



# Islamabad POST

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**Pakistan to approach IMF for 2nd COVID relief package: Imran**

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**Amb. Nong Rong meets PPP leaders**

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**Confident for the bowlers to make comeback**

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## Briefs

**Initial signs of positivity slowing**

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development, Reforms and Special Initiatives Asad Umar on Tuesday said increased restrictions, broader lockdowns and stronger standard operating procedures (SOPs) enforcement are starting to have effect as initial signs of the positivity rate of coronavirus are slowing. The federal minister, who also heads the NCOC, said in his tweet that patients on critical care and mortality rate will however stay at high levels for some time due to the momentum of last two weeks. He urged all to follow the SOPs and be safe.

**PPP broke PDM alliance**

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Shahid Khaqan Abbasi on Tuesday said that Pakistan People's Party (PPP) broke the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) alliance. Talking to media, the PML-N leader said that not show cause, but a plain notice was issued to PPP for violating the rules of opposition parties' alliance during elections in the Upper House of the Parliament, Senate. The ministers of PTI are involved in corruption, he claimed. Shahid Khaqan Abbasi said that NAB requires self accountability.

**Not joining PPP: Tareen clarifies**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Jhangir Tareen has denied reports of joining PPP and said that those spreading such news will be disappointed. Reacting to the statement of PPP leader Shehla Raza, PTI leader said that a constant propaganda campaign was being run against him, there was no truth in the news of meeting Peoples Party leadership and joining the PPP adding that those who spread news against me would be disappointed.

## Further split in PDM as ANP departs

Hoti says that the party feels as if they have been "pushed against the wall"

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: Leaders of the Awami National Party have withdrawn from the Pakistan Democratic Movement after show-cause notices were issued to the party to explain their actions during the recently held Senate polls. The decision was announced by Ameer Haider Khan Hoti during a press conference in Peshawar. It comes a day after the notices were issued, to both ANP and PPP. Hoti, in his media briefing, noted that the PTI and the JUI-F have joined hands to give the PPP a tough time in Larkana. "Of course, an explanation for this should also have been provided, but neither should a show-cause notice have been served to PML-N or Maulana Fazlur Rehman," he said. "And with what authority would one have served a show-cause notice?" he asked. Hoti said such issues should have been taken up in a meeting of the PDM leadership. He said that it was expected from

**PML-N, JUI-F disappointed**

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: The JUI-F and PML-N Tuesday strongly reacted to ANP's exit from the Opposition's alliance — Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) — terming it "the most humiliating move in political history". Reacting to ANP's hard-hitting presser, JUI-F's secretary-general Senator Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri said there were several ways to caving in and selling out. "This is the most humiliating move in political history... ANP and PPP's actions have led to the world laughing at us," the JUI-F senator said. "Despite all this, we went and spoke to ANP's leadership and they said the move was made based on friendly ties.

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## Pak to approach IMF for COVID relief package: PM

The premier was addressing the launching ceremony of UNDP's Report on Inequality

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan Tuesday said that his government would approach the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for second relief package as third COVID-19 wave had gripped the country with its service sector hit badly. "We are going to speak to IMF because we see disruptions ahead. Just when our economy was recovering and all the indicators were positive, unfortunately we will have



to review the whole situation and our new Ehsaas Programme. Because the service industry has been badly hit everywhere in the world but in Pakistan our service industry has been really badly hit," the prime minister said addressing the launching ceremony of

United Nations Development Program's Pakistan National Human Development Report on Inequality. The event was also attended by Federal Planning Minister Asad Umar, with virtual attendance by the Assistant Secretary-General, Assistant Administrator and UNDP Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, Kanni Wignaraja. The report, presented by the lead author Dr Hafiz Pasha, explores many dimensions of inequality in Pakistan.

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**RAWALPINDI:** Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Nadeem Raza presenting a souvenir to Ambassador of Indonesia Adam Tugio. — DNA



**ISLAMABAD:** Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi talks to his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov at his arrival. Sergey Lavrov's act of holding his umbrella remained a top trend on the social media throughout the day. — DNA

## Pak to welcome Russian investment in Steel Mills

Qureshi said Pakistan, Russia were ready to cooperate with each other

SHUJAAT HAMZA

**Sergey Lavrov arrives**

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi on Tuesday said Pakistan would welcome if Russia made an investment for the revival of Pakistan Steels Mills (PSM) or other projects. The PSM was set up with the technical and financial help of Russia and now its role in revival

ISLAMABAD, Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation, Sergey Lavrov arrived here Tuesday on a two-day official visit to Pakistan to hold talks for further deepening multi-faceted bilateral relations and cooperation between Islamabad and Moscow. The Russian Foreign Minister upon arrival at the airport was warmly received by Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Pakistan's Ambassador to Russia Shafqat Ali Khan and senior foreign ministry officials.

of the entity could open up several opportunities to strengthen bilateral cooperation, Qureshi said in a video statement regarding the visit of Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. The PSM was closed in 2015 due to heavy financial losses. The foreign minister said the visit of a Russian foreign minister to

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## Turkey summons Chinese envoy

NEWS DESK

ANKARA: China's ambassador to Ankara, Liu Shaobin, was summoned to Turkey's Foreign Ministry on Tuesday over social media posts responding to opposition politicians who had criticised Chinese treatment of Uighurs, a foreign ministry source said. The discomfort caused by the embassy's Twitter posts were conveyed to Chinese Ambassador Liu Shaobin, said an official on condition of anonymity due to restrictions on speaking to the media. In response to IYI Party leader Meral Akşener and Ankara mayor Mansur Yavaş, member of the main opposition CHP, the Chinese Embassy had said on Twitter: "The Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region is an inseparable part of Chinese soil. "The embassy's tweet was in response to the Twitter posts by Akşener and Yavaş in which they recalled the 1990 killing of Uighurs by Chinese forces in the Baren Township.

## Pak crosses 1m vaccine doses mark

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has administered coronavirus vaccines to more than one million people so far, Federal Planning and Development Minister Asad Umar confirmed on Twitter Tuesday. "More than 76,000 vaccinations were carried out yesterday.

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## Global deaths surpass 3 m

NEWS DESK

NEW YORK: Coronavirus-related deaths worldwide crossed 3 million on Tuesday, according to a Reuters tally, as the latest global resurgence of Covid-19 infections is challenging vaccination efforts across the globe. Worldwide Covid-19 deaths are rising once again, especially in Brazil and India. Health officials blame more infectious variants that were first detected in the United Kingdom and South Africa, along with public fatigue with lockdowns and other restrictions.

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Amb. Tugio highlights media role in promotion of bilateral ties — Page 08

## Classes 9 to 12 to resume from 19th

The minister said that the provincial governments will take a decision to close schools where the situation is worsening

ZUBAIR AHMED

ISLAMABAD: The government on Tuesday announced that educational institutes will resume classes 9-12 across Pakistan from April 19 where as classes of grade 1 to 8 will remain suspended until April 28 in districts where the Covid-19 positivity ratio is high. Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Shafqat Mahmood briefed the media about the decisions of the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) taken at a meeting in Islamabad chaired Shafqat Mahmood. The education and health ministers also took stock of the pandemic situation in the country. Key decisions: Classes 1-8 will remain suspended in affected districts till April 28. Classes 9-12 will resume for in-person learning from April 19 across Pakistan. Universities in areas with a high positivity ratio



will remain closed for physical classes-Punjab board exams to be shifted to third week of May- Cambridge exams will be held as announced earlier- Universities asked to extend entry exam dates- Next NCOC meeting on April 28 Shafqat Mahmood said "The educational institutes will resume 9-12 classes from April 19 with strict SOPs in a staggered way even in the affected districts so that they can complete their course." The minister said that the provincial governments will take a decision to

close schools where the situation is worsening. He, however, clarified that all the board exams, including Cambridge, will be held as per the schedule announced earlier by the respective authorities. Shafqat said that they have asked the universities to extend the dates of their admission tests whereas the higher education institutes in affected districts would continue with online classes.

"A meeting will be held on April 28 to once again review the situation and see whether the primary classes should remain suspended till Eid or can be resumed," he added. Addressing the reporters, Shafqat Mahmood stated that two main topics were discussed during the NCOC meeting. The first was whether educational institutions that have been closed down till April 11 will continue as is or will they be opened, he added.

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## Briefs

## Insaf mobile shops program launched

## BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: Under the vision of Punjab Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar, "Insaf Sasti Mobile Shops" have been introduced to provide fruits and vegetables to the consumers at government rates, initially through more than 100 loader rickshaws will provide Fruits and vegetables are being sold at discounted rates in the streets while registration of 50 more loader rickshaws is also underway. In addition, cheap shops are being set up outside 40 mega marts of the city where besides fruits and vegetables, groceries are also being sold which would also available at controlled prices. Assistant Commissioner Sadar Umar Magbool said that under this flagship program, the market committee is supplying goods directly to the rickshaws from the markets.

## Cases register against SOPs violators

As many as 1152 shopping malls, restaurants, marriage halls and private schools sealed in last 22 days for violating corona SOPs. Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ali informed that Assistant Commissioners of district were active to check implementation on corona SOPs and actions were taken against violators. He informed that during the checking so far 779 shopping malls/ plaza, 273 restaurants, 58 private schools and 42 marriage halls have been sealed. He directed to the Assistant Commissioners that implementation on corona SOPs should be implemented in every cost.

## 'Karachi Air Quality in 2021 and Beyond' discussed

## ATHAR SUFI

KARACHI: The U.S. Consulate General Karachi hosted a virtual roundtable discussion on 'Karachi Air Quality in 2021 and Beyond' to promote real-time monitors to improve air quality. The roundtable brought together policymakers, climate change experts, and diplomatic community members based in Karachi to explore the benefits of using low-cost air quality monitoring programmes to measure and track air pollutants, according to a communiqué. The U.S. Department of State has installed more than 60 reference-grade air quality monitors worldwide, including four in Pakistan. Real-time outdoor air quality data from these monitors helps scientists and policymakers to address air quality around the world and is transparently available to the public.

U.S. Consul General Robert Silberstein and Murtaza Wahab, adviser to the Chief Minister of Sindh on Environment, Climate Change and Coast Development, delivered keynote remarks. Consul General Silberstein said, 'Accurate data allows us to make better decisions and to understand the problem.'

## 3 bodies found in Faisalabad

## DNA

FAISALABAD: The police have found three bodies from different parts of Faisalabad during the past 12 hours. A police spokesman said on Tuesday that passersby spotted three human bodies lying at Teezab Mill Chowk, Tariq Abad bridge and Shehbaz Sharif Park, and informed the area police. The police took the bodies into custody and dispatched them to mortuary for postmortem. Aged of the dead men were believed to be 24 years, 40 years and 45 years, while further investigation for their identification and search of their families was under way, the spokesman added.

## 500 sugar bags seized

The tehsil administration Jarranwala seized 500 bags of sugar during a raid at a godown on Tuesday. A team, headed by AC Jarranwala Zainul Abidin, raided the godown of one Muhammad Siddique in Chak No 107-GB and recovered 500 bags of sugar stored there illegally.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan at the launch of Pakistan Human Rights Development Report-2020. – DNA

## PTI following policy of "Health for elite" instead "Health for all"

## STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has said that PTI regime has a policy of "Health For the Elite" instead of "Health For All" and accused Imran Khan government for putting at risk the health of Pakistanis through its corruption-laden policies. In his message on World Health Day being observed on Wednesday across the world under the aegis of World Health Organisation (WHO), the PPP Chairman said that health facilities

were the basic right of the people of Pakistan and government must ensure safeguarding this right. However, the PTI regime has increased drug prices up to an unprecedented 260 percent, which has compelled a major segment of patients to reduce drug dosage or discontinue treatment.

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari further said that in Imran Khans cabinet, two Health Ministers were removed on corruption charges for being caught red handed in the drug price and import scandals but no visible action has been taken against



them while the PTI regime continues playing havoc with public health. He pointed out Sindh government had spent Rs 100 billion on the JPMC and NICVD hospitals in the province, where state of the

art and expensive medical treatment is provided to patients of cardiovascular, liver, cancer and other diseases from all over Pakistan free of cost. "However, the PTI regime is plotting to turn this successful public

healthcare model into a model of failure by attempting to take over these hospitals and run them into the ground like they have done in countless public health facilities like the provinces they rule," he added. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that Imran Khan first declared COVID-19 as a simple flu asking people not to get scared of it. He (Imran Khan) opposed the lockdown by Sindh government during the first wave of the pandemic only to follow the PPP-led Sindh governments lead after it took concrete steps to deal with the pandemic. Now, Imran Khan's

government is among only a few in the world, which has not purchased COVID-19 vaccines itself, relying solely on donated doses. The PPP Chairman added that the illegitimate and incompetent selected government led by Imran Khan was not only a danger to the economic prosperity of the country but it was equally intent on systematically destroying the health sector. He lamented that PTIs neo-liberal policies worked only to enrich the few at the cost of the economic, social, health, and political wellbeing of every Pakistani citizen.

## Development work at sector I-15 in full swing

## SHAHEEN HANIF

ISLAMABAD: Development work in Sector I-15 and Sub-Sectors 1, 3 and 4 is in full swing by Capital Development Authority (CDA) administration. Earth work of the said sector has been completed while 3 plots are also in the final stages. Work has been started on roads, bridges, underground and overhead tanks of the said sector. Moreover, work of subways of roads is also being expedited. Development work has been started in sub-sector I-15/1 only a few days ago, however, 20% development work has been completed in the said sub-sector. However, 45% development work has been completed in sub-sector I-15/3, while the remaining development work in the said sector is also in progress. The said sub-sector is being developed on 86.62 crore rupees, while work is also underway on road infrastructure. The work will be completed in the next few months; soon other services will be launched in the sector. At the same time, construction of underground, overhead tanks has also been started. On the other hand, construction work of clot and bridge is also underway. Clots will also be completed in the next three months, while the bridge will also be completed in six months. Sector I-15/4 tender has also been awarded with a bid price of Rs. 58 crores. The tender for I-15/1 has been opened and 10% development work has been done in the said sub-sector.

## 500,000 saplings planted across Faisalabad district

## ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Under the Prime Minister's Clean Green Pakistan program, 500,000 different types of saplings are being planted in the district during the current season, while block plantation and establishment of urban forest would be planned in next couple of days. This was stated by Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ali while planting trees under Clean Green Pakistan Index Phase II at District Jail in collaboration with the district administration and forest department. Member National Assembly Sh. Khurram Shahzad,

Additional Deputy Commissioners Muhammad Khalid, Superintendent Jail Ali Akbar Gujjar, Director Horticulture PHA Abdullah Nisar Cheema and other officers also planted sapling in the premises of the Jail. Deputy Commissioner said that tree planting was essential to prevent pollution and the Prime Minister's Ten Billion Tree Project was an important revolutionary initiative that is being achieved in a coordinated manner. He said that the district administration is implementing the tree planting campaign in the form of a movement in which the participation of citizens was also mandatory so the message of two trees per

person should be made public. He said that trees are a beautiful masterpiece of nature and administration would make this campaign a success through joint efforts. MNA also highlighted the importance of plants and their utility.

## Mosque committee meeting held

District Mosque Committee meeting was held at DC Office under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ali in which SSP Operations Muhammad Afzal, Additional Deputy Commissioner General Khurram Pervaiz and other officers were also present while Maulana Muhammad Yusuf Anwar, Sahibzada Zahid Mahmood Qasmi, Mufti

Muhammad Zia Madani, Maulana Muhammad Riaz Kharal, Syed Jafar Naqvi, Ifthikhar Naqvi and other religious leaders were also present. Welcoming the religious scholars, the Deputy Commissioner apprised them of the serious situation of the third wave of Corona epidemic in the district. He said that even in this situation, the ulema should play the role of role model by conveying the message of precautionary measures to the people from the pulpit. He appealed to continue the implementation of SOPs in mosques and said that joint efforts should be made in this regard to defeat the virus.

## IoBM signs MoU with PharmEvo, creates strategic alliance

## NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Institute of Business Management (IoBM) on Tuesday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with a leading pharmaceutical company to enhance the collaboration with the local industrial and pharmaceutical sector. It will enable its students to acquire hands-on training in the areas of marketing, finance, sales, and business development among others. On behalf of IoBM, the MoU was signed by Institute's President Talib Syed Karim while Haroon Qasim, Man-

aging Director of the pharmaceutical firm, PharmEvo (Pvt.) Ltd signed the memorandum of understanding at IoBM. Speaking on the occasion, President IoBM said that academic institutions' collaboration with the corporate sector is increasing. This is beneficial for both academia and the corporate sector. The young graduates can apply their academic knowledge in the field and the corporate sector can capitalize on their innovative problem-solving skills. Talib Syed Karim further said that IoBM students have so far completed 700 projects with 500 local companies.

## Cops directed to enforce traffic laws

## MEHBOOB AHIR

SARGODHA: DSP traffic Sargodha Sheikh Muhammad Kashif directed Traffic Inspector Muhammad Azam, Aftab Aslam, Sub Inspector Zulfiqar Muhammad Mumtaz, Mazhar Hussain Shah, Muhammad Amir Kamal, Arshad Baig assistant sub inspector Muhammad Afzal Kalair Habib ur Rehman, Muhammad Arshad, Muhammad Zulfiqar Ahmed, Hawaldar Muhammad Ashraf and other traffic officers and personnel to perform their duties in an efficient manner. Strict action to be taken against violators of traffic rules, over speeding, unnumbered vehicles, underage drivers, keeping a close eye on one wheeling and do not allow any driver to violate traffic laws during their duty and instructed them to behave with good manners. Public circles have demanded from higher officials that traffic employees perform their duties in an efficient manner. Special compassion should be shown to traffic employees and their duty time should be reduced.

## PDM has fallen apart, says Sarwar

## ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Governor Punjab Chaudhry Mohammad Sarwar has said that Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) of the opposition parties has fallen apart and the irreconcilable differences could never be bridged now. Talking to a Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) delegation, led by MNA Riaz Fatana at the Governor's House here on Tuesday, he said the opposition parties should read the writing on the wall and take part in constructive politics for the good of the country and people. "The opposition should abandon the policy of protest inside and outside the parliament and play its positive role for strengthening of democracy and development of the country," he said, adding that Prime Minister Imran Khan would not back down on his principled stance on merit and transparency in the country. The governor said that overcoming challenges like inflation and unemployment was the first priority of the PTI government, adding that all government institutions were working to overcome these challenges. He said that Punjab government's real challenge was inflation and not the opposition, adding that the government was using all possible measures to address these issues. Ch Sarwar said the government, led by Prime Minister Imran Khan, was not pursuing political or personal interests but national agenda.

## Kuwait offers to support Sindh govt against COVID

## DNA

KARACHI: The Consul General of Kuwait Mr Saleem Yousif AlHamdan called on Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah and offered his government support against Coronavirus. The chief minister said that he has established an Institute of Infectious Disease, NIPA at Karachi. "The institute is serving as a hospital for COVID patients, but it would start research against different kinds of infectious diseases," he said and added he wanted to establish a similar facility at Hyderabad and Karachi. The visiting diplomat told the chief minister that his government would support the provincial government to establish another institute of Infectious Diseases. Murad Ali Shah recalled that the Kuwait government has invested in the hotel industry during the tenure of prime minister Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto. Kuwait had established a five star hotel in Karachi. Mr Bhutto had engaged a large number of skilled and unskilled people of Pakistan in Kuwait, therefore we respect the Kuwait government and its people and believe them as brothers. The CM said that he has worked in Kuwait and would soon visit Kuwait to meet his old friends.



FAISALABAD: Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ali planting a sapling in the District Jail regarding Clean Green Pakistan Index Phase II. – DNA

## NAB only affiliated with people of Pakistan: Chairman

## ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: A meeting of National Accountability Bureau (NAB) held on Tuesday with chairman honourable Justice Javed Iqbal in the chaired to review overall performance of the bureau. The meeting was attended by deputy chairman, prosecutor general accountability, director general operations, while all director generals attended the meeting via video link. Speaking on the occasion, the NAB chairman said, "The anti-graft watchdog firmly believes in pursuing the policy of accountability for all. NAB does not have affiliation with any group, political party or individual. The only affiliation of the bureau is with the state of Pakistan. The NAB is duty bound to recover the looted amount from the culprits, besides taking mega corruption cases to logical conclusion." The forum reviewed the latest progress of corruption cases against former prime ministers Nawaz Sharif, Shahid Khaqan Ab-

basi, Shaukat Aziz, Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani, former president Asif Zardari, former chief ministers Shehbaz Sharif, Qaim Ali Shah, Aslam Raisani, Sanaullah Zehri, Sindh chief minister Murad Ali Shah, former ministers Ishaq Dar, Khawaja Saad Rafique, Dr Asim Hussain, Ahsan Iqbal, Babar Khan Ghauri, Manzoor Wasan, Agha Siraj Durrani, Syed

Khursheed Shah, Saleem Mandviwala, Sharjeel Inam Memon, Jam Khan Shoro, Adil Siddique, Waseem Akhtar, Ejaz Jakhrani, Sabtain Khan, Sahibzada Mehmood Zaib, Sher Azam Khan, Engineer Amir Muqam, Mehtab Abbasi Asfandyar Kakar, Asim Kurd, Saadat Anwar, Rehmat Baloch, Hamza Shehbaz, Salman Shahbaz, Ahad Cheema, Fawad Hassan Fawad,

Siddique Memon, Manzoor Kaka, Saeed Ahmed Khan, Tahir Basharat Cheema, Abdul Ghani Majeed, Anwar Majeed, Hussain Lawai, Ghulam Mustafa Phal, Farkhand Iqbal, Akhtar Nawaz Ganjara, Kamran Shafi and others.

The meeting also reviewed progress in the ongoing investigation against Mufti Ehsan, Ghulam Rasool Ayubi and others Modarba/ Musharka

case, Bank of Khyber, K Electric, NTS, closure of Roosevelt hotel, Sindh festival case, NICVD, Karachi, 56 Public Limited Companies, Flour, Sugar subsidies scams.

The meeting decided to take cases against fake housing/cooperative societies to logical conclusion as per law by utilising all available resources as well as to nab proclaimed offenders and absconded.

The meeting reviewed progress in mutual league assistance (MLAs) applications sent to other countries. Justice Javed Iqbal said that most priority of NAB is to eradication of corruption in all its forms and manifestations from the country and recovery of the looted money in order to deposit in national exchequer. NAB's faith is corruption free Pakistan. The performance of NAB has already been acknowledged by reputed National and international organisations. Especially the World Economic Forum in its recent report has appreciated Bureau's awareness and prevention campaign which is honour for NAB.





Briefs

PNCA to inaugurate regional office in GB

**IBRAR KHAN**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) has finalized all arrangements to inaugurate its new regional cultural center in Gilgit-Baltistan on April 8. Director General PNCA Dr. Fouzia Saeed told APP on Tuesday that Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training & National Heritage Shafqat Mahmood will inaugurate the new regional office of PNCA in GB. She further said that GB Minister for Tourism, Sports, Culture, Archaeology and Museum Department Raja Nasir Ali, Secretary Culture GB and PNCA board member Naqi Akhunda will also attend the inauguration ceremony.

"In this regard a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) were signed between PNCA and Gilgit Baltistan government to set up PNCA regional office in GB", she added. She said that the new center would work for the promotion of arts and culture of GB, adding that PNCA being a national cultural institution was making efforts to explore new avenues. She said that Gilgit Baltistan government has provided facilities and venues including auditorium free of cost to PNCA for new regional office.

The new PNCA regional office would work for the cultural activities to preserve the tangible and intangible culture and traditions of the people of Gilgit-Baltistan.

Police bust dacoit gang; arrest four

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi District police have busted a dacoit gang and arrested its four members besides recovering cash Rs 187,000 looted amount, four mobile phones and other items from their possession.

According to a police spokesman, Saddar Baroni police team under the supervision of Station House Officer (SHO) Malik Allah Yar and SI, Incharge Police Choki, Girja, Waqar Haider managed to net four dacoits including ring leader of the gang. SHO Saddar Baroni informed that the accused confessed to have committed several dacoities and street crimes in different areas of Rawalpindi city.

He said, the dacoit gang members have been sent to Adiala Jail for identification parade, adding, efforts would be made to recover other looted items from their possession after completing identification parade process.

Superintendent Police (SP) Saddar Kamran Hameed appreciated the police team for netting the dacoit gang members and directed to continue raids against the lawbreakers.

ATC reserves decision on bail plea of lawyer

**DNA**

ISLAMABAD: An Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) Tuesday reserved its judgment on pre-arrest bail of lawyer Shaista Tabasum in a case pertaining to vandalizing of Islamabad High Court (IHC) building by a group of lawyers. ATC Judge Raja Jawad Abbas Hassan heard the interim bail petition of Shaista Tabasum moved through her counsel Latif Khosa. The petitioner's counsel pleaded that case investigation had been completed and there was no need of arrest of his client after it. He argued that no lawyer could imagine to attack on the respect of judiciary.

He, however, added that the lawyers would take up their problems only to the chief justice. The counsel argued that injured journalist had given statement that Shaista Tabasum had no connection with the incident. After the completion of arguments, the court reserved its judgment.



**ISLAMABAD:** A delegation of Independent Opposition in the senate led by Senator Azam Nazir Tarar, called on Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani at Parliament House Islamabad. – DNA

CDA urged to avoid sealing of shops in I&T centers

Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, said the current situation demanded that promoting the ease of doing businesses should be the top priority of all relevant departments

**ZUBAIR AHMAD**

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Traders Welfare Association, I&T Centre, G-8/1, Islamabad led by Senior Vice President Nasir Chaudhry met with Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) and apprised him of the problems being faced by the traders due to sealing of some shops in I&T Centers.

Ajmal Baloch, President, All Pakistan Anjuman-e-Tajiran and Traders Action Committee Islamabad, Khalid Chaudhry Secretary and others were also present on the occasion.

Addressing the delegation, Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry said the current situation demanded that promoting the ease of doing businesses should be the top priority of all relevant departments to facilitate the growth of business activities, save the people from unemployment and steer the economy out of current challenges.

However, sealing of some shops in IT Centers by CDA has created a lot of concerns in the trading community. He appealed that CDA should reconsider this approach to seal shops in I&T Centers as it would deprive many traders of their livelihood and increase unemployment.

Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan said that already businesses were facing great problems due to Covid-19 pandemic and in these conditions, sealing of some shops would increase the difficulties of the trading community.

He said that instead of sealing shops, CDA in consultation with ICCI and concerned market associations should work out a better solution to this issue. "If someone is doing legal business, instead of shutting down such businesses, efforts should be made to explore a legal solution of such cases," he said.

Ajmal Baloch, President, All Pakistan Anjuman-e-Tajiran said that in the current difficult circumstances, such drastic measures should be avoided as they would damage business activities and create more problems for the economy.

He said that shops set up 40 years ago are now being declared illegal which is not a right approach. He said that if the CDA did not resolve the issue amicably, traders would have no other options exempt to launch strong protests against such actions.

Therefore, the CDA should review its policy and avoid actions that would cause more harm to the business activities.

Nasir Chaudhry, Senior Vice President, Traders Welfare Association, I&T Center, G-8/1, Islamabad said that the process of sealing the shops has taken place in the constituency of Ali Nawaz Awan, Special Assistant to the PM on CDA Affairs, so he should take notice of the situation and issue orders to the responsible authorities in CDA to refrain from actions that would prove more harmful for the local economy.

‘Facilitation Centers’ revamped to serve masses

**KHAYAM ABBASI**

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration has completely revamped its three 'Citizens Facilitation Centers' and added more services to serve the masses in an efficient manner.

According to a senior official of the ICT administration, the facilitation centers were fully operation at various areas including G-11/4 sector of Islamabad, Tarlai and Bhara Kahu.

He informed media on Tuesday that at least 14 services were being provided at the centers that included issuance of domicile certificate, International driving permit, marriage / divorce certificates, no objection certificate for events, land fard, birth / death / burial certificate, renewal of arms license and others.

The official added that earlier, the services were limited to only three.

As regards revamping of the centers, he said online appointment system was launched for all the services, whereas self-service desks had also been set up. Other initiatives included uploading of past record of various services on the system, establishment of dedicated counters for elders, disabled persons and women, a helpline (051-9108194) and a SMS service for updating applicants about status of their applications, he added.

To a query, he said as many as 6,175 citizens were facilitated at those centers during the last month.

AIOU admissions to be closed on April 12

ISLAMABAD: Last date for admission in the programmes of B.Ed, BS, post graduate diploma, associate degree, BA (Associate Degree) and certificate courses offered in Semester spring 2021 at AIOU is April 12. According to the Director Admissions on Tuesday, date of admissions will not be extended further. Prospectus and admission forms are available at main campus and prospectus sales point established at Union Council level throughout the country. Admission forms are also available on the university website. The interested candidate can also fill their form online and generate challan form. After depositing fee in any of the designated bank branches, the candidates should dispatch the required documents/ testimonials along with the university copy of bank challan to the admission department before deadline. Students my pay their fee through jazz cash, easy paisa and u paisa. – DNA

Lack of resources hurting archery

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani national archer Aqsa Ali believes there was tremendous talent of archery in the country but lack of resources was hurting the game.

“Holding more sports competitions at the grassroots level was the need of the hour and essential for the development of sports in the country. Educational institutions can also play a vital role in the growth of sports by holding competitions to dig-out the talented players from the grass-roots level,” she told media.

She said sports competitions should be organized regularly in educational institutions which would bring out the young budding talent to fore.

“Then the federations should play their role in harnessing this talent,” she said.

To a question, she said the game of archery was a centuries old Islamic game and people were playing it with great zeal and enthusiasm.

Police Guides appointed to resolve public complaints

RAJA PERVAIZ

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad police have taken a unique initiative to smoothly resolve the public complaints and deployed ‘Police Guides’ to properly guide those visiting police stations. Police Guides have been appointed at 22 police stations of Islamabad who would properly guide the visitors and ensure every possible assistance to them in police related matters.

The police constables are initially entrusted responsibilities as police guides who would lead the visitors to resolve their complaints. The IGP Islamabad Qazi Jamil ur Rehman has termed the appointment of ‘Police Guides’ as an important step towards changing the typical ‘thana culture’.

He said that interaction with visitors at police stations in a decent manner would help to improve the image of police and attitude of Police Guides and men at Front Desk would be of utmost importance in this regard.

The decent attitude with complainants would be helpful in inculcating friendly police ecology, the IGP said and urged the policemen to make best possible efforts to resolve the problems of citizens with honesty and efficient manner.

He said that complainants should feel secure themselves during visit of police stations rather than getting frightened.

The IGP said that 65 percent people visit police stations to get resolved their issues of minor nature. He said that Station House Officers and Muharrars at police stations were also appointed after tests and interviews with an aim to change ‘thana culture’ and ensure sobriety during dealing with public.

Such steps, he said, would help to bridge gap between community and police.

Experts question motives behind SBP Bill 2021

Dr. Pervez Tahir lamented the removal of the word ‘national interest’ from the preamble of the existing SBP Act and argued that the proposed bill would delineate responsibility for controlling inflation to the SBP which has already failed in this regard

**SHUJAAT HAMZA**

ISLAMABAD: The recent move by the government to make the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) autonomous is part of the IMF agenda being imposed on Pakistan as the decision lacks transparency and goes against national interest. This was the unanimous view of economic and fiscal policy experts during a webinar titled ‘Understanding State Bank Amendment Bill 2021’ organized by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS). The event was chaired by Prof. Dr. Abdul Saboor, Dean Faculty of Social Sciences, PMAS Arid Agriculture University, Rawalpindi.

The speakers and discussants included IPS’ Chairman Khalid Rahman, Vice Chairman Ambassador (r) Syed Abrar Hussain, Dr. Shahida Wizarat, Dean, College of Economics and Social Development, Institute of Business Management, Karachi; Dr. Pervez Tahir, former chief economist, Planning Commission; Qanit Khalil, chartered accountant and economic policy analyst; Raja Kamran, a Karachi-based economic journalist and Amanullah Khan, former president, Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce & Industry (RCCI).

Commenting on the proposed amendments, Dr. Pervez Tahir lamented the removal of the word ‘national interest’ from the preamble of the existing SBP Act and argued that the proposed bill would delineate responsibility for controlling inflation to the SBP which has already failed in this regard.

He further said controlling prices of food items is a provincial subject and has nothing to do with the SBP which can only control core inflation that has not increased substantially in recent years.

He was also of the view that the Pakistani government is giving much more than what IMF or World Bank could actually demand from a sovereign state through the proposed amendment. Dr. Shahida Wizarat was of the view that independence of institutions can only be achieved through holistic policies. She rued Pakistan's policies are not indigenous, rather dictated, as most of the officials running important institutions are “imported” which underlines the continuation of colonial era in this part of the world.

Giving absolute autonomy to the SBP, she further said, is tantamount to making Pakistan subservient to the IMF and the World Bank. Explaining the phenomenon of independence of central banks, Qanit Khalil termed the proposed autonomy to the SBP in line with the global trend. However, he argued independence does not guarantee price stability and economic growth of a country as proven by many studies.

30,410 saplings planted in Rwp

**SHAHEEN HANIF**

RAWALPINDI: The authorities concerned have planted over 30,410 saplings under Green Highway Project (GHP) in Rawalpindi region. According to a spokesman, the saplings were being planted under spring plantation campaign 2021.

The plantation campaign was launched in the region in February and all out efforts were being made to make the campaign a success. He informed that during current Spring Tree Plantation Campaign, sector-wise target of the region were fixed. The tree plantation was being carried out as per the vision of the Prime Minister Imran Khan, he added.

On the directives of the authorities concerned, a plan for the tree plantation was evolved to plant maximum saplings under plantation campaign which is basic requirement to overcome environmental degradation, he added. All necessary arrangements were also made to make the spring plantation program a success which would continue till April end, he 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 7th April from 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM, Tarlai, H-8, Highway, Iqbal Town, Faziya, NPCC II, Qaziabad, Hussainabad, Col. Sher Khan, AWC, Shahia, Rashid Minhas, Sagarpur. Jalalpur, Abdullahpur, CWO, New Wat, Mansoor Shaheed, SPARCO, COD, PTC, Borian, Chip Board, Industrial, Kala Base, Al-Qaim, Mureed, Gharial Feeders, from 09:00 AM to 04:00 PM, Qutbal Feeder, from 09:00 AM to 03:00 AM, Kohistan Enclave, Mixed Industry Feeders, from 07:00 AM to 02:00 AM Kalar Kahar, Miani, Khairpur, Padal, Istiqlal Camp, Minara, PAF Feeders and surrounding areas will be remain without power. – APP

1508 houses handed over to applicants

ISLAMABAD: The concerned department has completed process of 1,508 apartments/housing unit's possession and handed over to applicants under Naya Pakistan Housing Programme (NPHP). These apartments and housing units have been handed over to applicants in collaboration with Workers Welfare Fund (WWF). The information provided by Cabinet Division here, around 2,003,940 citizens applied for registration in Naya Pakistan Housing Programme (NPHP) during Phase-I and II of registration, of which 17,99,533 became eligible. – APP

Islamabad police bust network of drug pushers

**MEHMOOD ABDULLAH**

ISLAMABAD: The crack-down of Islamabad Police against professional alms-seekers is underway and six handlers of beggars were arrested during the last 24 hours. A police spokesman said on Tuesday that Golra, Industrial area and Shehzad town police stations nabbed four handlers of beggars identified as Ghulam Yaseen, Azam, Majid and Imran. They had divided sectors, signals and main chowks for begging activities. Two of the accused Ghulam Yaseen and Majid used to send children belonging to slum area of Golra at various signals and chowks of the city. They used to get share from them and support them in case of any issue with them.



## Briefs

## Police arrest 4; recover pistols &amp; rifles

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi district police have arrested four accused and recovered two Kalashnikovs, two 30 bore pistols, a 223 rifle, a 44 bore rifle and 15 magazines with ammunition from their possession.

According to a police spokesman, Chontra police team under the supervision of SHO Chontra, on the directives of ASP Saddar Circle managed to recover weapons including two Kalashnikovs, two 30 bore pistols, a 223 bore rifle, one 44 bore rifle, 15 magazines and ammunition from a vehicle, stopped at a check post during snap checking from the possession of Muhammad Mehran, Mumtaz Ahmed, Mubashir Ijaz and Siraj Hussain. Police also impounded the vehicle.

He informed, a case has been registered against the accused while further investigation is underway.

## Corona death toll surpasses 1000 in Rawalpindi

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The District Health Authority (DHA) reported 228 novel corona cases on Tuesday taking the number of confirmed cases to 19571 in the district so far.

According to data from DHA, the death toll rose to 1002 out of which 774 belonged to Rawalpindi and 228 from other districts with the addition of 9 new deaths during the last 24 hours.

The data showed that 16461 patients recovered so far and 4974 were quarantined including 2856 at home and 2118 in isolation. The patients reported during the last 24 hours included 44 have their place to Rawal Town, 56 Potohar town, 67 Rawalpindi Cantt, 16 Gujar Khan, 16 Taxila, 2 Murree, 4 Kahuta, 4 Kalar Syedan, 7 Kotli Sattian, 2 AJK, 6 Islamabad and one each from Attock, Jehlum, KPK and Pind Dadan Khan. "Presently 218 confirmed patients were admitted to various facilities of the city counting 31 in Holy Family Hospital, 32 in Benazir Bhutto Hospital, 133 in Institute of Urology, and 22 in Fauji Foundation Hospital," the report said.

Meanwhile talking to media, District Health Coordinator for C-Virus Dr Jawad Zahid said the rise in COVID-19 cases can be associated with not following COVID-SOPs such as wearing masks and maintaining social distance. He urged the people to wash hands frequently, cover their mouth when coughing or sneezing and keep rooms well-ventilated at home and the workplace.

## Accused gets bail over hiding religious status

IBRAR KHAN

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Tuesday granted bail to accused Zaid arrested over malafidely hiding his religious status (Ahmadi) in marriage.

A two-member SC bench headed by Justice Maqbool Baqar heard the case and granted bail to petitioner Zaid against two surety bonds of Rs 0.1 million each.

During the course of proceedings, the counsel for the wife of accused Zaid revealed before the bench that the accused who married with his client was belonged to Ahmadiyya community. He said that the petitioner and his father fraudulently composed the marriage by not disclosing their Ahmadi status.

The counsel for the petitioner submitted his client's recorded statement before the magistrate. Justice Baqar said that according to the report, accused statement was recorded before the magistrate. According to the recorded statement, the accused believed on 'Khatam-e-Nabuwat,' he added.



ISLAMABAD: Chairperson Pay and Pension Commission Nargis Sethi calls on Federal Minister for Finance, Revenue, Industries and Production, Hammad Azhar. – DNA

## Sania talks about “Invisible Scaffold” at WB-IMF moot

Addressing the meeting, Dr. Nishtar highlighted Pakistan's social protection policy initiatives- the aspiration and challenges and how the government of Pakistan demonstrated commitment to addressing them

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: At the World Bank-International Monetary Fund annual spring meetings 2021, a webinar was held titled, 'the IMF's Engagement on Social Protection', wherein SAPM Dr. Sania Nishtar was invited to present Pakistan's perspective on bolstering social safety nets. The event aimed to showcase the IMF, development partners, the WBG and member countries' efforts to implement more effective social protection programs, strengthen social safety nets, and protect the most vulnerable from economic shocks and the potential adverse effects of

reforms. Addressing the meeting, Dr. Nishtar highlighted Pakistan's social protection policy initiatives- the aspiration and challenges and how the government of Pakistan demonstrated commitment to addressing them.

Along with Dr. Nishtar, Roger Nord, Deputy Director Institute for Capacity Development, IMF; Antoinette Sayeh, Deputy Managing Director, IMF; Fernanda Brollo, Senior Economist, IMF; Brooks Evans, Economist, IMF; and Tanja Goodwin, Senior Country Economist, World Bank Group came to the table to launch a Capacity Development Talk on the IMF's engagement on social protection,



with a particular focus on Pakistan and Ecuador. Speaking at the webinar, Dr. Nishtar spoke about the invisible scaffold that is needed to execute programs well. She said that almost for a year after the launching of Ehsaas, an extensive effort was made to build the infrastructure of integrity

and transparency. According to statutory requirement-board meetings, conflict of interest policy, whistleblowing policy, and error, fraud and corruption frameworks and risk registers were institutionalized. She then explained how financial, audit and accounting systems were strengthened and more

broadly, she described how critical was implementation of the Ehsaas Governance and Integrity Policy. She also mentioned about the creation of Ehsaas Governance Observatory to track risks and governance practices. Further, she explained the importance of building the digital backbone for execution of many Ehsaas programs. An SMS request seeking mechanism and data analytics system were integral to the execution of many programs. Continuing, Dr. Nishtar stated that in 2019, a new biometric payment system was installed after a competitive process, to make sure that all payments were biometrically verified. Further, she said

that the IT infrastructure had undergone a major overhaul-and across applications, networks, and the data systems, many reforms had been implemented. Inequality around the world has been growing in recent years, and the pandemic has only made matters worse. As a result, more and more of the IMF's policy advice and capacity development collaborations have focused on the issues of social spending and social protection. IMF is an organization of 190 countries, working to foster global monetary cooperation, secure financial stability, facilitate international trade, promote high employment and sustainable economic growth, and reduce poverty around the world.

## HRD programme for army officers concludes at IIUI

IIUI President also stressed upon the unity of entire Muslim world to counter the prevailing challenges and said that Islam is a religion of peace and harmony

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: The 36th Human Resource Development (HRD) Program for professionals (Officers of Armed Forces) of Pakistan, was concluded here Tuesday at Allam Iqbal Auditorium Faisal Masjid Campus, International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI). The one month long Islamic training Program was organized by the Dawah Academy of the University. As many as nineteen participants from Pakistan Army, Air Force and Pakistan Navy participated in the Program. Addressing the concluding ceremony, President, International Islamic University (IIU) Dr. Hathal Homoud Al-Otaibi said that armed Forces of Pakistan are the pride of Muslim Ummah which always remains ready for the protection of nation

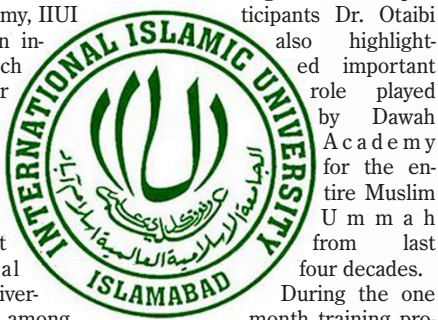
and protecting societies from extremism and terrorism.

IIUI President said that in present era distance education and online teaching has become vital for all educational institutions while Dawah Academy, IIUI will also soon introduce such programs for people from all sectors in this regard. He reiterated his resolve that International Islamic University will be among the leading ranks to make Pakistan proud across the nations through its skilled youth, research and academic excellence.

IIUI President also stressed upon the unity of entire Muslim world to counter the prevailing challenges and

said that Islam is a religion of peace and harmony and this message must reach to all corners of world whereas International Islamic University Islamabad is performing its pivotal role in this regard.

Addressing to course participants Dr. Otaibi also highlighted important role played by Dawah Academy for the entire Muslim Ummah from last four decades. During the one month training program, different sessions included, Quran, Sirah of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Character Building, Meaning and Methodology of Da'wah, Qur'an Introduction, Islamic Personality and Spiritual Development, Power Potential of



Muslim Ummah, Purpose of Life, Concept of Leadership in Islam, Time and Personality Management, Islamic Culture and Civilization, Islamic System of Economics, Concept of Knowledge in Islam, Islamic Ideology and Concept of Pakistan. Incharge, Dawah Academy, Prof. Dr. Ilyas thanked IIUI President for joining the concluding ceremony and vowed that the academy would keep pursuing its objective of dissemination of peace. He also highlighted the objectives of the course among the course participants and emphasized that it is time to protect Ideological boundaries as well as geographical boundaries while we all are standing united to protect our country and Muslim ummah. He also appreciated all the training section for providing services to the course participants throughout the training program.

## SECP opens second cohort of its Regulatory Sandbox

RAJA PERVAIZ

ISLAMABAD: To spur innovation in its regulated sectors, the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has announced the launch of second cohort of its Regulatory Sandbox.

The Regulatory Sandbox is a tailored regulatory environment that allows entities/firms to conduct limited scale live tests of innovative products, services, processes, and business models in a controlled environment, said a press release issued here.

SECP had earlier last year issued the Regulatory Sandbox Guidelines 2019. Under second cohort, the application window will be open from April 15, till May 14, for all eligible persons including registered companies, unregistered startups and FinTech firms.

The unregistered entities would have to get registered upon successful experiment. The application form, eligibility criteria and relat-

ed documents are provided in the Regulatory Sandbox Guidelines placed at SECP's website and can be accessed at <https://www.secp.gov.pk/document/secp-regulatory-sandbox-guidelines-2019/?wpdmdl=37476>. The Commission has formed a six-member committee, headed by Chairman SECP Aamir Khan to evaluate the applications.

In the second cohort preference will be given to innovation in the areas of Digital Assets/Security Token Offerings (STOs), Non-Bank Financial Companies, Blockchain/ Distributed Ledger Solutions for Capital Markets, Digital Identity/AML/KYC, Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning and Robotic Processes Automation based solutions.

Female entrepreneurs are highly encouraged to apply. All the applications will undergo preliminary screening and detailed evaluation. Successful applicants will be allowed to test and experiment their innovative ideas and solutions for a period of six months.

## Raid at 'Walima'; FIR lodged on violation

MEHMOOD ABDULLAH

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi District Administration has lodged a FIR against father of the groom on violation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) issued by the Punjab government to contain spread of coronavirus. According to a district administration spokesman, Assistant Commissioner (AC) Saddar Rawalpindi Mehar Ghulam Abbas conducted a raid at a 'Walima' in the jurisdiction of Chontra Police Station and lodged a FIR against father of the groom on violation of the SOPs. The AC said that Rawalpindi district administration officers under their ongoing campaign launched to check implementation of coronavirus SOPs were inspecting mosques and madaras besides conducting raids at public transport vehicles. He said, the public parks were also being inspected and fines were imposed on those who breached the SOPs. The shopping malls, markets and plazas were regularly being checked under efforts being made by the administration to contain spread of coronavirus. The marriage halls and restaurants on violation of the SOPs were being sealed, he added. He informed that the provincial government had imposed a complete ban on marriages in wedding halls due to rise in coronavirus cases.

He urged the citizens to adopt all possible precautionary measures and follow the SOPs which would help curtail the number of patients. The restrictions were placed under the Punjab Infectious Diseases (Prevention and Control) Act 2020, he added.

## Hospital's capacity to be enhanced

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Deputy Commissioner Capt. (Retd) Anwar ul Haq Tuesday said the efforts were being made to enhance the capacity of hospitals in the district as the country has been experiencing the premier levels of COVID-19 cases since start of the pandemic.

During a visit to Corona vaccination center here at Sports complex, Shamasaad to inspect the facilities, he said the district administration was taking steps to manage the increasing number of C patients reaching the hospitals.

Anwar said the prevailing third wave of coronavirus was more dangerous as compared to previous ones as a large number of deaths and cases were being reported on a daily basis.

He informed that 23 vaccination centers have been set up in the district where inoculation drive to jab senior citizens and front line health workers in full swing. The DC warned that any violations of COVID-19 SOPs would not be allowed at any cost.

He asked the business community to strictly follow standard operating procedures (SOPs) related to business activities to ensure safe working conditions and observe the timings related to the businesses and closed their shops at 6:00 p.m. as directed by the provincial government.

## Distt admin seals 20 commercial centers

RAWALPINDI: District Administration Rawalpindi on the directives of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rawalpindi Anwar-ul-Haq has accelerated its ongoing operation against coronavirus Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) violators and conducted raids at commercial centers including shopping malls, markets, plazas and others and sealed 20 besides imposing fines amounting to Rs 52,500 on the violators.

According to a district administration spokesman, the district officers raided at several points to check implementation of SOPs and imposed fines on the violators. He said, Public Service Vehicles (PSVs) were also inspected during last 24 hours and 22 vehicles were impounded from different routes while Rs 32,000 fines were imposed on the violators. – APP

## Introductory meeting with heads of CAIR, Azerbaijan

Chairman CAIR spoke about Azerbaijan's presidency of the Non-Alignment Movement and concerns over the distribution of COVID-19 vaccine. He thanked Pakistan for its principled stance on Nagorno-Karabakh and its illegal occupation by Armenia

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Center for Strategic Perspectives (CSP) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) held an introductory virtual meeting with Dr. Farid Shafiyev, Chairman, Center of Analysis of International Relations (CAIR), Baku, Azerbaijan on April 6, 2021. Members of CAIR who also joined the meeting included: Dr. Esmira Jafarova, Deputy Chairman; Dr. Javid Valiyev, Head of Department; Fuad Chiragov, Head of Department; and Dr. Vasif Huseynov, senior advisor.

DG ISSI, Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry briefed the members of CAIR on the work being done by ISSI and its five centres of excellence. Introducing CAIR,



Chairman CAIR, Dr. Farid Shafiyev said that it is a very young Centre affiliated with the government and covers issues of national, regional and global concern. Briefing CAIR on the global and

regional issues, DG ISSI spoke about the new emerging world order in the post-Cold War era and intensifying major power competition, particularly between US and China. He especially talked about

Washington's "Contain China" policy, QUAD, and India's growing interests in it which, in his view, is making regional peace precarious. He briefed CAIR on Pakistan's relations with its neighbours includ-

ing India and the growing Hinduva mindset, peace in Afghanistan, relations with Iran and China and the Muslim World including Turkey. Chairman CAIR spoke about Azerbaijan's presidency of the Non-Alignment Movement and concerns over the distribution of COVID-19 vaccine.

He thanked Pakistan for its principled stance on Nagorno-Karabakh and its illegal occupation by Armenia. DG ISSI thanked Azerbaijan for its support to Pakistan on the issue of Kashmir.

Both DG ISSI and Chairman CAIR agreed that Islamabad-Baku ties are thriving and sustainable. The meeting ended with a suggestion by Dr. Farid Shafiyev to arrange a trilateral think tank meeting between Pakistan, Azerbaijan, and Turkey.



## Direct contact

IMRAN Khan's regular telephonic conversations with citizens is a great initiative. The phone call scheme makes the Prime Minister (PM) accessible to anyone, provided they get a chance. The phone calls in the recent sessions show that the conversation between the PM and ordinary folks was organic and uncensored. Such a scheme is not something usual to see with the head of government and other representatives.

A recurring theme in the conversations was the rapid rise in prices and uncontrolled inflation. These two issues have been the common criticisms against the government's performance so far in any case. However, what was slightly disappointing was that the answers that the PM gave might increase hope, but offered little tangible in the way of policy strategies.

It would have served the government well if it had chosen this opportunity to announce some concrete measures against the rising inflation and the expected hoarding in Ramzan. Crackdown on the mafias the PM was speaking about are sorely needed; and as the ruling party, it is PTI's responsibility to alleviate these issues. The inflation in March edged up to 9.1 percent from 8.7 percent in February, according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). Increasing inflation, despite the government's continuous claims to control it by one means or another, is making it difficult for people to buy even basic commodities.

While the PM wanted to satisfy the callers with positive macroeconomics indicators, the public is looking for some hardcore action from the government to control inflation. We must wait and see whether the PM's stern words will translate into action on the ground. However, all the indications hint that this Ramazan might be another one, where the prices of essential food items will skyrocket.

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## Halt in development

DESPITE statements proclaiming all developmental projects are 'headed towards completion on a fast pace' by the Minister for Planning and Development, Asad Umar, there seems to be a major halt on account of the government's failure to release funds. Not only is this going to jeopardise the prospects of infrastructural development but it will cause a major hold up in all four provinces.

Projects under the National Highway Authority (NHA) were promised a budget of Rs.119 billion, out of which they have only received 30 percent. Considering the sheer number of projects and their size, and that some are part of CPEC initiatives as well, the amount released is not going to be sufficient.

Large-scale development projects require an equally large pool of finances if all materials are to be bought, workers to be hired, permits to be obtained, expertise to be consulted, so on and so forth. Without funds, progress either becomes unbearably slow or contractors revert to a policy of complete abandonment. The problem is exacerbated further by the fact that recent non-payment reports for the last three months have already agitated contractors and have contributed towards causing a delay already. At this point, there is only so much that can be condoned by the authorities.

There is no doubt that such developmental projects are a necessity for Pakistan. In light of this fact, it is imperative to understand that fund burnout rate is a key component that can either make or break development projects, both in the private and public sector. It is the responsibility of the government to ensure that a steady rate is maintained in regards to investing and releasing finances so that projects can be completed in their entirety without unnecessary costs brought about by delay.

# Evaluation of vigilant Uzbek role in Afghanistan

**Khalid Taimur Akram**



**War in Afghanistan has been going on for almost two decades now. With the end of this war, peace building process for Afghanistan's future stability and socio-economic rebuilding must be implemented**

IT is generally believed that every country in the world has some potential to achieve respectable status among nations' comity. However, only a few of these countries find leaders who possess the far-sightedness and prudence to steer their nations through tumultuous waters of scathing hardships and challenges to ensure a prosperous future for them. In the 21st century, the rise of Uzbekistan's potential role both within and outside the Central Asian block has been witnessed due to the remarkable efforts of incumbent Uzbek President ShavkatMirziyoyev. The implementation of Uzbek-led inclusive development projects in Afghanistan and the receipt of economic benefits from them will increase the interest of all the participants in the inter-Afghan conflict and external forces in a peaceful settlement of the Afghan crisis. And with financial benefits, it will be realized that trading is much more profitable than fighting. A regional consensus built on this truth will be far stronger than any political agreement or geopolitical deal. Therefore, by supporting the establishment of Afghanistan

as a bridge connecting Central and South Asia, Uzbekistan is solving not only socio-economic and transport-communication problems, but also making a significant contribution to ensuring regional security and stability of these regions. In this aspect, the paper elaborates President ShavkatMirziyoyev's unprecedented rise to the helm of political affairs in Uzbekistan. Moreover, this study highlights Uzbekistan's substantial role and efforts in the Afghan peace process and socio-economic reconstruction of the country.

**Uzbekistan's Foreign Policy Changes under President ShavkatMirziyoyev:**

Under former Uzbek President Islam Karimov, Uzbekistan was committed to remaining neutral in its foreign relations under its multi-vector policy of keeping a strategic equilibrium within the region. However, more proactive and vigilant interest in seeking positive regional influence and conducting international peace activities by President ShavkatMirziyoyev has enabled the state to become a key regional player. There are various reasons which have accelerated this change in the approach of Uzbekistan's leadership. Any country's realistic economic goals cannot be achieved unless that country forms strong socio-economic alliances with the dominant countries in its region vis-vis economic development. To achieve this objective, Uzbekistan has significantly improved its relations with Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. In this regard, the current Uzbek government has signed agreements to amicably resolve its border disputes with these countries to enhance trade activities with them. Moreover, President ShavkatMirziyoyev has met leaders of many important countries in the region during recent years. These meetings' primary objective was to ensure lasting peace and stability for increasing multilateral economic activities in this region, especially in Afghanistan. In this aspect, Uzbekistan's active role under the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) umbrella cannot be overlooked as well. Uzbekistan's growing energy requirements and need for strong strategic allies have also played an important role in easing of relations with important regional powers. During Russian President Vladimir Putin's state visit in 2018, multiple contracts were signed for economic projects. The projects worth US\$27 billion, including an agreement to build the first civil nuclear power station in Central Asia. President ShavkatMirziyoyev has actively participated in the Chinese-led Shanghai Cooperation Organization's various activities for region's socio-economic prosperity. On the bilateral front, both countries are tirelessly working to restore economic growth in the coming years. In this context, significant efforts are being held to increase trade, build new industrial cooperation chains and diversify cargo transportation routes through the efficacious Belt and Road initiative (BRI).

**Afghanistan's Peace Building Process: Role of Uzbek Leadership:**

According to many experts, Peace in Afghanistan is one of the most important priorities in Uzbekistan's foreign policy. The country's will for establishing peace in Afghanistan

through its allies is based on its willingness to increase trade and desire to stop the spilling over of religious and ethnic extremism and rampant drug trafficking in Afghanistan. The Uzbekistan government's constant efforts for erasing the mistrust between Afghanistan's neighboring countries has become a reality in recent years. A new political atmosphere based on mutual trust and cooperation has been seen between previously contradicting neighboring states. For ensuring lasting peace in Afghanistan, it has formed relations with all the major stakeholders involved in the complicated Afghan conflict. Moreover, the incumbent leadership has also allowed increasing people-to-people connections, trans-regional trade-commerce, and joint peacemaking efforts for assimilating the Afghan government and people. Uzbekistan's government has rightly felt the need to have a peaceful approach so that economic and political prosperity goals with wider regional connectivity can become a reality. All these assertions were masterfully described by Uzbekistan's Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdullaziz Kamilov when he said: "Don't forget that we have a common border with Afghanistan. We have centuries-old history and the destinies of our people are closely intertwined. As President ShavkatMirziyoyev has noted, for over a span of millennia the people of Uzbekistan and Afghanistan developed in one cultural and civilization space." And how cannot we be interested in soonest recovery of normal life there?" Furthermore, Uzbekistan's contribution to peace in Afghanistan has greatly improved its image in the nations' comity. Under the visionary and incumbent leadership, the country is becoming a more active member of the international community. Its prudent involvement in peacekeeping in Afghanistan has been appreciated worldwide.

**President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's Plans for Afghanistan's Reconstruction:** War in Afghanistan has been going on for almost two decades now. With the end of this war, peace building process for Afghanistan's future stability and socio-economic rebuilding must be implemented. For doing so, the agreement for the peaceful transition of power was signed between the USA and Taliban on 28th February. The accord should be implemented in its letter and spirit and all the important regional countries' support. Uzbekistan, as a main regional player, can facilitate Afghanistan's integration into Central Asian diplomatic frameworks. The Tashkent Conference held in March 2018, and other such activities, represented this country as a credible regional consensus builder. After fighting in Afghanistan for almost two decades, the USA is pinning its hopes on Uzbekistan and Pakistan to keep the war-torn country stable in the future. Uzbek President ShavkatMirziyoyev has played a dynamic role for supporting the cause of Afghanistan's socio-economic reconstruction. During recent years, the country has established and strengthened bilateral ties. Moreover, it has facilitated Afghan interests in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as

well. During President's recent speech at the SCO video-conference summit, he said:

".....we are in favor of the soonest possible elaboration and adoption of a plan of practical actions to assist the social and economic reconstruction of Afghanistan within the framework of the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group. New prospects for all SCO countries are opening up through the initiatives of transport corridors that would help restore Afghanistan to its historic role as a bridge connecting the Central and South Asia." Moreover, Uzbekistan's share in Afghanistan's foreign trade has increased up to 7.4% in recent years. Likewise, the share of Afghanistan has gone up to 1.5%. However, according to President ShavkatMirziyoyev, this is not enough, and there is still a huge unused economic potential between both countries. In this context, it has been targeted that the indicators of mutual trade between both states should be increased up to 2 billion dollars by 2023. The adoption of such plans has already begun as the trading houses, and free trade zones in Afghanistan are being constructed using modern technologies and infrastructure development techniques.

**Conclusion:** Uzbekistan has played a constructive and positive role in this regard so far. The country has initiated and conducted many initiatives for bringing durable peace in Afghanistan by collaborating with various stakeholders like Pakistan. Furthermore, Uzbekistan's efforts for the socio-economic reconstruction of Afghanistan are praiseworthy. To continue the mission of achieving durable peace in Afghanistan, the other countries willing to step up for this cause must take guidance from President ShavkatMirziyoyev's policies which have proved to be highly effective in pursuance of this goal.

In general, by promoting socio-economic, energy, transport and communication projects in the neighboring country, involving it in regional trade and economic ties, Uzbekistan seeks to promote the transformation of Afghanistan into a link between Central and South Asia, a space of mutually beneficial interregional cooperation, and not military confrontation. The country believes that the prospects for obtaining economic benefits from the projects will strengthen the interest of both the intra-Afghan conflict participants and external forces in the peaceful settlement of the Afghan crisis and the early stabilization of the situation. The implementation of such projects can create a completely new reality for the development of the countries of Central and South Asia, and remove the international community's heavy burden of responsibility for maintaining security in the region. Ultimately, not only Uzbekistan and the Central Asian region but also the entire international community will benefit from the development and reconstruction of Afghanistan.

— *The writer is Executive Director, Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad*

# The Biden's world leaders summit on climate

**Munir Ahmed**



**The Summit will reconvene the US-led Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate, which brings together 17 countries responsible for approximately 80 percent of global emissions and global GDP. The President also invited the heads of other countries that are demonstrating strong climate leadership, are especially vulnerable to climate impacts**

PRESIDENT Joe Biden has invited 40 world leaders to the 'Leaders Summit on Climate'. The two-day conference will start on 22 April – the Earth Day, and will come ahead of a major UN meeting on the crisis, scheduled for November in Glasgow, Scotland. The conference will be entirely online due to the coronavirus pandemic, and will be live streamed for public viewing. Some of the top leaders including President Xi Jinping and President Putin have been invited. Some of the most climate vulnerable countries from Asia and Africa have also been on the list of invitees. Bangladesh, Bhutan and India are from South Asia. Exclusion of Pakistan from Biden's list of invitees is a clear denial of Pakistan's vulnerability to the climate crisis. It may also be termed as the failure of Pakistan's balance of diplomacy in the recent years – the most vulnerable turn in 73 years of diplomatic relation between the US and Pakistan. A point to ponder for Pakistan to urgently review the diplomacy tracks and to take remedial steps accordingly to balance the sides. Pakistan is no longer on the priority list of the US for many years now but we had seen no tangible efforts by the country's foreign office to address the challenges. Same is the case with other long-standing friends. Pakistan has to take note of this alarming diplomacy deficit that could turn to be more vulnerable than the climate vulnerabilities the country is already confronting. Coming back to Biden's very important climate event that has given a hope to the Paris Agreement again. By organizing the 'Leaders Summit on Climate', the President Biden has shown his sincere commitment to taking up the climate vulnerabilities to calamities. The president kept his campaign pledge to rejoin the Paris climate agreement on his first day in the White House, after Trump pulled the US out of the deal after he was sworn in. The return of the world's largest economy and sec-

ond-largest emitter of carbon dioxide became effective on 19 February and means almost all countries are now parties to the agreement signed in 2015.

President Biden took action on his first day in office to return the United States to the Paris Agreement. Days later, on January 27, he announced that he would soon convene a leaders' summit to galvanize efforts by the major economies to tackle the climate crisis. The Leaders Summit on Climate will underscore the urgency – and the economic benefits – of stronger climate action. It will be a key milestone on the road to the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) this November in Glasgow.

In recent years, scientists have underscored the need to limit planetary warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius in order to stave off the worst impacts of climate change. A key goal of both the Leaders Summit and COP26 will be to catalyze efforts that keep that 1.5-degree goal within reach. The Summit will also highlight examples of how enhanced climate ambition will create good paying jobs, advance innovative technologies, and help vulnerable countries adapt to climate impacts.

By the time of the Summit, the United States will announce an ambitious 2030 emissions target as its new Nationally Determined Contribution under the Paris Agreement. In his invitation, the President urged leaders to use the Summit as an opportunity to outline how their countries also will contribute to stronger climate ambition. The Summit will reconvene the U.S.-led Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate, which brings together 17 countries responsible for approximately 80 percent of global emissions and global GDP. The President also invited the heads of other countries that are demonstrating strong climate leadership, are especially vulnerable to climate impacts, or are charting innovative pathways to a net-zero economy. A small num-

ber of business and civil society leaders will also participate in the Summit.

Key themes of the Summit will include galvanizing efforts by the world's major economies to reduce emissions during this critical decade to keep a limit to warming of 1.5 degree Celsius within reach. Mobilizing public and private sector finance to drive the net-zero transition and to help vulnerable countries cope with climate impacts. The economic benefits of climate action, with a strong emphasis on job creation, and the importance of ensuring all communities and workers benefit from the transition to a new clean energy economy. Spurring transformational technologies that can help reduce emissions and adapt to climate change, while also creating enormous new economic opportunities and building the industries of the future. Showcasing subnational and non-state actors that are committed to green recovery and an equitable vision for limiting warming to 1.5 degree Celsius, and are working closely with national governments to advance ambition and resilience.

Discussing opportunities to strengthen capacity to protect lives and livelihoods from the impacts of climate change, address the global security challenges posed by climate change and the impact on readiness, and address the role of nature-based solutions in achieving net zero by 2050 goals. Convincingly, a positive step of President Biden towards realization of the urgency of addressing the emergency on planet earth if facing right at the moment. Getting the world leaders together before the 26th Conference of Parties in Glasgow in the coming November may deliver a phenomenal outcome.

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## Briefs

## Israeli troops kill Palestinian

WEB DESK

JERUSALEM: Israeli soldiers have shot dead a Palestinian motorist who they said tried to ram them at a checkpoint in the occupied West Bank – an account disputed by his wife who was with him in the car. The Palestinian health ministry said the man, identified as 42-year-old Osama Mansour, was killed on Tuesday and his wife sustained bullet fragment wounds. The military statement said no troops were hurt in the early morning incident. “They told us to stop the car and we stopped and turned it off,” the man’s wife, Sumaya Mansour, 35, told Palestine TV.

## PML-N, JUI-F...

From Page 01

However, Hoti said the party had made a wrong decision (supporting Yousuf Raza Gilani for Opposition leader in Senate). Haideri warned ANP it had made a “blatant” mistake after blaming PDM chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman for lacking leadership. “ANP should not have blamed Fazlur Rehman.” Similarly, PML-N spokesperson Marriyum Aurangzeb said ANP had made several sacrifices for the cause of democracy, as she expressed sorrow over their departure. However, she said PPP’s decision to get their member elected as the Opposition leader in Senate was against the PDM’s September 20 Charter – as they got support from treasury benches, and ANP backed them. However, Aurangzeb reminded that the PDM had decided the Opposition leader would be from PML-N. “If Gilani would have come back to PDM after his loss as Senate chairman ..., then Nawaz Sharif would not have turned down his request to become the Opposition leader.”

## Further split in PDM...

From Page 01

PDM chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman and General-Secretary Shahid Khaqan Abbasi that they would take decisions in their capacity as leaders of the alliance, not as members of the JUI-F and PML-N. “We know why they have given us the show-cause notice [...] [Shahid Khaqan] Abbasi, [Shah Owais Ahmed] Noorani, and [Abdul Ghafoor] Haideri came to my home and we already provided them a clarification. “For them to issue a show-cause notice nonetheless, can mean only one thing: they wish to harm our reputation,” Hoti said. The ANP leader said that such a move “makes it very clear” that “two or three parties” wish to take the lead in all decision making. “They consider ANP and PPP as obstacles in their way,” he added. Hoti said that the party feels as if they have been “pushed against the wall.” “A leader’s position is not one to be used to attack in such a manner,” he said, referring to Fazlur Rehman. “A leader gives everyone a chance and tries to resolve all differences between parties of an alliance,” Hoti added.

## Pak crosses 1m vaccine...

From Page 01

Total number of people registered so far is now over two million. 600,000 health care workers and more than 1.4 million 50 plus. Please register if you are 50 plus,” Umar said in his tweet. In another tweet, he said that increased restrictions, broader lockdowns and stronger enforcement of standard operating procedures (SOPs) are starting to have an effect. “Initial signs of positivity slowing. However, due to momentum of last two weeks patients on critical care & mortality will stay at high levels for some time. Please follow SOPs & be safe,” he said. Pakistan reported 3,953 coronavirus cases on April 5 with a positivity ratio of 8.4%, according to the latest stats provided by the National Command and Operation Centre.



AGDAM: Japanese ambassador to Azerbaijan Junichi Wada along with delegation visits liberated city of Karabakh. – DNA

## Japan to help Azerbaijan to rehabilitate Karabakh

Japanese ambassador Junichi Wada said that artesian wells were drilled in Aghdam region’s Hindiristan and Chullu villages within the grant assistance program being implemented by the Japanese government

DNA

TOKYO: Japanese ambassador Junichi Wada Japan has said his country is ready to support the restoration of Azerbaijani territories liberated from Armenia’s occupation in a 44-day war in 2020. Wada made the remarks in the opening ceremony of a kindergarten in Azerbaijan’s Aghdam district. The ambassador said that artesian wells were drilled in Aghdam region’s Hindiristan and Chullu villages within the grant assistance program being implemented by the Japanese government. “As a result of the implementation of this project, there is no need for residents of both villages to go to neighbouring villages to get water or buy it at a high price, which made me very happy. I hope that the inhabitants of these villages will carefully use the new artesian wells for them to serve the population for a long time,” the ambassador said. After Azerbaijan gained independ-

## OIC reps voice support for Azerbaijan

BAKU: Visiting officials from the Organization of Islamic Cooperation have expressed their support for Azerbaijan’s efforts to rehabilitate Karabakh liberated from Armenia’s occupation in a 44-day war in 2020. The permanent representatives of the OIC Contact Group on Armenia’s aggression against Azerbaijan have been on a visit to Azerbaijan since April 5. The visit is aimed at getting acquainted with the consequences of Armenia’s war crimes in Aghdam region and Ganja city. Permanent representative of OIC delegation Rizwan Saeed Sheikh said that OIC has all along offered political support to Azerbaijan in its struggle against Armenia. “We have seen the devastation caused by the Armenian aggression,” he said. He made the remarks in an interview with journalists on April 6 during his fact-finding visit to Aghdam region. Rizwan Saeed Sheikh said that the members of the contact group are going to call on the next meeting of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM), the OIC countries to participate in the reconstruction and the economic well-being of this territory. The official added that along with OIC, Pakistan also has always offered its unconditional support to Azerbaijan in this aggression, also during the 44-day war. “As a Pakistani, as a member of the delegation, I congratulate you on the successes that you have accomplished in the war. We hope that now the peace has been restored and...and rehabilitation will take place,” he added. OIC Assistant Secretary-General Ahmad Kawesa Sengendo once again reiterated the support of all OIC member states for Azerbaijan. “The OIC supports Azerbaijan’s right to liberate its territories. Our organization demonstrates a decisive position on this issue,” he said. Another OIC Assistance Secretary-General Ahmad Ssenyomo stressed that OIC clearly stands for Azerbaijan’s right to liberate lands through international resolutions. – DNA

## Iran, Pakistan hold joint naval drill in Persian Gulf

DNA

TEHRAN: Iran staged a joint naval drill with Pakistan on Tuesday in the waters of the Persian Gulf amid tensions between Tehran and Washington. Iranian officials said the exercise aims at bolstering combat capabilities of the naval forces of the two countries and sharing information and expertise. “The exercise sought to

demonstrate naval prowess and ensure closer coordination between the two sides,” said Captain Reza Sheibani, a senior Iranian Navy officer. “It also sought to establish dynamic interaction to create lasting peace and security in the region.” The annual naval exercise is part of a MoU between the two countries and had been halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic last year. The drill saw the participation of an Iranian destroyer, a mis-

sile-launching vessel and a helicopter apart from logistics units, Sheibani said. Maritime transfers and a passing exercise meant to streamline communication and cooperation in the event of war or humanitarian crisis were also part of the exercise, he added. The latest exercise comes two months after the Iranian Navy took part in the Aman-21 international naval exercise in Karachi as an observer Pakistan’s Navy had

staged one of the largest naval exercises in the Arabian Sea that saw the participation of 45 countries, including the US, China and Russia. Iran has been involved in multiple military exercises in the Persian Gulf recently with the participation of regional countries, including Pakistan, Russia and China. The exercises came amid escalating tensions between Tehran and Washington over Iran’s nuclear program.



WOLVERHAMPTON: Players of Wolverhampton Wanderers F.C. and West Ham United F.C. vying each other during the Premier League match in Molineux Stadium. – DNA

## Confident for our bowlers to make comeback: Misbah

DNA

CENTURION: Head coach Misbah-ul-Haq is confident that his bowlers will make comeback in the ODI series against South Africa on April 7. Speaking in a video released by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), Misbah said their bowlers were a bit rusty in the second ODI but they still controlled on the pitched like South Africa.

“Such bouncy pitches are not easy to bowl on but our bowlers tried to control. I am confident that they will make comeback in the third game,” he said. Misbah said the team’s environment is

good and players are looking forward to winning the series. “Our team is combined of young and experienced players. Players are pumped up and looking forward to winning the series,” he highlighted.

While concluding the statement, Misbah said that they will make changes if they feel any need. “We need a middle-order batsman to make our combination strong. We are looking at Shadab’s replacement too. We will make changes if we feel the need,” he mentioned. It must be noted here that Pakistan and South Africa held three-matches ODI series 1-1. The third and final ODI will be played here on April 7.

## Italian PM calls for strict observance of truce in Libya

ROME: Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi on Tuesday called for ensuring the strict observance of the cease-fire in Libya. After meeting Libya’s interim Prime Minister Abdulhamid Dbeibeh on his first trip abroad, the Italian premier said they had addressed migration and economic cooperation between the two countries. “Being able to proceed with courage and decisiveness it is a prerequisite that the cease-fire must continue and be strictly observed,” Draghi said at a joint press conference with Dbeibeh. Dbeibeh’s new UN-backed unity government was installed last month with a mandate to prepare the country for a national election in December. Draghi stressed that migration is not only a geopolitical issue, but also a humanitarian one. He also reminded that the problem involved not only the Libyan coasts but also its southern borders. – DNA

## Classes 9 to 12 to resume...

From Page 01

The second topic of discussion was the schedule for exams, he said, adding that this included exams for grade 9, 10 and 11 as well as those for O and A levels. “During today’s meeting it was decided that classes for grade 1 to 8 will not be held in districts that are affected and this will go on till April 28.” For example, the Punjab education minister informed the meeting that he has 13 districts that have been affected, he said. Therefore, in these 13 districts classes for grade 1 to 8 will not require the physical presence of students, he said. “The provinces will decide which areas are the most affected and where this will be implemented,” the minister said, adding this decision will be reviewed again on April 28. He also said that classes for grade 9, 10, 11 and 12 will be allowed to resume from April 19 with strict standard operating procedures (SOPs). “This means that classes will also resume in affected districts in a staggered manner so that students can complete their lessons and be prepared for their examinations.” Commenting on upcoming examinations, the minister said that approximately 40 lakh students across the country give the board exams. “It was decided that exams for grade 9, 10, 11 and 12 will be held, but because they are our own they will be pushed to the third week of May.” He added that the date sheet announced by Punjab would also be revised so that the coronavirus situation is under control and children have time to prepare. “All provinces and boards have given separate timetables. But nothing will happen before May 24.” Regarding A and O level examinations, the minister said that approximately 85,000 students will sit for the exams.

## Pakistan to welcome Russian...

From Page 01

Pakistan after nine years reflected a “new and positive dimension” of bilateral relations. He said the talks would focus on strengthening economic, trade and defence ties. Qureshi said Pakistan and Russia were ready to co-operate with each other as their bilateral relations improved with time. He said Russia was an important country in the region and expressed confidence that the talks would yield good results in fortifying bilateral ties. He said both countries wanted to carry out work on North-South gas pipeline project. He recalled that during the flour crisis in Pakistan, Russia ensured supply of wheat so as to help stabilize the price of the commodity. Qureshi said Pakistan and Russia were working together in the Afghan peace process. The Russian foreign minister could persuade India to play a positive role in bringing peace to Afghanistan. He said the Russian foreign minister would meet Prime Minister Imran Khan and army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa would also participate in delegation-level talks at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

## Pakistan to approach IMF...

From Page 01

These dimensions have been captured both at the national and provincial levels, exploring inequality between and within Pakistan’s provinces. In addition, inequality has been measured from the perspective of people focusing on children, labour, youth, and women. The report takes a comprehensive approach, exploring not just economic measures such as income and wealth, but also studying inequalities in human development – the true measure of a country’s success. The prime minister said Pakistan was having a very scary third wave than the first one. He said in the United States with a population of 330 million, around \$4 trillion were given out to COVID-hit people contrary to Pakistan which distributed just \$8 billion among a population of 220 million. “So I think, this is time for second package and we will obviously talk to IMF,” the prime minister said.

## NATO membership only way to end Donbass war

Russia is openly opposed to Ukraine joining NATO and recently warned the alliance against deploying troops to Ukraine. “We very much doubt that this will help Ukraine settle its domestic problem,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters

DNA

KIEV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has urged NATO to speed up his country’s membership plan, saying it is the only way to end a simmering conflict in the eastern Donbass region. Ukrainian government troops have battled Russian-backed separatists in the country’s eastern Donetsk and Lugansk regions, which form part of the Donbass, since the rebels seized a swathe of territory there in April 2014. A ceasefire was agreed to last July, but fears of an escalation in hostilities have mounted in recent weeks amid reports of renewed front-line clashes and a Russian military

build-up along the shared border. Speaking on Tuesday after a phone call with NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg, Zelenskyy said a signal needed to be sent to Russia as tensions grow between the pair. He called on members of NATO, which counts Ukraine as an ally, to strengthen their military presence in the Black Sea region. Zelenskyy said such a move would act as a “powerful deterrent” to Russia, which annexed Ukraine’s southern Crimean peninsula in March 2014 after an uprising that toppled former Kremlin-friendly President Viktor Yanukovich. “Reforms alone will not stop Russia,” he said. “NATO is the only way to end the war in Donbass.” Stoltenberg said he had expressed

“serious concern about Russia’s military activities in and around Ukraine” during the call with Zelenskyy. “NATO firmly supports Ukraine’s sovereignty & territorial integrity. We remain committed to our close partnership,” he tweeted. Shortly afterward, Moscow, which denies being a participant in the conflict, warned that Ukraine’s NATO membership would “worsen the situation” in the Donbass region. Russia is openly opposed to Ukraine joining NATO and recently warned the alliance against deploying troops to Ukraine. “We very much doubt that this will help Ukraine settle its domestic problem,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

Peskov also claimed that Ukrainians living in the country’s east do not back NATO membership. Also on Monday, the United States and United Kingdom said they were “concerned” about Russia’s recent military activity along its border with Ukraine. The US Department of State said it found reports of troop movements in the eastern border region to be “credible”, adding it had asked Moscow to explain the “provocations”. The US has been Kyiv’s most powerful ally since Russia’s annexation of Crimea. State Department spokesman Ned Price told reporters that Washington would be concerned by any effort by Moscow to intimidate Ukraine, whether it occurred on

Russian territory or within Ukraine. He declined to say if the US believed Russia was preparing to invade the former Soviet republic. Price’s comments followed a telephone call on Friday in which US President Joe Biden reassured Zelenskyy of his “unwavering support”. UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson also spoke with Zelenskyy on Monday and expressed his support for Ukraine’s “sovereignty and territorial integrity”, according to his spokesperson. “They discussed the UK’s significant concerns about the recent Russian military activity on Ukraine’s border and in illegally annexed Crimea,” Johnson’s spokesperson said. The Kremlin last week said that Russia was at liberty to move troops on its own territory.



## Briefs

Vietnam's  
Nguyen  
sworn in as  
president

## FOREIGN DESK

HANOI: The man behind Vietnam's successful handling of the coronavirus pandemic, Nguyen Xuan Phuc, was formally sworn in as president in Hanoi.

Phuc, 66, was Vietnam's prime minister for the last five years, a period in which the economy boomed, and his government's Covid-19 response won plaudits at home and abroad.

Following secret voting on Monday, Phuc scored the maximum votes among the almost 500-member rubber-stamp national assembly. "This is his well-deserved award," said Nguyen Khac Giang, a Vietnamese politics expert from New Zealand's Victoria University of Wellington. Authoritarian Vietnam is run by the Communist Party and officially led by the party general secretary, president, and prime minister, with key decisions made by the 18-member politburo.

Vietnam is in the midst of its twice-a-decade leadership transition, with 76-year-old Nguyen Phu Trong re-elected in January as party general secretary, the most important of the three roles. Phuc was the only candidate nominated for president, as Trong, who had held the presidency since 2018 after the sudden death of his predecessor, stepped down. The National Assembly said earlier this was "the first time ever a prime minister was nominated to the position of the president".

Bangladesh  
protest over  
Covid curbs  
turns violent

## FOREIGN DESK

DHAKA: A protest over police enforcement of coronavirus restrictions in rural Bangladesh turned violent when a mob of demonstrators attacked a police station, resulting in at least three people being shot, police and a doctor said. The incident took place late on Monday in the central town of Saltha in the Faridpur district where, according to the police, rumours had spread about a man being injured in a police sweep of a market aimed at enforcing health measures to curb the spread of COVID.

Thousands of villagers took to the streets in anger. A group of them hurled bricks at a police station and vandalised government offices in the town, torching an officer's home and two cars belonging to government officials, police said. "Police fired in self-defence after they attacked the police station," a police spokesman in Faridpur district told AFP news agency. A second police official, Inspector Nura-Alam Fakir, confirmed the incident. Police did not give any casualty figures, but Abdul Matin, a doctor at the emergency ward of the state-run Faridpur Medical College Hospital, said three people were in critical condition after suffering gunshot wounds.

Turkish  
FM meets  
UNGA head

## WEB DESK

ISTANBUL: Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu on Tuesday met with Volkan Bozkir, the Turkish diplomat currently heading the UN General Assembly, in the capital Ankara.

"Met w/ @volkan\_bozkir who pays his 1st official visit to Turkey as President of 75th @UN General Assembly. Under his leadership UNGA works uninterrupted despite pandemic," Cavusoglu said on Twitter. "Our leading role in UN & our support to Amb. Bozkir will continue. - Will make Istanbul UN hub," Cavusoglu added. Earlier on Tuesday, Bozkir visited Anitkabir, the mausoleum of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founder of the Republic of Turkey. On Monday, Bozkir arrived in Ankara to start his official visit. He is expected to meet with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Parliament Speaker Mustafa Sentop and later address the Turkish parliament. This Saturday, Bozkir is set to visit Turkey's southern province of Hatay, on the Syrian frontier, where he will see UN cross-border aid operations and inspect temporary shelter facilities.



HANOI: Samina Mehtab, ambassador of Pakistan to Vietnam was received by the Director General of State Protocol of Vietnam. She presented a copy of her credentials to the Director General, State Protocol. – DNA

## China provides machinery for increasing cotton production

"Cotton and textiles account for 8 per cent of Pakistan's economy and we must all work together to strengthen Pakistan's economy"

## DNA

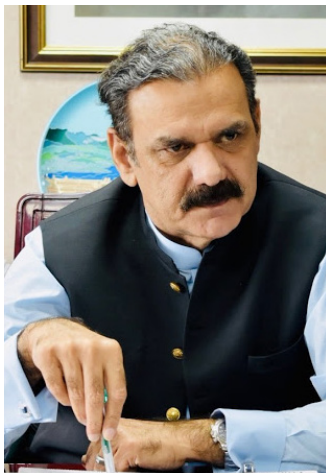
ISLAMABAD: Chairman China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Authority Lt. General Asim Saleem Bajwa (ret'd) said that Iron Brother China is providing research and machinery assistance to Pakistan for increasing cotton production. According to Gwadar Pro, the Chairman CPEC Authority, Minister for Agriculture Syed Hasnain Jahanian Gardezi, and others participated in a meeting, chaired by Governor Punjab Chaudhry Muhammad Sarwar. Addressing the meeting, Bajwa said the CPEC Authority was keen on facilitating farmers by

assisting in various sectors.

"Cotton and textiles account for 8pc of Pakistan's economy and we must all work together to strengthen Pakistan's economy," he added.

The Agricultural Committee headed by Governor Chaudhry Muhammad Sarwar recommended increasing the per 40 kilograms price of cotton to Rs 5,000 and providing direct subsidy to cotton farmers. The Committee's meeting discussed the problems faced by cotton farmers and their solutions including providing relief to the farmers.

Federal Minister for National Food and Research Syed Fakhr Imam joined the meeting via vid-



eo link. Addressing the meeting, Gov-

ernor Muhammad Sarwar said that an effective policy and integrated strategy is needed to increase cotton production.

He welcomed the decision of the federal government not to import cotton from India and added that to encourage cotton growers, subsidies will be given directly to farmers in a phased manner and at the same time the federal and provincial governments will ensure that strict action will be taken against those responsible for selling substandard medicines to cotton farmers.

Sarwar said that to increase the production of cotton, all the stakeholders including those from the textile industry should

be on one page for which the efforts have been initiated and we are utilising all resources to address the problems of our farmers.

Federal Minister for National Food and Research Syed Fakhr Imam said that the previous governments have been constantly neglecting the cotton farmers but the present government under the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan has stood by the cotton farmers and will continue to facilitate them.

The Federal government will ensure the implementation of steps following the recommendations put forward by the committee, he added.

Iran indicts 10 officials over  
downed Ukraine airliner

TEHRAN: A military prosecutor says indictments have been brought against "10 of the officials who had a role" in the deadly downing of a Ukraine International flight over Tehran last year.

In a ceremony on Tuesday to introduce his successor, Gholam Abbas Torki said the individuals – whom he did not name or otherwise identify – will head to court soon, though he also did not provide a timeframe.

Torki said in January 2020, shortly after Flight PS752 was downed by two missiles fired from an Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) air battery, that 10 individuals had been subject to disciplinary action including dismissals or demotions, and will soon go on trial.

On Tuesday, Shokrollah Bahrami, head of the Iranian armed forces' judicial organisation, confirmed that the military court is done with the case and indictments were signed. "Inshallah, the case will be followed up in court in the new year," he said, referring to the Iranian new year that began on March 21. – Foreign Desk

Jordan bans reporting on plot;  
labels palace feud a family affair

## FOREIGN DESK

AMMAN: The prosecutor general in Jordan's capital Amman has banned the publication of any information about an alleged plot said to involve the king's half-brother, Prince Hamzah, state television said.

Tuesday's order came after Prince Hamzah, who has been highly critical of the government, pledged loyalty to King Abdullah II late on Monday, two days after he said he

had been placed under house arrest.

"In order to keep the security services' investigation into Prince Hamzah and the others secret, [it is decided] to ban the publication of anything related to this inquiry at this stage," prosecutor Hassan al-Abdallat said in a statement read on state television. "The ban on publication involves all audiovisual media and social networks, as well as the publication of all images or video clips relating to this subject on pain of legal

action."

The government has accused Hamzah, an ex-crown prince, of a "malicious plot" and involvement in a seditious conspiracy to "destabilise the kingdom's security" – at least 16 others were arrested. Earlier on Monday, Prince Hamzah had struck a defiant tone, insisting he would not obey orders restricting his movement.

But in an apparent easing of the tensions, the 41-year-old prince later pledged his backing to King Abdullah.

"I will remain ... faithful to the legacy of my ancestors, walking on their path, loyal to their path and their message and to His Majesty," he said in a signed letter, quoted by the palace.

"I will always be ready to help and support His Majesty the King and his Crown Prince," Prince Hamzah – whom Abdullah stripped of the title of crown prince in 2004 – has emerged as a vocal critic of Jordan's leadership, accusing it of corruption, nepotism and authoritarian rule.

Azerbaijani, Turkish  
troops start joint drills

## DNA

BAKU: The Azerbaijani and Turkish signal troops have started their joint tactical and special drills under a plan approved by Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, the Defence Ministry has reported on its website.

"During the exercises, military signalmen deployed to the areas for fulfilling training and combat tasks are working out tasks for organizing a unified communications system. The tasks on organizing the interoperability of troops, deploying field command posts and other actions are fulfilled in the course of the exercises conducted with the use of modern communications and automated control sys-

tems," the ministry said.

The ministry earlier reported that the drills will be underway between April 6-8.

In a different report, the ministry stated that under the joint annual plan of the Azerbaijani and Turkish defence ministries, servicemen from the two countries will join operational and tactical exercises on April 8.

"The exercises, to be organized in our country, will be conducted at combined-arms training grounds located in different directions of the areas of responsibility of the Army Corps of the Azerbaijani Army," the report added.

It said that the exercises are aimed at improving interoperability and increasing the combat effectiveness of the operational units of the Azerbaijani and Turkish armies.



BISHKEK: Erik Beishembiev, Ambassador of the Kyrgyz Republic to Pakistan in hi working visit to Bishkek, met with Eldar Aitmatov, President of the Ch. Aitmatov International Foundation, Director of the House-Museum of Ch. Aitmatov. – DNA

## Myanmar junta targets celebrities opposing coup

At least 570 protesters and bystanders, including 47 children, have been killed since the takeover, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, which monitors casualties and arrests and says the true toll is likely higher

YANGON: Myanmar's ruling junta has stepped up its crackdown on support for nationwide protests against its seizure of power, by publishing wanted lists of celebrities in the state press that warn against using their work. The move follows weeks of escalating violence by security forces in breaking up street protests against the February 1 coup that ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. At least 570 protesters and bystanders, including 47 children, have been killed since the takeover, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, which monitors casualties and arrests and says the true toll

is likely higher.

The coup reversed the country's gradual return to democracy after five decades of military rule.

The lists published Sunday and Monday in the Global New Light of Myanmar newspaper include actors, musicians and social media influencers charged with violating Section 505(A) of the Penal Code for "spreading news to affect state stability." The penalty for the offense is up to three years' imprisonment.

A chart filling most of a page lists 20 people, along with photos, hometowns and Facebook pages of each.

Several actors and directors were also charged in February, but the

campaign against celebrity protest supporters was stepped up last week when army-controlled Myawaddy TV broadcast a wanted list. There are now at least 60 people on such lists.

May Toe Khine, who describes herself in her Twitter profile as "Full Time Burmese Actress / Part Time Fashion Designer Student," tweeted after the TV announcement that her arrest warrant was "for simply doing my job as a civilian: using my platform to speak out the truth."

"Please always pay attention to news in Myanmar until we win," she wrote.

What appears to be a leaked document from the Information Min-

istry advises broadcasters and production agencies of the accusations against people in the fields of literature, film, theater arts, music and journalism. It warns them not to publish or broadcast any of their work or face prosecution themselves.

The April 4 document, which could not be authenticated by The Associated Press, was reported by Khit Thit Media and widely circulated on social media.

Protests continued Monday around the country, but generally on a smaller scale than recently and often in ways intended to avoid confrontations. On Sunday, an "Easter Egg Strike" was held with eggs painted in support of

the protests displayed in public places and online.

In Dawei, a city in southeastern Myanmar that is a stronghold of the protest movement, a short march was accompanied by a motorcycle procession.

In Yangon, the country's biggest city, a memorial march for the dead was held by mourners clad in black. Separately, about 20 people gathered briefly on a city street and burned Chinese flags. Many protesters believe that Beijing backs the military regime with economic and political support, including the threat of a veto at the UN Security Council against international sanctions.

Iran receives  
AstraZeneca  
doses through  
COVAX

## FOREIGN DESK

TEHRAN: Some 700,000 doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine have been delivered to Iran as part of its purchase of millions of doses through the World Health Organization's COVAX initiative.

As confirmed by an Iranian official and the United Nations' UNICEF, which handled delivery, the first shipment landed in Tehran's Imam Khomeini Airport Monday night and included 700,800 doses of the vaccine. The delivered doses were manufactured by South Korea's SK-Bio Institute. "By the end of May, 3.6 million doses of the 16.8 million doses purchased through COVAX will be delivered to Iran," said Kianush Janahpur, spokesman for Iran's Food and Drug Administration, in a tweet.

Iran, which previously said it purchased 4.2 million doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine through the global vaccine initiative, expected them before Nowruz, the Iranian new year, on March 20.

"Achieving this important milestone aimed at ensuring the global goal of equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines across the world through COVAX facility is the key priority for WHO and partners," UNICEF said in a press release after delivering the vaccines.

India  
steps up  
anti-Maoist  
operations

## WEB DESK

NEW DELHI: Indian security forces have stepped up operations against ultra left-wing fighters deep in the forests of a mineral-rich central state after they killed 22 policemen in an ambush over the weekend, a top police officer said.

At least 30 other members of the security forces were wounded in the four-hour gun battle with Maoist rebels that took place in Chhattisgarh state on Saturday, the deadliest ambush of its kind in four years.

"The operation will be intensified," said Om Prakash Pal, the deputy inspector general of police, who is leading the fight against the rebels in Chhattisgarh, on Monday. The Maoists, also known as Naxals, have waged an armed struggle against government forces for decades. They say they are fighting for the poor who have been left behind in India's economic boom. Chhattisgarh, one of the fastest-developing states in India, has 28 varieties of key minerals, including diamonds and gold, a government website said. It also holds 16 percent of India's coal deposits and large reserves of iron ore and bauxite.

The Maoists, considered by the government as India's biggest internal security threat, operate in mineral-rich territory in the east and south of the country known as the "red corridor," which has shrunk in recent years because of heavy operations against them.

Indian  
states vote in  
assembly polls

## FOREIGN DESK

CALCUTTA: Voters in four Indian states and a union territory are casting their ballots in elections seen as a test for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government, which is facing a tough fight against the country's latest surge in coronavirus cases.

News channels on Tuesday showed voters wearing masks as officials checked temperatures and tried to maintain physical distancing in lines.

Modi on Twitter asked people, particularly young voters, to "vote in record numbers" as the polls opened in Assam, West Bengal, Kerala and Tamil Nadu states and the federally administered territory of Puducherry. The elections are seen as crucial for Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which is seeking to gain a foothold in the northeast and south.

In the eastern West Bengal and Assam states, where the third phase of elections is under way, Modi's party is banking on its strong Hindu nationalist ideology to draw votes.



## Briefs

PIA to  
operate 3  
additional  
flights to UK  
ahead of ban

DNA

KARACHI, Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) said on Tuesday it will operate three more flights to the United Kingdom (UK) ahead of the April 9 travel ban.

The airline will operate two flights to Manchester on April 7 and 8 while one to London on April 8. The national flag carrier has sought the UK government's nod to operate more flights before the travel ban comes into effect on April 9. In a Twitter statement, PIA said: "Those who couldn't yet get the seats can get those with ease by approaching PIA offices, tasked by CEO to work 24/7. More flights are also planned & will be announced soon."

The United Kingdom (UK) has added more countries including Pakistan and Bangladesh to its red list from April 9 - 2021 in order to curb the spread of COVID-19 variants internationally.

The British authorities had added Pakistan, Bangladesh, the Philippines and Kenya to its red list to be effective from 4:00 am (local time) Friday, April 9 - 2021 for implementing travel bans on visitors from these countries.

Under the restrictions imposed by the UK Department for Transport, British, Irish and third-country nationals with residence rights (including long-term visa holders) would be required to self-isolate in a government-approved hotel quarantine facility for 10 days.

PM ready  
to talk to  
Opposition:  
Sh Rasheed

SHAHEEN HANIF

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Sheikh Rasheed said Tuesday Prime Minister Imran Khan is ready to talk to the Opposition over important issues concerning the country.

The prime minister has been quite vocal in the past in his criticism of the Opposition and has frequently ruled out providing relief to the Opposition in corruption cases.

PM Imran Khan says Opposition trying to 'buy' PTI lawmakers after all PDM efforts 'failed' "The Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) can't do any harm to the prime minister," said Rasheed, adding that the premier had formed a 10-member team of politicians to talk to the Opposition.

Sports  
leave positive  
legacy: UN  
Chief

NEW YORK: United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Tuesday urged everyone involved in the sport sector to help advance climate action, combat discrimination and prejudice, and ensure that global sporting events leave a positive legacy.

In a message commemorating International Day of Sport for Development and Peace, he highlighted the power of sport to bring people together, promote healthy lifestyles, and contribute to inclusive and sustainable development.

"Those involved in sport also have responsibilities: to reduce its environmental footprint; to meet international labour standards; to fight discrimination and prejudice of all kinds; to reject corruption; and to ensure that major global events such as the FIFA World Cup and the Olympic and Paralympic Games, which bring the world together, leave a positive legacy", Guterres said.

The UN chief also noted that while the COVID-19 pandemic brought new challenges to the sector, sport can contribute to a "safe and sustainable recovery". - APP

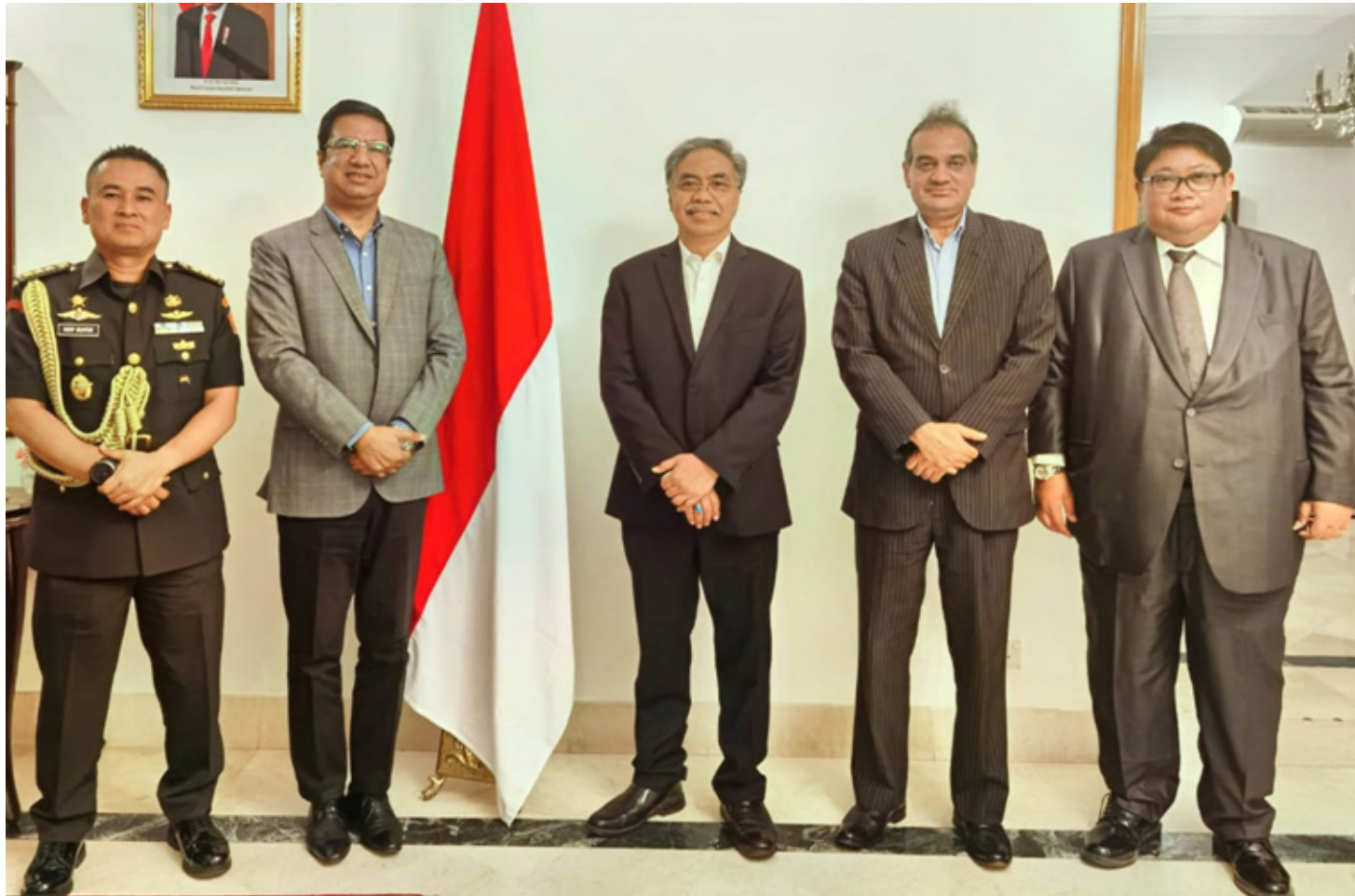
Amb. Tugio highlights media role  
in promotion of bilateral tiesIndonesia ambassador shares future plans and initiatives  
of the embassy with the media and think-tankSPECIAL  
CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Indonesia Adam M Tugio has highlighted the role of media in promotion and strengthening of relations between Indonesia and Pakistan.

He expressed these views during a meeting which was held between the Ambassador and Khalid Taimur Akram, Executive Director, Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad, and Ansar Mahmood Bhatti, Chief Editor, Daily Islamabad POST / Diplomatic News Agency / CENTRELINE magazine, and Member Board of Experts, CGSS at the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia, Islamabad.

During the meeting, future projects and initiatives were discussed to enhance the ties between Indonesia and Pakistan. It was agreed that media can play an effective role in portraying various sectors of collaboration between both countries.

The ambassador appreciated CGSS's and media efforts in enhancing people-to-people contact and diplomatic ties between Indonesia and Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Indonesia Adam Tugio in a group photo with Executive Director CGSS Lt. Col @ Khalid Taimur Akram, Chief Editor Daily Islamabad POST/CENTRELINE/DNA Ansar Mahmood Bhatti, Indonesia Defence Attaché and Counselor. - DNA

Mosques to remain open  
during Ramadan with SOPs

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Mosques and Imam Bargahs will remain open during Ramadan for five-time congregational prayers and Taraweeh with certain Standard Operating Procedures to prevent spread of Covid-19 pandemic.

According to a joint 20-point declaration issued in consultation with President Dr Arif Alvi and Ulama, carpets or mats will not be laid down in mosques because the virus is airborne and prayers will

be offered on clean floors. However, mats can be laid if floor is unpaved.

It said people will be allowed to bring prayer mats from home and gatherings before and after prayer should be avoided. If a mosque or Imam Bargah has an open area or garden it is preferable to conduct prayers there. The declaration said people over 60 years of age, children and patients with cough and flu should avoid coming to mosques and Imam Bargahs. Ordinary prayers and taraweeh should not be conducted on roads, footpaths

and anywhere else than the premises of mosques and Imam Bargahs. Floors of mosques and Imam Bargahs should regularly be washed with chlorinated water. The joint declaration said there should be a three-foot distance during congregational prayers, while markers should be made on the floors of mosques and Imam Bargahs to guide people about the distance they should keep from others. It is encouraged that people should do ablution at home. People must wear face masks when coming to

mosques and avoid handshakes and hugging. It said that collective Sehar and Iftar in mosques should be avoided. Motki-fee should maintain six-foot distance during Aitkaf. Mosque committees should be in constant contact with the provincial, district governments and police. It was decided that the government can review this policy if it feels that the situation has gone out of control and the number of cases surge during Ramadan and SOPs are not followed in letter and spirit.

NA Speaker  
seeks suggestions  
for reforms

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaiser has stressed that all the political parties in the parliament should give their suggestions on electoral and judicial reforms.

He was talking to Minister for Science and Technology Fawad Chaudhary who called on him in Islamabad on Tuesday.

The speaker said the opposition parties will be given ample opportunity in the

house for detailed discussion on important national matters.

Asad Qaiser said difference of opinion is essence of democracy but on matters of national interests, we have to move forward collectively.

Fawad Chaudhary said responsibility rests with both the government and the opposition to address the matters of national importance through negotiations. He said the opposition should play a proactive role in legislation and electoral reforms.

FIA summons  
Jahangir Tareen,  
Ali Tareen on  
April 9

The notice said that if Jahangir Tareen and Ali Tareen fail to appear in the FIA Lahore office, it would be assumed that they have nothing to present in their defense

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has summoned Jahangir Tareen and Ali Tareen to appear before it on April 9.

Both the father and son were also sent a notice in this regard by the FIA, the subject of which was financial fraud. The notice said that if Jahangir Tareen and Ali Tareen fail to appear in the FIA Lahore office, it would be assumed that they have nothing to present in their defense.

The FIA has summoned Jahangir Tareen for two and Ali Tareen for one case. According to the notice, FIA has accused Ali Tareen and his father of committing fraud with the shareholders. It has also directed Ali Tareen to answer five of the agency's questions.

Among these, Ali Tareen has been asked why the JK-FSL sugar business was sold off; was the sale of the sugarcane business advertised; how many potential buyers contacted the company and how much did they bid?

FIA has also asked for documents showing how the sale of sugarcane business was valued at Rs 4.35 billion. Moreover, Ali Tareen has been asked to provide money trail of where JKFSL spent the Rs 4.35 billion. - DNA

CanSino vaccine: Age limit  
changed in Islamabad

The age limit for the CanSinoBIO's single-dose coronavirus jab has been reduced from 80 to 70 years

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: The age limit for a single-dose jab of the coronavirus vaccine manufactured by China's CanSino Biologics Inc, or CanSinoBIO, has been slashed by 10 years in the federal capital, media reported.

According to the report, the age limit for the CanSinoBIO's single-dose coronavirus jab has been reduced from 80 to 70 years, meaning that septuagenarians in Islamabad may now get themselves vaccinated. Asad Umar - the federal minister for planning and development, as well as the head of the National Command and Control Center (NCOC), Pakistan's nerve centre to monitor the coronavirus situation - said Tuesday the effects of stricter restrictions, wider lockdowns, and rig-



orous implementation of the COVID-19 standard operating procedures (SOPs) were starting to show. Initially, the number of positive coronavirus infections had begun declining but cases at the intensive care units (ICU), as well as the mortality rates, could remain high for some time due to the situation over the past two weeks, Umar remarked.

Urging people to once again follow the SOPs and stay safe, the minister said more than one million vaccine doses have been administered across the country so far, while two million have registered for the coronavirus jab. These two million registered individuals included 600,000 healthcare workers and 1.4 million people who were above 50 years of age.

"If you are over 50, register for the vaccine," Umar said.

The government of Pakistan has been administering two coronavirus vaccines - both Chinese - at the state level. These include the single-dose CanSinoBIO jab and the double-dose drug manufactured by the China National Pharmaceutical Group, or Sinopharm.

Pakistan may  
get \$900m  
debt relief  
from G20

DNA

ISLAMABAD: There was a strong possibility that Pakistan may get \$900 million relief from the G20 countries.

According to a private television channel report Tuesday, the Finance Ministry has started listing the recommendations for loan deferment by the G20 countries which may range from \$800 million to \$900 million.

The sources said the relief from G20 countries is likely to pour in between July to December 2021. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has proposed to the G20 nations to put off the loan payments. The sources said the G20 states are expected to defer loans of low-income countries, so they can tackle the situation arising out of the coronavirus pandemic.

Pak grieved  
over loss  
of lives in  
Indonesia

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has expressed profound grief and sorrow over the loss of precious lives, missing persons and destruction caused in Indonesia due to floods and landslides.

In a tweet on Tuesday, Foreign Office Spokesperson Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri said our thoughts and prayers are with the victims, their families and brotherly people of Indonesia.

At least 157 people have been killed in Indonesia and neighbouring Timor-Leste with dozens more still missing after a tropical cyclone battered the south-east Asian nations, leaving thousands homeless, authorities said on Tuesday.

Indonesia's disaster management agency said it had recorded 130 deaths in a cluster of remote islands near Timor-Leste, where another 27 have been officially listed as dead.

Iran notches  
new daily  
record of  
virus cases

TEHRAN: Iran Tuesday announced a new record number of daily coronavirus cases, as authorities warned of a "major increase" in infections to come as the country faces its fourth wave.

Over the past 24 hours, the Islamic republic officially recorded 17,430 cases of infection, health ministry spokesperson Sima Sadat Lari said.

The figure eclipses a previous peak in late November of 14,051 daily cases, and brings Iran's total number of cases to 1,963,394.

Iran also recorded 174 additional virus deaths, Lari said, bringing the total to 63,506.

Lari warned the population of a "major increase in infections" to come.

The Islamic republic is battling the Middle East's deadliest coronavirus outbreak, and case numbers have risen following a surge in trips during the Iranian new year holidays in recent weeks.

Iran is facing "one of the most severe waves" of its coronavirus outbreak, Health Minister Saeed Namaki had said Monday. "We've now lost the reins" of the virus, he said.

Some officials, including Namaki, have admitted in the past that the virus numbers are likely higher than official figures.

Authorities had warned of a concerning rise in the spread of the more contagious British variant of the disease and of a "fourth wave" prior to the holidays. Dozens of towns and cities including the capital Tehran are classified as "red", the highest rating on the country's coronavirus risk scale, requiring all non-essential businesses to close. Iran has avoided imposing a full lockdown on its population of 82 million since the pandemic started. - AFP

## Chinese envoy discusses CPEC with PPP leadership

ATHAR SUFI

KARACHI: The Chinese Ambassador, Nong Rong called on the former President Asif Ali Zardari and Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari at Bilawal House on Tuesday. Vice President Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Sherry Rehman was also present.

The Ambassador was accompanied by Defence Attaché Major General Chen Wen Rong, Consul General Karachi Li Bijian and other diplomats who exchanged views on with the Pakistan Peoples Party leadership on areas of mutual cooperation and long standing brotherly relations between the two neighbouring na-



tions and the two political parties, the PPP and CPC.

President Asif Ali Zardari and Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari thanked the Chinese government for all its bilateral cooperation in setting up the monumental China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project after Gwadar port was granted to China by President Asif Ali Zardari, and the assistance by the Chinese government to the people of Pakistan in the provision of essential vaccine aid to prevent COVID-19.

Both sides agreed to build on this strong relationship and undying bond nurtured over three generations of the Pakistan Peoples Party and the CPC.