects for Afghanistan.

Pakistan values its ties...

From Page 01

The visiting dignitaries also appreciated Pakistan's role in regional stability, especially the Afghan Peace Process. All sides pledged to play their role for further improvement in diplomatic cooperation at all levels.

Emirates marking UAE vaccination milestone

DNA

DUBAI: Emirates is showcasing the UAE's remarkable progress in its vaccination programme with a special flight that will carry only fully vaccinated crew and passengers onboard. On 10 April 2021, special flight EK2021 will depart Dubai International Airport at 12:00hrs local time, to cruise over various areas across the UAE. The flight will return to Dubai at 14:30hrs local time. The one-off flight EK2021 is a unique event that not only celebrates the success of the UAE's vaccination programme to date, but also highlights Emirates' progress in vaccinating its staff and in particular its pilots and cabin crew. Aviation has been and continues to be an irreplaceable force for good, connecting people and cities, facilitating important trade flows and passenger journeys that bring economic prosperity and joy to millions of people. Passengers will have the opportunity to experience Emirates' newest A380 aircraft which features the airline's brand-new Premium Economy seats, and refreshed cabin interiors across all cabin classes.

Oman hopes Yemen ceasefire will be agreed very soon

FOREIGN DESK

MUSCAT: Oman, a mediator in ceasefire talks between Saudi Arabia and Yemen's Houthi group, says it hopes an agreement between the warring parties would be reached "very soon". Muscat has been working closely with Saudi Arabia, the US and the United Nations to reach a comprehensive political solution to the crisis that has raged for six years now. "The sultanate hopes that these contacts will achieve the desired result very soon, in order to restore security and stability to brotherly Yemen and preserve the security and interests of the countries in the region," a statement carried by the Omani state news agency ONA said on Tuesday. Since a Saudi-led military coalition intervened in Yemen on March 26, 2015, tens of thousands of people have been killed, mostly civilians, and millions pushed towards starvation. Some Houthi officials, including the group's chief negotiator Mohammed Abdul salam, have lived in Muscat since the coalition launched air raids in support of the internationally recognised government that was toppled by the Yemeni rebel group. Saudi Arabia offered a ceasefire proposal last week but the Iran-aligned Houthi group said it would only agree to it if an air and sea blockade were lifted as well. Despite the offer, the Houthis have continued their drone and missile attacks against Saudi Arabia as well as a ground offensive on the gas-producing Yemeni region of Marib, which is still under the control of the internationally recognised government of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi. The coalition said on Tuesday it had destroyed two drones launched by the Houthis towards Saudi Arabia, Saudi state TV reported. On Friday, Houthi military spokesman Yahya Sarea said the group had attacked facilities of state oil giant Saudi Aramco in Ras al-Tanura, Rabigh, Yanbu and Jazan. The attacks took place during the latest visit of US Special Envoy Tim Lenderking and UN mediator Martin Griffiths to Oman and Saudi Arabia. – DNA



ANKARA: In recognition of his services for promotion of Pakistan-Turkey ties, Chief of Turkish General Staff, General Yaşar Güler, presented Turkey's highest military award "Legion of Merit" to Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, Gen. Nadeem Raza at an impress ceremony in Ankara. – DNA

Azerbaijan, Pakistan mull co-op between Air Forces

Aliyev noted that the people of Azerbaijan greatly value Pakistan's resolute and unequivocal position on the restoration of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and its unfaltering support and solidarity for its just cause

DNA

BAKU: Azerbaijani Deputy Defence Minister, Air Force Commander Ramiz Tahirov and Pakistani Deputy Air Force Commander, Air Marshal Aamir Masood have discussed prospects of cooperation between the two countries' Air Forces, the Defence Ministry has reported on its website. At a meeting that was held in Baku on March 29, the visiting Pakistani delegation led by Aamir Masood congratulated Azerbaijan on the victory in the 44-day war with Armenia in 2020. The sides also discussed the prospects for the development of co-operation between the Azerbaijani and Pakistani Air Forces in the military, military-educational and military-technical spheres, as well as other issues of mutual interest, the ministry said. Moreover, the sides expressed satisfaction with



the development of Azerbaijani-Pakistani relations and the level of strategic partnership. It should be noted that in his recent message to his Pakistani counterpart Arif Alvi on Pakistan Day, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev hailed as high the present level of bilateral strategic partnership relations. Aliyev noted that the people of Azerbaijan greatly value Pakistan's resolute and unequivocal position on the restoration of Azerbaijan's territorial integrity and its unfaltering support and solidarity for its just cause. "I attach particular significance to the development of friendly and co-operative relations between Azerbaijan and Pakistan. I am confident that through our joint efforts, our inter-state relationship, based on mutual trust, support and solidarity, and our productive cooperation in bilateral and multilateral format will continue to progress and expand successfully," he added.

Briefs

FTO assures to solve tax issues

NAZIR SYAL

KARACHI: The Federal Tax Ombudsman (FTO) has assured to the industrialists of Karachi for resolving the taxes related issues on priority basis, has said that the industrialists should not be bothered by the show cause notices issued by the Federal Board of Revenue. Instead of harassment, the FTO should be informed about unnecessary notices so that complaints can be resolved in a timely manner.

This assurance was given by Shahid Ahmed, Advisor to the Federal Tax Ombudsman for Sales Tax, Mansoor Hussain Memon, Income Tax Adviser, Badruddin Ahmed Qureshi, Customs Adviser, Abid Mahmood, Director FTO and Mansoor Ahmed, President, Sindh Region to Syed Tariq Rasheed, Chairman, Tax Sub-Committee, North Karachi Association of Trade & Industry (NKATI) in a meeting, was convened with a delegation included SVP NKATI Shabir Ismail, members Shaikat Ismail, Sheikh Imtiaz, Inamul Haq and Abdul Karim.

Federal Tax Ombudsman's advisors highlighted the purpose of the meeting for raising the awareness about the facilities provided by the FTO to the industrial community. They said that industrialists should not feel any hesitation or fear in sending their complaints, so that the FTO can play an effective role in resolving their grievances on a priority basis.

Sisi for not to repeat Suez closure

FOREIGN DESK

ISMAILIA: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi promised Tuesday that his country would buy equipment to avoid any repetition of the past week's closure of the Suez Canal as he visited Ismailia, en route to the vital trade artery.

The promise came a day after the refloating of the giant container vessel MV Ever Given, which hit the eastern bank of the narrow shipping lane last Tuesday and became wedged diagonally across its span for nearly a week.

"We will acquire all the necessary equipment for the canal," to avoid similar incidents, Sisi declared during his visit to Ismailia, home to the Suez Canal Authority (SCA). Egyptian authorities have presented the freeing of the mega-ship on Monday as a vindication of the country's engineering and salvage capabilities.

Sisi claimed "success" in the operation after the stern was freed, several hours before the bow of the ship was finally dislodged.

Nepal closes schools due to air pollution

FOREIGN DESK

KATMANDU: Nepal has ordered schools to close for four days after air pollution climbed to hazardous levels, forcing millions of students to stay home across the country.

The country of 30 million people lies in the Himalayas between China and India, two of the world's biggest polluters.

Air pollution is a chronic problem in the rapidly growing capital city of Kathmandu and an additional headache for the government, which is struggling to contain the coronavirus pandemic.

Over the weekend, pollution levels hit their highest in the capital since the government began keeping records in 2016, government official Shankar Paudel told Reuters news agency.

Education ministry spokesman Deepak Sharma said about eight million students have been affected by the closures.

Turkmen leader gets seat in new upper house in succession hint

Turkmenistan on Sunday held its first elections to a newly created senate but there were no opposition candidates. The president was elected to a seat along with 47 other candidates

DNA

ASHGABAT: Turkmenistan's autocratic president Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov received a seat in the secretive country's new upper house, state media reported Tuesday, in the latest move hinting at a succession strategy.

Turkmenistan on Sunday held its first elections to a newly created senate but there were no opposition candidates. The president was elected to a seat along with 47 other candidates, said the Neutral Turkmenistan newspaper.

The candidates were elected by local councils and the newspaper did not say which council had elected 63-year-old Berdimukhamedov. An official cited in a separate publication said the head of state had received 100 percent of the vote.

Full control of the senate is important to the Berdimukhamedov family because the head of the upper house will be second-in-line to the presidency following constitutional changes passed last year. Berdimukhamedov's 39-year-old son Serdar has received a series of promotions viewed as grooming him for the top job. The president's candi-

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HK: China limits parliament to patriots

Under the changes, district councillors will no longer be part of that committee

FOREIGN DESK

BEIJING: China has approved a sweeping and controversial overhaul to Hong Kong's political system that will cut the number of directly elected seats in the territory's mini-parliament and create a vetting committee to approve candidates for office. The Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC), the top decision-making body of the mainland's rubber-stamp parliament, approved the changes 167-0, Hong Kong media reported on Tuesday, citing comments from Tam Yiu-chung, the committee's only representative from the territory. The 167 members of the committee gave themselves a "huge round of applause" after their vote, broadcaster RTHK reported Tam as saying.

China announced the proposals at the NPC meeting in March, arguing that the changes were necessary "improve" the electoral system and ensure only "patriots" were able to govern Hong Kong.

Hong Kong's chief executive Carrie Lam said the overhaul would help heal divisions in the territory.

"I firmly believe that by improving the electoral system and implementing 'patriots administering Hong Kong', the excessive politicisation in society and the internal rift that has torn Hong Kong apart can be effectively mitigated, thereby enhancing the governance capability of the HKSAR," Lam said in a statement, referring to the territory by its official name.

"The HKSAR will then be able to leverage our unique advantages and the staunch support of the Central Authorities to develop the economy and improve the livelihood of our citizens."

Under the plan the Legislative Council (LegCo) will be expanded to 90 members, but the number of seats that are directly elected will drop to 20. Some 30 seats will be reserved for "functional constituencies" representing various industries, with the Election Committee that currently chooses Hong Kong's leader appointing 40

representatives, media said. Under the changes, district councillors will no longer be part of that committee.

Previously, half the members in the 70-seat LegCo were directly elected by the public. A new committee will also be established to vet all candidates for the elections. It will have fewer than 10 members, and be chosen by two groups overseeing national security - the Committee for Safeguarding National Security under Hong Kong's chief executive and Beijing's national security office in Hong Kong, the South China Morning Post added.

Elections to the territory's Legislative Council were due to take place last September but the government delayed the poll because of the coronavirus pandemic.

When China took back control of Hong Kong from the United Kingdom in 1997, it promised to maintain the territory's way of life and its civic freedoms - unheard of on the mainland - for at least 50 years under the "one country, two systems" framework.

Azerbaijan, Belarus eye bilateral ties

BAKU: Azerbaijan and Belarus have discussed their potential in trade, economic and political cooperation, including the humanitarian sphere.

The discussion took place at a meeting between Belarus National Assembly Council Chairwoman Natalya Kochanov and Azerbaijani ambassador to Belarus Latif Gandilov.

Kochanova spoke about the level of political dialogue and the dynamics in cooperation between the two countries. It was noted at the meeting that trade between Belarus and Azerbaijan increased by 1.5 times in 2020, reaching almost \$450 million.

"It was important that we clearly secured the Azerbaijani oil supplies to our refineries. The level of cooperation between our mechanical engineering enterprises is also commendable. I think there are still many prospects for our cooperation," Kochanova added. Moreover, she noted the dynamic level of visits between the two countries at various levels.

"Unfortunately, in 2020, due to the pandemic, all visits and meetings were held mostly online. - DNA

Kremlin blame Kiev for worsening Ukraine conflict

DNA

MOSCOW: The Kremlin on Tuesday blamed Kiev for failing to implement peace agreements in eastern Ukraine and said progress to resolve the conflict with separatists was backtracking as fighting intensifies.

Kiev's army has been at war with Russian-backed separatists in the east of the country since 2014 when Moscow annexed the Crimean peninsula following a bloody uprising that ousted Ukraine's Kremlin-friendly president Viktor Yanukovich.

France, Germany, Ukraine and Russia together comprise the Normandy format of countries which have sought to resolve the conflict and in 2015 agreed the Minsk accords to de-escalate the fighting.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky last July oversaw the beginning of a ceasefire with the separatists that had brought relative calm until an uptick in fighting earlier this year. "With the Normandy format, things are bad," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said in an interview with Russian weekly news-

paper Argumenty i Fakty published on Tuesday.

"It can be said that under President Zelensky, it hasn't been possible to make any progress in the implementation of both the Minsk package of measures and the subsequent agreements that were reached in Paris."

Zelensky was elected in 2019 on promises to end the conflict, but critics say that the shaky ceasefire is his only tangible achievement and talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Paris in December, 2019 brought the sides no closer to a lasting settlement. At least 16 Ukrainian servicemen have been killed since fighting escalated in mid-February and Kiev has accused Moscow and separatists of using banned military hardware.

"Now we're seeing an escalation in tensions along the frontline," Peskov said. "Modest achievements that were made earlier are being negated."

The fighting has claimed more than 13,000 lives since 2014, according to the United Nations. Russia denies sending troops and arms to support the separatists.

UN seeks \$10bn for Syria

WEB DESK

NEW YORK: The United Nations is seeking \$10bn in aid to help Syria, saying civilians there continue to face attacks as well as increased hunger and poverty, as the COVID-19 pandemic compounds the "despair and disaster" of 10 years of civil war.

The appeal came ahead of Tuesday's Brussels Conference on Syria, an annual event co-hosted by the UN and the European Union. It includes \$4.2bn for the humanitarian response inside Syria and \$5.8bn for refugees and their hosts in the Middle East.

The UN said at least 24 million Syrians need aid today - a rise of four million over the past year and the highest number yet since 2011, when President Bashar al-Assad's crackdown on pro-democracy protesters resulted in a brutal civil war. "It has been 10 years of despair and disaster for Syrians," said UN aid chief Mark Lowcock.

"Now plummeting living conditions, economic decline and COVID-19 result in more hunger, malnutrition and disease. There is less fighting, but no peace dividend," he said in a statement.

Munir Akram urges extension beyond June of G20's DSSI

DNA

NEW YORK: The President of UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Pakistan's Ambassador Munir Akram, has called for the extension of Group of 20's (industrialized countries) Debt Suspension Initiative (DSSI) beyond June to enable developing countries recover from the devastation left behind by the deadly coronavirus pandemic.

Speaking at a virtual High-Level Meeting on International Debt Architecture and Liquidity, he also recommended expansion of the G20's move to cover the most vulnerable countries, including some of the small island developing countries. The meeting has been convened jointly by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, Jamaican Prime

Minister Andrew Holness, and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

The virtual meeting followed-up on a series of meetings since last year to mobilize action to assist the economic recovery from the pandemic.

In April 2020, Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan was the first leader to call for urgent debt relief, and the suspension of debt by G20 brought some "breathing space" to the developing countries.

In his remarks Ambassador Akram emphasized that several possible mechanisms for debt relief and restructuring including debt deferral, debt buyout, and debt swaps - which have been identified - should be implemented, with the participation of private creditors, who hold the vast majority of developing country.



DUSHANBE: Foreign minister of Pakistan, Shah Mehmood Quraishi in a meeting with Azerbaijani counterpart, Jeyhun Bayramov on the sidelines of The Heart of Asia - Istanbul Process conference. - DNA

Azerbaijan urges joint fight against terrorism

DNA

DUSHANBE: Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov has described as extremely important the continuation of joint efforts to fight terrorism and separatism, Trend has reported. He made the remarks at the 9th "Heart of Asia - Istanbul Process" ministerial conference in Tajikistan, Dushanbe. The minister said that the conference provided a good opportunity for assessing the important work carried out within the framework of the Istanbul Process and identifying further directions for common efforts to address serious problems that Afghanistan and the entire region faces. He stressed the importance of the event in terms of the commitments of all participating countries, as well as supporter states and international organizations,

to achieve the common goal of ensuring Afghanistan's security and prosperity.

Bayramov added that Azerbaijan is committed to supporting stability and development in Afghanistan through bilateral efforts and active participation in multilateral platforms. "Azerbaijan is closely monitoring the internal peace processes in Afghanistan and hopes that sustainable peace and security will be restored in the country based on respect for its sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity," he said. The minister stressed that Azerbaijan regards the Istanbul Process as a valuable mechanism for achieving peace, security, and economic development in Afghanistan. "Azerbaijan is one of the first and most active supporters of Afghanistan in efforts to cope with the existing problems. Since joining this process in 2012, we

have been actively participating in this multi-stakeholder platform. Azerbaijan is committed to advancing the Istanbul Process, acting as one of the leading participating countries," Bayramov said.

The minister went on to say that Azerbaijan still believes that the progress and prosperity, economic development and regional cooperation of Afghanistan are linked to each other and depend on the general regional security. "To maintain the made progress, it is essential to continue to address the security challenges facing Afghanistan. Expanding its practical contribution to education, infrastructure development, investment and financial assistance, Azerbaijan remains committed to supporting Afghanistan," the minister said. Bayramov said that the ongoing regional projects initiated by Azerbaijan represent a qualita-

tively new achievement. He said that regional projects initiated by Azerbaijan, including the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (BTK) railway, the new Baku International Sea Trade Port, a logistics centre on the Caspian coast connecting the railway networks of Azerbaijan and Iran, represent a qualitatively new achievement in the development of multi-modular opportunities for trans-regional infrastructure along the East-West and the North-South corridors.

"The Lapis-Lazuli route agreement between Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey and Turkmenistan is an agreement on a major international trade and transport corridor that directly connects Afghanistan with Europe. This is an important milestone in efforts to coordinate by building and improving infrastructure to expand Afghan trade across Eurasia. Azerbaijan

is satisfied with its contribution as a party to the agreement in providing Afghanistan with a multilateral choice in transit and transport," Bayramov added. The minister noted that these projects will facilitate Afghanistan's entry into global markets and ensure the coordination of faster and more efficient management of cargo and container transport in the region. The "Heart of Asia - Istanbul Process" is a regional initiative of Afghanistan and Turkey, launched in 2011. This format is a platform for political dialogue and regional cooperation to promote stability, peace and prosperity in Afghanistan and the region as a whole. The participants in the Istanbul Process are Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, China, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and the UAE.

Thai billionaire charged with royal insult

FOREIGN DESK

BANGKOK: A billionaire Thai opposition figure was charged Tuesday with defaming the monarchy after he questioned the government's alleged over-reliance on coronavirus vaccines from a company linked to the royal family.

Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit, founder of the now-dissolved Future Forward Party, posted a video on Facebook in January in which he queried whether Thailand was leaning too heavily on Siam Bioscience for its vaccination campaign. The company is owned by the Crown Property Bureau, which manages the royal family's multi-billion-dollar fortune.

Police on Tuesday charged Thanathorn with lese majeste and a computer crime over the video, but he was defiant.

"It has had a positive result - encouraging the government to reassess the vaccine policy to manage the Covid-19 situation. There is nothing to worry about," he said after being charged.

"(The police) did not bring up any quotes or anything that was said specifically. It was generally a charge for speaking via Facebook." Those convicted under Thailand's strict royal defamation laws can face up to 15 years in jail per charge. Thailand has ordered 61 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine. Siam Bioscience plans to manufacture 200 million doses of that vaccine for the kingdom and wider region each year.

Thanathorn's will have to report to police again on May 7. Before it was disbanded, his Future Forward Party was Thailand's third-largest, drawing millions of supporters who were attracted to his anti-establishment platform during the 2019 election.

Briefs

PM approves GB Integrated Development Plan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan Tuesday approved the historic Gilgit Baltistan (GB) Integrated Development Plan. The prime minister approved the Gilgit Baltistan Integrated Development Plan while chairing a meeting here.

PTI opposes handover of accounts record to Babar

ZUBAIR AHMED

ISLAMABAD: The ruling Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) has once again opposed Akbar S Babar's, the petitioner, request for the handover of its accounts record to him.

A three-member bench of the ECP, headed by Election Commission Member Punjab Altaf Ibrahim Qureshi, was hearing PTI's foreign funding case.

In its reply submitted to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Tuesday, counsel for the PTI Shah Khawar said that the ECP had previously too rejected the petitioner's request for the provision of the record to him.

Khawar argued that it was Babar's responsibility to prove the authenticity of the documents he had submitted to the election commission. He further said that the documents already submitted could not be made public.

Member Punjab Altaf Ibrahim Qureshi said that if Akbar S. Babar continued to submit applications, the scrutiny would drag on. "If the petitioner has objections to any transaction, he could challenge it," Qureshi remarked. He further said it was not necessary that Babar checked the transactions of each and every individual.

Later, talking to the media, Akbar S. Babar, the petitioner, said despite the fact that he had provided to the ECP details of three persons who collected funds for the PTI, not a single person's account was checked. He urged the election commission to give a verdict in the case as soon as possible.

Sindh govt to purchase 5 mln doses of vaccine

DNA

KARACHI: Sindh Health Minister Dr Azra Pechuho announced on Tuesday that the provincial government will directly purchase single-dose CanSino COVID-19 vaccines from China after the federal government greenlighted provinces to procure the vaccines.

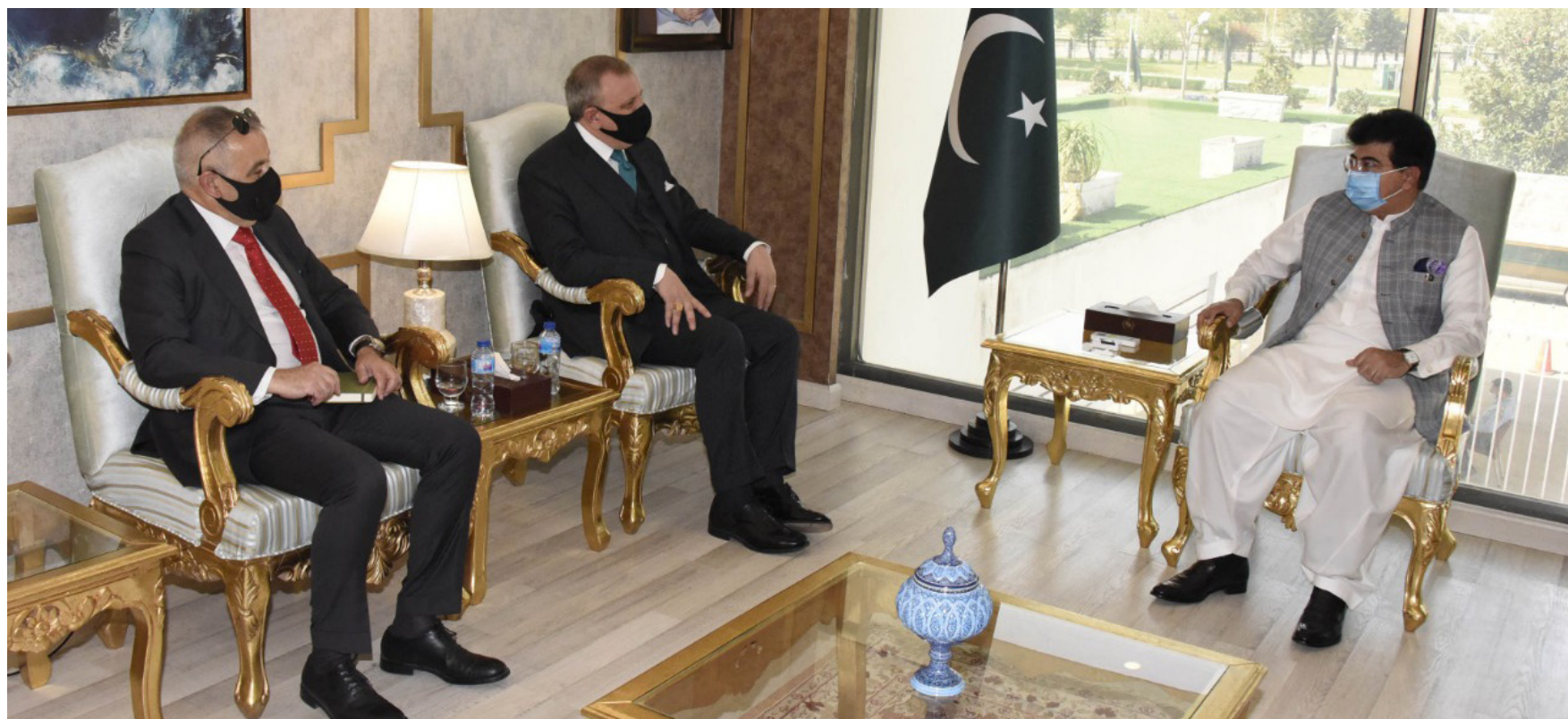
Dr Azra Pechuho, while addressing a press conference today, made the announcement for procurement of COVID-19 vaccines after permission was granted to the provinces by the Centre.

"Sindh will get 20,000 more doses of COVID-19 vaccines on March 31 (tomorrow), whereas, the federal government will get 1 million vials within two to three days. The share of Sindh province will be 200,000 doses.

Those administered two doses of vaccines will be issued certificate."

"I appeal the citizen to follow the [standard operating procedures] SOPs as the third tide of the virus will create a dangerous situation here in Sindh. People should avoid organising private gatherings inside homes too."

The health minister said that the vaccination drive could not be declared successful until 80 per cent population is immunised. "We have started administering vaccines to people aged above 55 and others included in the age range of 50 years will be getting vaccinated in a few days. Everyone should go for being vaccinated as this vaccine is not for elites only."



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Italy Andreas Ferrarese met with the Chairman Senate and exchanged views on issues of mutual interest. – DNA

Govt forms committee to review social media rules

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The government on Tuesday formed a committee to review social media regulations introduced last year, the office of the Attorney-General for Pakistan said in a statement.

The development comes after the federal government in January informed the Islamabad High Court that it would review the regulations in an ongoing case challenging their formation.

The AGP's office said Federal Minister for Human Rights Shireen Mazarri would be the committee's chairperson, with MNA Barrister Maleeka Bokhari, Senator Barrister Ali Zafar, secretary IT, and chairman of Pakistan Telecommunication Authority as its members.

The statement further said the committee would furnish its recommendations to Prime Minister Imran Khan within a month's time — after consultations with the petitioner, Usama Khawar — who filed the case in the IHC — and relevant stakeholders.

During the January IHC hearing, Justice Athar Minallah observed

that Article 19 and 19-A of the Constitution are related to fundamental rights and that "it seems that the stakeholders were not consulted in formulating social media rules".

What are the rules?

Defining a social media company as "any person that owns or manages online systems for the provision of social media", the rules create legal liability on individuals associated with the tech company rather than holding the company responsible. They also place internet service providers (ISP) on a par with tech companies in terms of liability.

Section 4 states that any content against (i) the glory of Islam, (ii) integrity, security, and defence of Pakistan, (iii) public order, and (iv) decency and morality can be removed/ blocked. Clause 2 says the rules will prevail and take precedence over "any contrary Community Guidelines" issued by a service provider.

Section 5 states that a complaint can be filed by any person/ their guardian, ministry, division, attached department, subordinate office, provincial or local department or office, law enforcement

agency or intelligence agency, or a company owned by the government. Under Clause 5, the identity of the complainant

24 hours to abide by the authority's bidding.

Section 8 gives PTA the power to block "entire online systems or any services provided by such service providers".

Under Section 9 (1) the social media companies and ISPs have been directed to issue community guidelines. Adding on to it, clause 2 states that these guidelines "shall inform the user of the online system not to host, display, upload, modify, publish, transmit update or share any on-line content that belongs to another person and to which the user does not have any right."

"This is [content that is] blasphemous, defamatory, obscene, pornographic, paedophilic, invasive of another's privacy, violates or affects religious, cultural, ethnical sensitive of Pakistani or harms minor in any way, impersonates another person or threatens the integrity, security, or defence of

Pakistan or public order or causes incitement to any offence under PECA."

Clause 3 asks them to deploy appropriate mechanisms to identify online content that needs to be blocked/ removed under the rules. Under clause 4, the social media companies "shall not knowingly host, display, upload, publish, transmit, update or share any online content barred under the rules".

Under clause 5(a), social media companies with over 500,000 users have to register with the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority within nine months while (b) and (c) directs them to establish a registered office and appoint a focal person based in Pakistan.

The rules also ask social media companies and ISPs to establish one or more database servers in the country under clause 5(d) while clause 7 requires them to provide "decrypted readable and comprehensible information" to the Federal Investigation Agency.

Under Section 9 clause 10, the PTA is empowered to impose a penalty of up to Rs500 million on service providers and social media companies.



and the reported content shall remain "confidential". Section 6 clause 6 makes it mandatory for social media companies and ISPs to retain information line traffic data linked to the blocked content if asked by the PTA. Section 7 gives them between six to

China's agenda for the world based on peace and security

DNA

ISLAMABAD: "At present, the agenda provided by China for the world is based on Peace, Cooperation, and Security" said Prof. Dr. Iram Khalid, Chairperson, Department of Political Science, University of Punjab, Lahore.

She said the steering of the changing world is in the hands of China. Irum was speaking at the Focus Group Discussion on "Dialogue of Civilizations" held on March 29th.

The discussion was jointly organized by Communication university of China and Pakistan Research Centre for a community with shared future.

The Group Discussion was moderated by Khalid Taimur Akram, Executive Director Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS) and Director Pakistan Research Center for a Community with Shared Future, Islamabad.

The discussion was attended by the members of the Institute of Community with Shared Future, Communication University of China, Beijing. The session was commenced with the opening remarks by Prof. Li Hualiang, Dean, Institute of Community with Shared Future, Communication University of China, Beijing. He stated that the concept of "Clash of Civilizations" has led to numerous wars and killings of thousands of innocent lives.

He stressed the importance of international communication and international cultural exchange. He also mentioned that to achieve sustainable prosperity and security, a peaceful inter-civilization co-existence is required.

Prof. Zhang Yanqui, Vice Dean, Institute of Community with Shared Future, Communication University of China, Beijing highlighted the need for Cultural Inclusiveness through the promotion of global communications.

Land core issue in Palestinian struggle: PNC

DNA

RAMALLA: Palestine National Council (PNC) has said that the celebration of The Land Day every year is an affirmation that the land is the core issue in our struggle against the Israeli occupation, and an expression of the Palestinian people's adherence to the land of their forefathers and grandparents and their rejection of the settler colonial policies and procedures that target their national and historical presence on their land.

In a statement PNC issued for the 45th anniversary of this national day, which will fall tomorrow, Tuesday, March 30th, PNC called on the Palestinian people in all places of their presence to defend their land, strengthen their national unity, and their resistance to occupation, settlement and Judaization in all forms.

The Land Day, which came after the gift of the masses



on the 30th of March 1976 in response to the policy of seizing the land and the attempt to Judaize the Palestinian Galilee, embodied the highest meanings of sacrifice and redemption for our people who have the inherent right to it in the face of Zionist colonialism, PNC said. The Land Day strengthened

the Palestinian national awareness of the masses of our people in the Galilee, the Triangle and the Negev, strengthened the bonds of unity between our people in the homeland and the diaspora, and contributed to the formulation of the national narrative in the face of the false and fabricated narra-

tive of the Zionist movement, PNC added and called on our people in the 1948 territories to adhere to unity and to miss the opportunity for the Israeli occupation that tried and is still trying hard to penetrate the national position and divert attention from the issue and the national goals.

5+1 talks in Geneva may be a last chance...

From Page 01

When asked how optimistic he was about the outcome and positive approach from the Greek side, the Foreign Minister categorically stated why they should come up with an open mind and positive approach. The world is spoiling them and treating them as if they were the Republic of Cyprus, while this is not the case. Since, the world is supporting them therefore why they should feel it necessary to attend these talks with a positive mind. Having said this, we know very well where do we stand and where the Greek side stands.

To a question the minister told, the government of TRNC has taken a decision to undertake steps on the fenced area of Maras starting with a scientific inventory survey. Steps taken are in line with the international law, first and foremost protecting and respecting the rights of possession of former inhabitants of this town as also called for the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions. The unacceptable status quo on the island, which is also valid for the fenced area of Maras, have continued for all these decades due to political considerations and propagan-

da, instigated by the Greek Cypriot leadership, to the detriment of the said area and more importantly at the expense of its former inhabitants. It should be noted that the TRNC govt decision of asking the initiative of progressive opening of Maras in October 2020 was welcomed by the former



Greek Cypriot inhabitants of the fenced area of Maras and they have publicly stated that this decision will provide for them to go back to their properties.

To yet another question about exploration of resources in the area, the Foreign Minister said, the Greek Cypriots have unilat-

erally licensed international oil companies to conduct hydrocarbon activities and they have passed a legislative bill to establish a so-called national investment fund to manage unilaterally the future capital income from hydrocarbon reserves. Moreover they have signed bilateral agreements with many countries regarding the delimitation of its unilaterally declared so called exclusive economic zone. As a result of Greek Cypriot side's increasing unilateral actions, the Turkish Cypriot side has been obliged to take steps to protect its own rights and interests regarding the hydrocarbon resources around the island.

To a question about COVID situation in TRNC, the Foreign Minister said everyone is suffering and so is the TRNC. But daily cases in our country are less and number of deaths is very low, but then you know we are a small country. Our government is conscious about spread of virus and we are thankful to motherland Turkey for providing us the vaccines.

As regards tourist activities we plan to open up country for international visitors and tourists in the mid of April 2021 but with double vaccination.

FBR continues action against non-duty paid Cigarettes

ISLAMABAD: Inland Revenue Enforcement Network (IREN), FBR has intensified country-wide operations against smuggled and Non-Duty paid cigarettes. IREN Rawalpindi Team has confiscated 1,800,000 cigarettes contained in 180 cartons worth Rs. 5,670,000 involving duty and tax evasion of Rs. 3,793,800.

In pursuit of Prime Minister's vision and special instructions of Chairman FBR, crackdown against counterfeit, smuggled and non-duty paid cigarettes is in full swing. Inland Revenue Enforcement Network is active in all parts of the country to restrict the trade of illegal cigarettes. The teams of IREN are working under Regional Coordinators in all major cities of the country and Central Coordinator, Intelligence and Investigation, Islamabad. – DNA

Pakistanis to get training from China

IP REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Minister for Science and Technology Fawad Chaudhry has said that Pakistan is working with Iron Brother China to train the people in semi-conductor technology, according to Gwadar Pro. Speaking to journalists, the Minister said the country's future is linked with technology.

"The merger of technology and biotechnology is of utmost importance. We will work together with China for the training of people in semi-conductor technology. China is already cooperating," he remarked.

Chaudhry maintained that the incumbent government is making all-out efforts for the development of the technology sector.

He said the country can develop at a fast speed with the development of science and technology. The minister emphasised the need for a national environment where policies encourage technological innovations and the exploration of new ideas.

He highlighted the recent initiatives, including a new national drone policy and the establishment of a national board for the regulation of technologies.

Chaudhry said that the unprecedented transformations in speed, accuracy and range of emerging technologies in the contemporary era necessitate their effective and robust utilisation for sustainable development more than ever. He said that for the first time in the country's history, the civil and military interface has been created and now both are sharing their research with each other.

The minister said Pakistan imported medical equipment when the first wave of Covid-19 hit the country, but now it is among those 18 countries which are manufacturing ventilators.

Pakistan, Azerbaijan to promote ties

DNA

DUSHANBE: Pakistan and Azerbaijan have agreed to continue the process of mutual consultations to promote bilateral cooperation.

The understanding came at a meeting between Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi and Azeri Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov in Dushanbe on Tuesday. Shah Mahmood Qureshi emphasized the need for undertaking joint efforts to achieve the targets set for promotion of trade and economic relations between the two countries.

The foreign minister noted that the beginning of direct flights between the two countries will supplement efforts to promote cooperation in diverse fields including tourism.

The two foreign ministers also held detailed discussion on the Afghan peace process, situation in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir and the regional situation in the wake of border areas recovered by Azerbaijan.