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Pakistan wants to diversify ties with Uzbekistan in all fields

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Sehri & Iftar Timings			
FIQA HANFIA			
CITY	SEHR	IFTAR	
ISLAMABAD	04:10 am	6:36 pm	
FAISALABAD	04:15 am	6:37 pm	
LAHORE	04:10 am	6:32 pm	
KARACHI	04:51 am	6:55 pm	
SARGODHA	04:14 am	6:40 pm	
FIQA JAFARIA			
CITY	SEHR	IFTAR	
ISLAMABAD	03:58 am	07:07 pm	
FAISALABAD	04:05 am	6:47 pm	
LAHORE	03:58 am	06:44 pm	
KARACHI	04:45 am	06:53 pm	
SARGODHA	04:06 am	6:49 pm	

Govt to ban TLP under terror law

Interior Minister Shaikh Rashid announces decision; says nobody shall be allowed to take law in its hands

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has decided to impose a ban on the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) under the anti-terrorism law, Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid said on Wednesday. The federal minister said that the decision has been taken at the request of the Punjab government. "We are forwarding a summary to the Federal Cabinet to impose a ban on the TLP," Sheikh Rashid said in Islamabad amid countrywide protests. Protest by a religious party had crippled life in major cities across the country and claimed the lives of three, including two policemen. Nearly 100 policemen have also been injured in clashes with the protesters. Rashid said that the government wanted to table a resolution in the National Assembly with consensus but they (TLP) insisted on coming to Faizabad. "Our efforts to convince them failed. As far as the matter of Khatam-e-Nabwat is concerned, I am ready to give my life." The interior minister said that firing was done after snatching a rifle from police in Islamabad. "They wanted such a draft after which all the Europeans should have to go back," he said. He said that the government stood by the agreement signed with the party. Regarding the FIRs filed against the protesters, Rashid said they were all filled according to law. "I have never supported this party nor had

No dictation from any group: Fawad

ZUBAIR AHMED

ISLAMABAD: The federal government said on Tuesday that it can not be dictated by any party or group and approved the deployment of Rangers in Punjab cities to maintain law and order amid protests by a religious party. Briefing the media in Islamabad after attending the cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Imran Khan, Federal Minister for Science and Technology Fawad Chaudhry said dictation to government from any party or group was indigestible. The science and technology minister was responding to media queries about the protests by a religious party that has crippled life in major cities and claimed the lives of three, including two policemen. Nearly 100 policemen have also been injured in clashes with the protesters. He said a party or group could present their demands in a democratic way upon which negotiations could be held, but decision-making could not be left to any party or group.

ever met Khadim Hussain Rizvi (former TLP chief)," the minister said, adding the ban has been imposed due to TLP's character and denied any political compulsion in the move.

AstraZeneca vaccine banned in Denmark

NEWS DESK

COPENHAGEN: Denmark became the first European country on Wednesday to announce it is suspending the use of the AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine after a few cases of serious side effects were reported earlier. Despite recommendations from the World Health Organization and European medicines watchdog to continue using the inoculation, "Denmark's vaccination campaign will go ahead without the AstraZeneca vaccine," Health Authority director Soren Brostrom told a press conference. Denmark was the first country in Europe to suspend the use of the AstraZeneca jab in its vaccination rollout, after reports of rare but serious cases of blood clots among those that had received the vaccine. More than a dozen coun-

tries followed suit but all but a few have since resumed the use after the European Medicines Agency (EMA) emphasised the benefits of

Since suspending the use of the AstraZeneca vaccine

AstraZeneca



the vaccine and deemed it "safe and effective". Denmark had however continued to hold off using the vaccine as it conducted investigations of its own. In Denmark, two cases of thrombosis, one of which was fatal, were linked to vaccinations after more than 140,000 people received the jab made by the Anglo-Swedish drugmaker. In the country of 5.8 million inhabitants, 8% have been fully vaccinated against Covid-19, and 17% have received the first dose.

Zeneca jab in March, Denmark has continued with the Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna jabs. The AstraZeneca suspension delays the country's ambitious vaccine rollout plans, but the health authority said in a statement that the availability of other vaccines combined with the pandemic being under control at the moment meant the inoculation campaign could continue without it.

Briefs

Bilawal condemns violence

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Chairman of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has strongly condemned violence in different parts of the country during the last three days, in which two policemen among seven people were killed in different incidents. In a statement, the PPP Chairman said that this kind of violence, ransacking, vandalising of public and private properties and mob-attacks on policemen could not be allowed to go unchecked. Those responsible must be dealt with in accordance with the law, and the govt cannot be allowed to abdicate its responsibility. PPP expressed sympathised with the martyred policemen as well as the innocent people who lost their lives in violence in Punjab and other parts of the country and stressed for best possible medical facilities to those wounded.

Babar takes no.1 ODI spot

SPORTS DESK

DUBAI: Pakistan captain Babar Azam on Wednesday topped Indian captain Virat Kohli to become the top-ranked ODI batsman in the world, showed the latest ICC ODI rankings. Azam now sits on top of ICC's ODI batsman rankings with 865 points and Kohli is number 2 with 857 points. With the new rankings, Babar ended Kohli's five-year reign at the top of the ICC rankings. The Indian skipper was on top of the table since October 2017. The Pakistan skipper propelled to the top of the table after scoring 228 runs in the recently concluded ODI series between Pakistan and South Africa.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Jordan Ibrahim Al Madani along with his Deputy Head of Mission and President ICCI visiting Defence Export Promotion Organisation. The ambassador witnessed various facilities and products manufactured by the Organisation. Pakistan and Jordan have close cooperation in the defence sector as well. – DNA

Allies mull Afghan pullout at the Brussels conference

NEWS DESK

BRUSSELS: A joint meeting between United States officials and NATO allies took place Wednesday in Brussels in the backdrop of America's announcement that US troops will leave Afghanistan by September 11 this year. The United States announced it will begin withdrawing US forces from Afghanistan on May 1 and the withdrawal will be completed by September 11, 2021. US Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken and Secretary of Defense Lloyd James III and NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg took the foreign and defense ministers of European countries into confidence on the US withdrawal and set a timetable for the withdrawal of NATO's European allies. The

Gen Bajwa, Blinken discuss Afghan peace



DNA

RAWALPINDI: General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) and US Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken had a telephone conversation. During the meeting matters of mutual interest, regional security situation including latest developments in Afghan Peace Process and bilateral cooperation in various fields were discussed. COAS said that Pakistan will always support "Afghan led-Afghan Owned" Peace Process based on mutual consensus of all stakeholders. The US dignitary also acknowledged Pakistan's continuous efforts for peace and stability in the region and pledged to further enhance bilateral relations between both countries.

officials addressed the NATO foreign and defense ministers' conference. Among the NATO allies, after the United States, Germany has the largest military presence in Afghanistan. European countries also demanded that modern US weapons remain in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of US forces. This joint meeting of NATO allies with US officials is the first of its kind in which a comprehensive strategy for the withdrawal from Afghanistan will be worked out. The European allies of NATO have long been pushing for withdrawal from Afghanistan because of the loss of life and property as a result of the war in Afghanistan. European public opinion has turned against this war.

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U.S. envoy extends Ramazan greetings

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: U.S. Chargé d'affaires a.i. Angela P. Aggeler extends her best wishes to all Pakistani Muslims during the holy month of Ramazan. In her video message the US diplomat extended warm greetings to the Muslims living in Pakistan adding the holy

Continued on Page 06

Army chief lauds Japan role in regional stability

Ambassador Matsuda meets Gen Bajwa; praises Pakistan's role in regional stability

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Kuninori Matsuda, Japan Ambassador to Pakistan Called on General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) at GHQ, today. During the meeting matters of mutual interest, regional security situation and measures to enhance bilateral



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Japan Kuninori Matsuda in a meeting with Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa. – DNA

Continued on Page 06

PM Imran, Uzbek President hold virtual summit

The two leaders expressed confidence that the understandings reached during the Virtual Summit will further deepen bilateral cooperation and contribute towards forging a stronger, multi-dimensional relationship between the two countries. It was agreed to continue the Summit-level political dialogue in future

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The first Virtual Summit between Prime Minister Imran Khan and Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev was held on Wednesday. During the wide-ranging talks, views were exchanged on bilateral, regional and international issues. The two sides highlighted the depth of Pakistan-Uzbekistan relations rooted in common faith, shared history and cultural affinities. They also reiterated their determination to maintain momentum of high-level exchanges and further enhance the upward trajectory of the relationship. The two leaders reviewed the entire spectrum of bilateral relations – with particular focus on political, trade, security and defence, educational and cultural domains. They also agreed to encourage more people-to-people contacts including through spiritual (ziyarat) tourism. Prime Minister Imran Khan underlined



TASHKENT / ISLAMABAD: Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev and Prime Minister Imran Khan wave each other during online summit. – DNA

the importance of enhancing political and diplomatic linkages, fast tracking trade and economic cooperation, ensuring early finalization of the Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) and Transit Trade Agreement (TTA), increasing

security and defence cooperation, and taking steps to deepen mutual collaboration in the fields of education, culture and tourism. The Prime Minister also underscored the importance of rail, road and air connectivity and highlighted the

enormous potential that exists in diverse fields to build an expanded mutually-beneficial partnership. The Prime Minister highlighted Pakistan's economic security paradigm and the shifting focus to geo-economics. He

stressed that Central Asia was a region of particular focus in this vision. The level of progress on the Trans-Afghan Railway Line Project, agreed between Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan earlier this year, was reviewed. The project would be a first step in linking the Central Asian transport network with Pakistani seaports of Gwadar, Karachi and Qasim. Prime Minister Imran Khan stated that, once completed, the initiative would transform the geo-economic dynamics of the entire region. The two leaders also discussed important global and regional matters of mutual interest, and reaffirmed the commitment to continue supporting each other at all international and regional fora, including the UN, OIC, SCO and ECO. Prime Minister Imran Khan apprised on the latest situation in IOJK, shared Pakistan's perspective on issues of peace and

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Russia seeking to 'provoke' Ukraine conflict: Germany – Page 07

Housing sector's promotion to strengthen economy: PM – Page 08

Briefs

Javed Latif tests positive for COVID-19

DNA

LAHORE: Sessions court in Lahore on Wednesday has extended interim bail of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Mian Javed Latif till April 27 in a case pertaining to allegedly defaming state institutions.

Additional sessions Judge Wajid Minhas heard the case. At the outset of the hearing, Latif's counsel presented a COVID-19 diagnosis report of his client, showing him infected with the virus.

"My client has tested positive COVID-19 and currently is in self-isolation." The court while suspecting the report ordered Javed Latif to undergo another test and directed concerned authorities to verify his COVID report, presented before the court.

Later, the court accepted the plea of the PML-N leader seeking exemption from the hearing and extended his interim bail till April 27. According to the First Information Report (FIR) Javed Latif deliberately defaming the state institutions and carried out hate speech. The applicant, Jameel Saleem had urged the authorities to take action against MNA Mian Javed Latif under the Pakistan Prevention of Electronic Crime Act.

Two colonies sealed, state land retrieved

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: Faisalabad Development Authority's enforcement team foil a bid to occupy state land measuring 4 kanal and 10 marla which was allocated for graveyard.

According to official sources, the enforcement team during checking found that 4 kanal and 10 marla state land allocated for a graveyard adjacent to the garden was being occupied by a factory owner.

Meanwhile, the team sealed the offices of two illegal towns including Bholewal Town and Universal Town near bypass road Chak No 9JB.

The team also sealed plot Nos. Y-11, 101-W-16, RSR-X-137, RSR-Y-37, ISR-Z-21 and 02-XISR-23 in Madina town area over illegal constructions.

The team also sealed a plot in Pertab Nagar over non-payment of commercialization fee and removed encroachments.

Special courts to ensure speedy justice

LAHORE: Governor Punjab Chaudhry Mohammad Sarwar has said that the establishment of special courts for the overseas Pakistanis will help ensure speedy justice for the expatriates.

Chairing a high-level meeting on resolution of problems of overseas Pakistanis at the Governor's House here on Wednesday, he said the special courts will help avoid inordinate delay in the cases of overseas Pakistanis, adding that these cases will also be decided within fixed time-frame.

Hailing role of Chief Justice Lahore High Court (LHC) in forming of special courts, he said role of judiciary in dispensation of justice to the overseas Pakistanis is commendable, adding that overseas Pakistanis are asset of the country and resolution of their problems is top-priority of the PTI government. Vice-Chairman Overseas Pakistanis Commission (OPC) Punjab Wasim Akhter Ramay, Additional Chief Secretary (ACS) Iram Bukhari, Provincial Secretary Law Bahadur Ali Khan, DG District Judiciary Wajeehullah Kundwi and others attended the meeting.

Governor Punjab Chaudhry Mohammad Sarwar said the government is considering to allowing overseas Pakistanis to record statements in their cases through video link at their respective embassies.

"We are proud of the role played by Overseas Pakistanis in Pakistan's economic stability despite the economic crisis due to the novel coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic", Sarwar said. — APP

Dist admin for quality check on essential items during Ramzan

The Divisional Commissioner also inspected the stalls of cheap flour and sugar in Ramzan Bazaar and while inspecting the weight, directed to save the consumers from the hassle of waiting

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Divisional Commissioner Sagib Manan visited Ramzan Bazar Kaleem Shaheed Colony and checked availability of essential items. He has said that no effort should be spared in providing quality essential items and maintaining good arrangements in Ramadan bazaars during the hours of bazars. The Divisional Commissioner also inspected the stalls of cheap flour and sugar in Ramzan Bazaar and while inspecting the weight, directed to save the consumers from

the hassle of waiting. He reviewed the quality of various items in Ramzan Bazaar and the difference from normal markets. He met with buyers and inquired about the quality of fruits, vegetables and other items. Meanwhile Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ali inspecting Ramzan Bazar of Sir Syed Town, Fizan e'Madina and other areas. He inspected the stalls of vegetables, fruits, groceries and directed that steps be taken to improve them further. He asked the officers in charge to maintain the supply of essential items and their high quality and

by grading the items sold at wholesale prices. The Deputy Commissioner asked the Assistant Commissioners to check the Ramadan bazaars from time to time so that there is no shortage of arrangements. He also checked the weight of some items under his supervision and clarified that strict action would be taken on the complaint of low weight. The Deputy Commissioner also checked the process of sale at sugar stalls in Ramadan bazaars and the situation of social distance under Corona SOPs. He asked the management of Ramzan Bazaars to ensure

that those who come to the bazaars for shopping should be required to wear face masks while those performing their duties in the bazaars should also ensure implementation of Corona SOPs. Meanwhile Deputy Commissioner visited Vaccination Center Samanaabad and checked the matters of vaccinated the senior citizens. It was informed that 23279 people have vaccinated so far in which 19943 were vaccinated first and 3336 were vaccinated second dose.

Two arrested for over-charging
The district administration

has arrested two shopkeepers and registered cases against them for overcharging, here on Wednesday. A spokesman of the district administration said that Assistant Commissioner Sadar Umar Maqbool took immediate notice of consumers' complaints regarding overcharging for sugar in Aminpur Bungalow. The AC checked Anwar Mansoor grocery store and Talha Zaheer grocery store and found that shopkeepers were selling sugar at more than Rs 85 per kilogram. The AC got registered cases against them and sent them behind bars.



SARGODHA: Prime Minister Imran Khan Plants tree at the Ground Breaking Ceremony of Naya Pakistan Housing Scheme in Sargodha. —DNA

Pakistan Navy distributes ration for Ramadan

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Pakistan Navy has been continuously reaching out and helping underprivileged sections of the society since the outbreak of COVID 19 pandemic.

During the recent campaign, Pakistan Navy Women Association (PNWA) in coordination with philanthropist organisation shared the happiness of Holy month of Ramadan by distributing hundreds of ration bags with deserving families.

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, PN troops in support with PNWA workers reached out to people in far flung areas of Sujawal, ChuharJamali, Saipur, Ghaghar, Bin Qasim, Ghoro and distributed the ration bags at their door steps.

Pakistan Navy amidst challenge of corona pandemic is persistently supporting the Nation with passion and resolve.

PM's vision of 5 million houses being materialized: CM Buzdar

MEHBOOB AHIR

SARGODHA: Prime Minister Imran Khan's vision of five million houses was being materialized as the laying of foundationstone of the LDA City Housing Project was an important step towards the realisation of this commitment.

This was stated by Punjab Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar while addressing the ceremony of the Prime Minister's Affordable Housing Project at Chak No. 39-NB in Sargodha. Giving details, the CM said

that houses would be constructed at 133 localities in 146 tehsils of the province under the PM's Affordable Housing Project. In the first phase, more than 10,000 houses were being constructed for low-income families at 32 places in various districts of the province, he added. Meanwhile, 1175 houses, of 3 marlas each, will be constructed at six different places in Sargodha. The overall cost of every house to be built under this project stands around Rs 1.4 million, he continued. The CM said the govern-

ment would also provide a Rs 300,000 subsidy, along with a soft loan, for each house. Similarly, Punjab Bank will provide approx Rs 1 million as a loan facility for the construction of the house with a monthly installment of Rs 10,000. The Punjab Bank will provide Rs 10 billion for ten thousand houses, he said and added that the cabinet had approved Rs 3 billion for infrastructural development of this project at 32 places. He said that necessary facilities like roads, mosques, playgrounds and

sewerage etc would not only be provided but also be fully taken care of. The government has also provided Rs 1 billion to PHATA for another housing project and the citizens will be able to get Rs 1 million loan for the construction of houses through micro-financing institutions, he added. The government has taken a solid step to fulfill the promise of providing an own home and lakhs of families would be able to materialize the dream of owning a dwelling place for them, concluded the CM.

CM Murad writes letter to PM over Sindh's reservations on census

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister in a letter to the Prime Minister has expressed the province's reservations over the population census figures.

"Sindh have reservations over approval of the population census results in the Council of Common Interest (CCI)," Chief Minister of Sindh Murad Ali Shah's letter to the Prime Minister read. The chief minister in his letter demanded a new population census forthwith. "Several millions of people in Sindh have not been counted in the population census," held in year 2017.

"Sindh's population has been over 60 million," the chief minister said in the letter. "In Census figures the average



number of the members of a family in Sindh has been delineated five members," the letter read.

Sindh's chief minister also referred survey reports of the UNICEF and other international institutions with regard to

the population of the province.

Murad Ali Shah had submitted his reservations and evidence in written in the session of the CCI, according to the letter. The Council of Common Interest (CCI) on Monday approved the results of 2017 national population census with majority votes and decided to hold the new census by the end of 2021.

The meeting of the CCI was held here presided over by Prime Minister Imran Khan and was attended by the chief ministers of all the provinces.

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah had voted against approval of the results of 2017 national population census, while the Chief Ministers of Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan voted in favor of the approval.

PM Imran is controlling NAB: Rana Sanaullah

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) senior leader Rana Sanaullah on Wednesday accused Prime Minister Imran Khan and his aide Shahzad Akbar of exerting influence and controlling National Accountability Bureau (NAB).

Talking to media persons, Rana Sanaullah said that NAB has failed to prove corruption allegations against PML-N President

Shehbaz Sharif but now this cruelty of NAB which is going on from last three years will end.

The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz leader said that incumbent government has increased problems for the public and stressed that it is need of the hour to send government packing.

Rana Sanaullah further said that Shehbaz Sharif, who did service of Punjab wholeheartedly, spent seven years in jail despite being a cancer patient.



LAHORE: President PMLN Punjab Rana Sanaullah talking to media. Maryam Aurangzeb, Ata Tarar and other party officials are also present. — DNA

Old vendetta claim life

DNA

SARGODHA: A youth was shot dead over an old enmity, in the limits of Bhalwal police station on Wednesday.

Police said that Shabbir Hussain, resident of Fatehpur Noon village of tehsil Bhalwal had enmity with his relative Feroz Ali over a family dispute.

In a fit of grudge, Feroz Ali along with his accomplices allegedly shot at and injured Numan Ali (24) son of Shabbir and fled the scene.

The victim was rushed to a hospital where he succumbed to his injuries. The body was handed over to the heirs after postmortem.

A case has been registered against the accused.

'Atmosphere of terror rejected by the state'

SHAHEEN HANIF

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Q Punjab Deputy Secretary Information Khawaja Rameez Hassan while commenting on the decision to ban the religious organization TLP said that the external conspiracy to promote the recent unrest in the country has died down. The state and the people rejected the atmosphere of terror outright. He said that the TLP had tried unsuccessfully to tarnish the image of the country by promoting the recent atmosphere of anarchy. State decision to ban extremist religious party is most welcome, Pakistan cannot afford anarchy.

22 more coronavirus patients die in Faisalabad

FAISALABAD: As many as 22 more patients died of the COVID-19 in the district during past two days.

A spokesperson for the health department said on Wednesday that the death toll due to COVID-19 rose to 713 in the district. He said that 1,484 tests for coronavirus were conducted in public and private sectors labs, out of these 153 were tested positive during last 24 hours.

He said that so far 10,907 patients had recovered from the disease while total active cases in Faisalabad were 3,823. He said that 220 beds were allocated at the Allied Hospital and 107 at the DHQ Hospital for COVID-19 patients.

At present, 212 patients, including 138 confirmed ones, were under treatment at the Allied Hospital while 96, including 53 confirmed, were admitted to DHQ Hospital. He further said that 2,377 confirmed patients were isolated at their homes in the district. — APP

CTD arrests Lyari gang operative

DNA

KARACHI: Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) has arrested an operative of Lyari gang trying to regroup criminals in the locality.

"Arrested man, Naseer, has been a hardened criminal and close aide of Zahid Ladda, a brother of slain gangster Baba Ladla," a CTD official said in a statement. The accused was arrested near the Lea Market, CTD official stated.

Naseer was involved in scores of murder and extortion crimes. After crackdown against criminal gangs in Lyari operation, he fled from Karachi and went into hiding in Balochistan, according to CTD official. He was trying to regroup criminals in a new gang in the locality, according to the CTD.

In recent past several criminal gangs were involved in a spree of heinous crimes in Karachi, including murder, extortion, kidnapping for ransom and other offences causing a serious situation of law and order in the port city.

A coalition of criminal gangs had made Lyari and other areas of the old city as hostage. The law enforcement agencies including the Rangers and Police launched an operation against criminal gangs to control the law and order situation in Karachi.

Briefs

CDA starts installing birds nesting boxes

RAJA PERVAIZ

ISLAMABAD: Wary of steep decline in the birds count, the Capital Development Authority (CDA) has started installing nesting boxes at major parks and other green areas to spur population growth rate of the Federal Capital's avifauna. "Urban parks and green spots are important biodiversity hotspots in city that is why we have launched the initiative with the Kachnar Park (Sector I-8) where more than 100 colorful nests are set up to avert the growing decline in birds' population by providing a suitable habitat," Capital Development Authority (CDA) Director General Environment Naveed Tareen said on Wednesday. Talking to media, he said feeders were also placed in those boxes to meet dietary requirements of the birds. He said more major parks such as Lake View, Shakar-Parian, F-9 would also have such boxes under the initiative soon. Places in Margalla Hills National Park were being identified to install the nests for migratory birds, he added.

12,577 drivers fined for ignoring seat belt

SHAHEEN HANIF

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) has fined around 12,577 drivers for not fastening seat belt during the ongoing year. Around 5, 982 motorists were issued fine tickets for using mobile phone while driving, an official in ITP told media. A special campaign was underway to check traffic violations, following directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Qazi Jamil Ul Rehman, he said. He said the Senior Superintendent of Police (Traffic) Farrukh Rasheed was himself visiting the personnel, performing duties at main roads of the city to evaluate their performance. The official said Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) had directed all the deputied staff to ensure implementation on traffic laws irrespective of status and rank. The cops were asked to demonstrate patience and politeness while issuing traffic violation tickets to the road users, he added. The Senior Superintendent of Police (Traffic) has appealed the motorists to abide by traffic laws to avoid any untoward situation. The force issued tickets not as a punitive measure but to ensure safe road environment in the capital and to secure the lives of citizens, he remarked.

Four held for carrying illegal weapons

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Police have arrested four persons and recovered illegal weapons from their possession here on Wednesday, informed police spokesman. Sadiqabad police arrested namely Haji Mohammad and recovered 1 pistol 30 bore from his possession while Westridge police held two persons identified as Sajjad Ahmed and Mohammad Arsalan and recovered 02 pistols with 30 bores from their custody. Similarly, Naseerabad police arrested Muhammad Khan and recovered 01 pistol with 30 bores from his possession. Police have registered separate cases against all of them and started investigation. City Police Officer CPO Muhammad Ahsan Younas appreciated the performance of police teams and directed them to expedite the operations against those possessing illegal weapons.

Future of Pak-Russia ties promising, says envoy

Mr. Danila Ganich stated that the most promising areas of bilateral cooperation lie in the political arena, international affairs, Afghanistan, and multilateral forum such as UN, SCO, and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: "Pakistan-Russia relations are developing at a normal pace, but change cannot be expected overnight. As far as the future of bilateral ties is concerned, it is promising." This was stated by Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Pakistan, Mr. Danila Ganich in a public talk on "Future of Pak-Russia Relations". The event was organized and hosted by Center for Strategic Perspective (CSP) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) on April 14, 2021. Following an introduction by Director CSP, Mr. Najam, DG ISSI, Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry requested the Russian Ambassador to shed light on three major areas of interaction between Moscow and Islamabad: future of bilateral ties, particularly the most promising ones; areas of mutual interests; and, how think



tank like ISSI can help strengthen the relations with a great country like Russia. Responding to these three important aspects of Moscow-Islamabad

ties, Mr. Danila Ganich stated that the most promising areas of bilateral cooperation lie in the political arena, international affairs, Afghanistan, and multilateral fo-

rum such as United Nations (UN), Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). He said Af-

ghanistan is an identical long-term area of interest since both states want a peaceful settlement of the Afghan problem without any external interference. Touching upon economic dimension, he said that Pakistan seems to be more inclined towards western markets and that is a big hindrance in tapping the true potential of economic cooperation. Language, he said, is another barrier to fruitful cooperation. The talk was followed by a lively interactive question-answer session. The talk concluded with a vote of thanks by Chairman BoG, ISSI, and Mr. Khalid Mahmood who said that Moscow-Islamabad ties have enormous potential of cooperation and emphasized the need to expand the ambit of bilateral collaboration under the umbrella of Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Mr. Danila agreed to a request by Mr. Najam to put CSP in touch with relevant think tanks in Russia.

CDA to ensure provision of clean water to people

ISLAMABAD: The administration of Capital Development Authority (CDA) is committed for ensuring the 24 hours provision of water to the citizens. Water supply is continued in the city despite the deficiency of water in Simli dam. Water tanker services will be available 24 hours during the Holy Month of Ramadan. Decision has been taken to do challan of the citizens who would be found wasting water. Work is underway to resolve the issues of water leakage in the city. More water plants and filtration plants are being installed across the city. Decision has been taken to issue a complaint number of the department of water supply. According to detail, the department of water supply of CDA has closed 8 to 10 leakage points and preserved one million gallons water. One million gallon water has been provided to sectors I-10, and I-9 from Simli dam. Only 30 complaints are left out of 150. Work on leakage of pipelines is also underway. Issue of the Leakages of all the pipelines of the city will be resolved in coming two weeks. Due to lack of rains during winter 10 million gallons water has been decreased in Simli dam. 22 million gallons stored water in Simli dam will be used till July 15 by ensuring the careful use of water. 190 tube wells are working currently in the city. 05 more tube wells will be made functional in the city with in the time period of one week. Faults of tube wells are being corrected with in the 48 hours so that the citizens may not face problem. 10 more tube wells will be installed in two months. Water supply timing in sector I-10 has been increased to 1 hour and 30 minutes from just 45 minutes. Similarly, new pipelines have been installed in G 11 to ensure the water supply in the sector. The citizens of small houses of G series are being provided water 24 hours. Almost 200 complaints are being received on daily basis which are being addressed through water tankers on the same day. – DNA

EWA assured VC AIOU of its support

MEHMOOD ABDULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Our top priority is to ensure supreme interests of this esteemed national institution and we will cooperate with each other to achieve this objective, said Prof. Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum, Vice-Chancellor, Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) while congratulating the newly elected representatives of Employees Welfare Association (EWA) on the occasion of assuming charge of the EWA office. He said that it is our mutual responsibility to protect and enhance AIOU's prestige, credibility, and progress. Taking critical decisions is my key responsibility as the head of the institution. The Vice-Chancellor further, added that he is against the notions of prejudice and favoritism and recent EWA elections is a testimony of impartial and objective practices of his office. AIOU administration is striving to take practical measures to raise quality standards of education imparted, institutional progress and for students' facilitation. However, these measures would be effective only if every one of us strives hard and discharges their duty with an utmost sense of honesty and dedication.

Revival of SAARC crucial to bring Pak-India closer

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: There are mixed vibes on the both sides of the border that have the underlying message of hope. The revival of the SAARC in the present circumstances is crucial to bringing the arch rivals closer to each other. Several opportunities in the non-traditional spectrum are also awaiting political will from both sides. If not ripe, this is the right time to invest in the betterment of relations between India and Pakistan.

These were the views expressed by the panelist in a webinar on the prospects of India-Pakistan relations organized by the Institute of Regional Studies. While speaking to the participants, Dr. Salma Malik, Asst. Professor at Quaid-i-Azam University said that Pakistan has always come up with workable, and concrete solutions to the problems that India and Pakistan have been facing. In the case of Kashmir, Pakistan has offered a clear roadmap to resolve the conflict amicably. Unfortunately, the high

politics overshadowed the progress achieved in that regard, she added. On the role of SAARC, she was of the view that one cannot delist the organization in framing the overall relations between the two countries. SAARC did play a role in the past, and it has the potential to bring harmony between India and Pakistan in the future as well, she stressed. On Indian cartographic maneuvering, she said it is 'completely meaningless' since the facts do not support the Indian claims. She also argued that Indian

thought that 'Pakistan is nowhere in India's strategic calculation', is baseless. The Cold Start doctrine, the Surgical Strikes, are a few examples to undermine India's claim, she added. Dr. Suba Chandran, Professor at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore, India, was a bit optimistic on the prospects of improving relations between the two countries. The 'good gestures' cannot bring a major shift, the genuine impulse and the sustained efforts are required to grab the opportunities if there are any, he stressed.



ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Climate Change Zartaj Gul Wazir plants a sapling at the Pakistan Boy Scouts Club Association HQ near Islamabad Club. – DNA

Pakistan needs relief from PTIMF: Sherry Rehman

The PPP has always dealt with the IMF but in entirely different terms, where the market alone cannot ruthlessly determine prices, driving millions into poverty and joblessness in the name of stabilization goals

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: PPP Parliamentary Leader in the Senate, Senator Sherry Rehman said, "Pakistan's economy is going through unprecedented damage under Tabahi Sarkar's controversial and non-transparent IMF agreement, which has wreaked havoc on the Pakistani street by unleashing a slew tsunami of unbearable utility and food staple price hikes. The indirect taxes from Rs1000 to 1300 billion will add to dangerous levels of inequality. It has also indebted Pakistan to the point of crisis, and has now taken us into a situation where the federal bank is being made totally unaccountable to Pakistan's parliament or people. The PPP has

always dealt with the IMF but in entirely different terms, where the market alone cannot ruthlessly determine prices, driving millions into poverty, homelessness and joblessness in the name of stabilization goals. We had also given the State Bank reasonable autonomy to make monetary policy, but never proposed opening up the county to the ups and downs of international capital and its dictation. "What we see today is a very worrying meltdown without any matching capacity for increasing direct taxation or actually widening the tax net. As a result, today we are totally exposed to debt, impoverishment and misgovernance on an epic scale. From Rs 12.5 trillion, our total debt has reached 44 trillion rupees (around 90% of GDP), circular



debt is expected to skyrocket to a whopping Rs 4.6 trillion in 2023, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is down by 30% and World Bank estimates only 1.3% GDP growth this year which is the lowest in the region. If this was happening in another country,

the government would have resigned on their own," she added. Rehman said, "Tabahi Sarkar's tax target for the next fiscal will shift the major tax burden directly on the vulnerable who are already struggling at the bottom of the social pyramid. Under the IMF deal, FBR will increase indirect taxes by a massive Rs1.272 trillion (almost 2.8% of GDP) in the coming budget and the government will continue increasing petroleum levy on oil products to the maximum level (Rs30 per liter) this year and next year to collect about Rs510 billion this year instead of budgeted target of Rs450 billion, which will have downstream inflationary impacts on every item including food staples. The World Economic Outlook (WEO) 2021 report has projected unemploy-

ment rising by 0.5% to 5% during the current fiscal year. This is the same government which promised 10 million jobs and 5 million homes. What happened to that? People are now struggling for their basic needs." "According to PBS's Sensitive Price Index (SPI), prices of 18 essential food items have been hiked this week. Average Food inflation hovers around 18.7% which is the highest in South Asia. Instead of providing relief before Ramzan, Tabahi Sarkar continues to burden our people with extreme Inflation which has reached a seven-month high, and in March, it rose to 9.05%. All over the world, governments give special relief to people in this holy month but Tabahi Sarkar is too busy criticizing the opposition to care," she added.

Citizens following SOPs to stay safe

IBRAR KHAN

ISLAMABAD: A sizable number of citizens have started wearing face masks to save themselves and others to contain the spread of coronavirus pandemic in the federal capital. "It's encouraging to see that citizen taking precautionary steps for their safety from coronavirus," said a senior citizen of Sector G-6 Muhammad Hussain Jamal while talking to media on Wednesday. He said the government was taking different steps to stop the spread of coronavirus but citizens should also help the government to achieve the goal of stopping the spread of COVID. People should also follow standard operating procedures (SOPs) to stay safe. He said it's encouraging to note that the people were realizing that corona was reality and wearing a mask helped saving them from the effects of the corona. A resident of Sector F-6, Aysia Batool said everyone should follow the standard operating procedures (SOPs) set by the government for the protection from coronavirus. Similarly, a resident of Sector G-8 Markaz Muhammad Jamil replying to a question said it was his moral duty to wear a mask and ensure safety of himself and others. It is pertinent to mention here that an increase was being witnessed in the number of Covid-19 cases and positivity ratio in the federal capital.

Historical Alla Ditta caves getting momentum

ISLAMABAD: The popularity of historical caves of Shah Allah Ditta commonly known as the 'Sadhu ka Bagh' was getting momentum rapidly attracting a large number of people across the country. The 25, 00-year old Buddhist caves are located next to the shrine of Hazrat Shah Allah Ditta, a Mughal-era saint, in the Margalla Hills of the capital. A beautiful Shah Allah Ditta is a centuries-old village located at the foothills of the Margalla Hills. "Relics of the Buddhist era dating back to the 8th century can be found here along with burnt diyas and trees with amulets tied to them", commented Muhammad Awais who came from Abbottabad to visit these caves. Ghulam Rasool, a caretaker of the caves informed that they were taking care of these caves ever since their grandfather who was granted this responsibility from a Hindu family after participation. He said the archaeological evidence of this historical place indicated that the platform-like formations surrounding the area were first used for meditation by Buddhist monks and later by Hindu sadhus before Muslim ascetics took over during the Mughal era, he informed. – APP

IESCO notifies power suspension programme

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Wednesday issued a power suspension programme for Thursday in various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the time period from 09:00 am to 12:00 Noon Purmiana, Hassan Abdal, Burhan, Rashid Minhas, Industrial Estate, Munirabad, Garhi Afghan Feeders, From 09:00 AM to 04:00 PM Nogzi Feeder and suburb areas.

Briefs

130
protesters
booked
under A-T Act

MEHMOOD ABDULLAH

RAWALPINDI: Police have arrested more than 130 protesters in a crackdown against a religious party, whose members were out on the roads for the last couple of days due to arrest of its leader on charges of murder and terrorism.

A police spokesman talking to media on Wednesday said cases had been registered against scores of the protesters in different police stations of Rawalpindi under the Anti-Terrorism Act.

During the operation, he said more than 120 police officers and personnel were injured and admitted to the different hospitals for their medical treatment. Adding further, the spokesman said senior officers of the Rawalpindi police including SSP Operations Shoaib Mehmood, SSP Investigation Muhammad Faisal, and Divisional SPs also participated in the operation. City Police Officer CPO Muhammad Ahsan Younas said no one would be allowed to create unrest and anarchy under the guise of religion.

10 outlaws
arrested
weapons
recovered

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad police on Wednesday arrested 10 outlaws have been arrested. Under directions of SSP (Operations) Dr. Syed Mustafa Tanveer, the police launched a crackdown against criminals at different localities of the district.

According to details, Secretariat police arrested accused Asif and recovered one 30 bore pistol from him. Lohibher police arrested accused Saddat and recovered one 9mm pistol along with ammunition from him.

Industrial Area police arrested accused Aurangzaib and recovered one 12 bore gun and two 30 bore pistols along with ammunition from their possession. Noon police arrested two beggars' handlers namely Ahd Hussain and Akhtar.

Cases have been registered against the nabbed person and further investigation is underway from them. During a special crackdown police teams arrested six offenders from various areas of the city.

DIG Operations Afzaal Ahmad Kausar and SSP (Operations) Dr. Syed Mustafa Tanveer have appreciated Police performance.

SSP Operations Islamabad appealed to parents not to allow children to buy or fly kites because it is dangerous.

He also sought cooperation of citizens to make the lives of all secure and safe.

Islamabad
Police holds
farewell for
2 inspectors

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad police held a farewell ceremony in the honor of two outgoing inspectors here at Superintendent of Police (SP) (Saddar) office here on Wednesday.

Speaking on the occasion, SP (Saddar) Hamza Humayun recognized the services rendered by Inspectors Muhammad Rafique and Athar.

He also gave away police shields to Inspectors Muhammad Rafique and Athar and expressed good wishes for them.

He said retirement was part of the service as those joining the service has to retire on one day.

He asked the in-service police officials to do their best to earn respect for the department. He was of the view that public service only could earn good name for the officials and the department.

Muhammad Rafique and Athar joined Islamabad police as a Constable and earned the rank of Inspector through their performance and dedication. SDPOs and Station House Officers Saddar Zones and other police officers were also present at the occasion. — APP



ISLAMABAD: Senior PTI Leader Usman Dar called on Federal Minister for Inter Provincial Coordination, Dr. Fehmida Mirza in her office. — DNA

NAVTTTC efforts in improving
GPIW's standards lauded

Minister emphasized that women represent more than half of our population and they must be provided opportunities to contribute in national development which is possible through launching marketable skill development programs for them

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training, Mr. Shafqat Mahmood visited Govt. Polytechnic Institute for Women on Wednesday. Chairman NAVTTC Syed Javed Hassan welcomed the Minister and a detailed presentation on the Govt. Polytechnic Institute for Women (GPIW) was given to the Minister by the Executive Director NAVTTC Dr. Nasir Khan.

Mr. Shafqat Mahmood, Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training appreciated NAVTTC's efforts in improving the infrastructure of the insti-

tute and imparting quality skills to the women hailing from less developed areas of the country. The Federal Minister emphasized that women represent more than half of our population and they must be provided opportunities to contribute in national development which is possible through launching marketable skill development programs for them. The Minister reiterated that efforts must be made to transform GPIW into a state of the art center of excellence and assured full support for this. The Minister emphasized the need to form Alumni network of the students who have completed their



trainings to maintain the data of their employment as the main focus of the training programs is to enable the women to get employed in national and international

job markets. The Minister also visited various labs of the institute and assured full support for their upgradation according to the challenges of emerging tech-

nologies and international standards. Earlier, the Minister was apprised that enrolment of students in GPIW has been enhanced from 200 to more

than 600 candidates and most of the candidates hail from remote areas such as Gilgit, Chitral, Bahawalpur, Kohat etc. Moreover they are provided free of cost hostel facility within the institute. GPIW is providing trainings facilities to Pakistani female students in demand driven and emerging technologies such as cyber security, graphic designing, Microsoft office applications, industrial stitching etc. Further, he was informed that NAVTTC is planning for the international accreditation of the institute and is establishing a Job Placement and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) center in the institute.

13 educational institutes
sealed for a week

FAISAL MUNIR

ATTOCK: As many as 13 educational institutes have been sealed for one week by the district administration owing to appearance of corona positive cases among the teachers and students. The step has been taken to control the rising cases.

Meanwhile, number of positive cases in the district has reached up to 1741.

Those institutes which have been sealed include Government Girls High School Formali, Govt Boys High School Jalalia, Govt Girls High School Kalu Kalan, Govt Girls High School Waisa, Govt Boys High School Formali, Govt Girls High School Shamsabad, Govt Girls High School Baryar, Govt Boys High School Chhab, Govt Boys High School Dakhner, Govt Boys High School Mianwala, Govt Boys High School Jabbi Kisan, Govt Boys High School Bahtar, Govt Girls High School Jabbi Kisan. As per In-charge Dr. Kashif Hussain Incharge Corona Cell Attock, so far, 33251 patients were screened and out of these patients 1741 were found positive, 27140 were found negative while result of 1118 suspects is still awaited.

India involved in economic
strangulation of Kashmiris

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Parliamentary Committee on Kashmir Shehryar Khan Afridi on Wednesday accused the Indian occupational regime for implementing a vicious plan of systematic economic strangulation of Kashmiris in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJ&K).

Addressing launching ceremony of a book titled 'Kashmir: Demographic Shift, Historical Developments and Hindutva' at Kashmir Council, he said the book reflected the fact that the academia

of Pakistan was alive to the developments taking place in and around Kashmir region and as to how the Hindutva rule was involved in genocide of Kashmiris. The book, authored by Dr. Kashif Zaheer, Dr. Rashid Aftab and others, covers the Indian war crimes being committed in IIOJ&K with a specific reference to demographic changes, historical developments taking place in Kashmir and invasion of

Kashmir by Hindutva rule. He said after sidelining the Kashmiris and putting the political leadership of Kashmir behind bars, the Hindutva regime was involved in systematic economic strangulation of Kashmiris.

He said India was committing genocide of Kashmiris and information terrorism, demographic terrorism and cultural terrorism were being employed as major tool of genocide in IIOJ&K.

He urged the youth to become ambassadors of Kashmiris and share the atrocities being committed against the Kashmiris by the Illegally Occupied regime of India. The chairman underlined the need for extensive projection of the living conditions of half widows in IIOJ&K and massive use of pallet guns, which were barred to be used on animals, against Kashmiris. He said mysterious silence of the world was a big question mark for the humanity and the prosperous world should not compromise humanity for commercial and market interest.



ISLAMABAD: Officials giving free bas to customers at sasta Ramzan Bazaar. — DNA

RWMC executes special
cleanliness plan at
Sasta Bazars of district

SHAHEEN HANIF

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC), under its ongoing special cleanliness plan in the city to provide best waste management services, executed cleanliness awareness drive at all 14 Sasta Ramzan Bazars of the district through deploying its 79 workers in various duty shifts. The cleanliness drive was executed in Sasta Ramzan Bazars established at Murree, Kahuta, Kotli Satian, Gujar Khan, Taxila, Kallar Syedan

and Rawalpindi city. The communication teams of the company distributed special waste bags and pamphlets for guidelines about safe disposals of waste among traders and stall holders besides keeping 30 containers in Sasta Bazars established at Chakri, Dhok Hassu, Gulzar-e-Quaid, Allama Iqbal Park, Committee Chowk, Halderi Chowk, Khayaban-e-Sir Syed and Adyala. In addition, the RWMC deputed eight workers for performing cleanliness duties in two shifts at corona vaccination Center in Sports Complex Double Road.

RCCI VITF (Europe) urge diversification in exports

He said that the forum would help in tackling the challenges facing Pakistani exports with European countries

SAIFULLAH

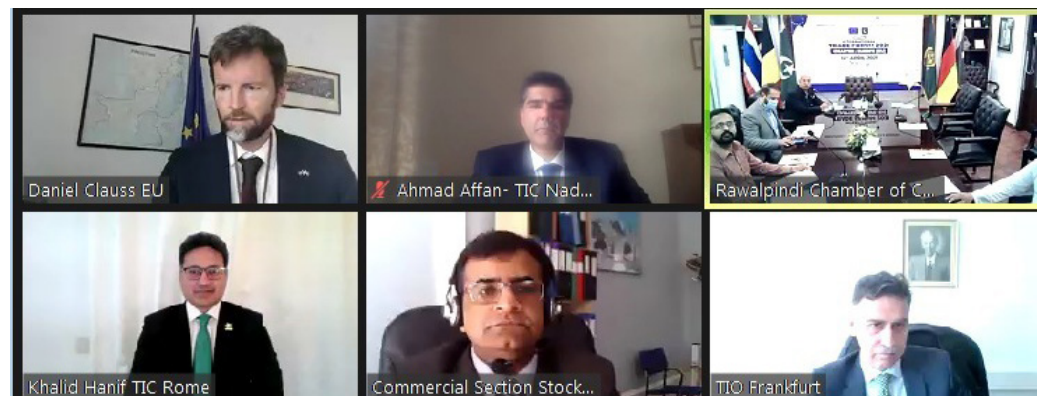
RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) organized the Virtual International Trade Forum chapter Europe. The purpose of the trade forum was to acquaint the business community in European countries with trade and export opportunities. The forum was well attended by large number of participants via video link, this includes, Daniel Clauss, Head of the Political, Trade and Communication Section, from Delegation of European Union to Pakistan, Khawaja Khurram Naeem, Commercial Counsellor in Germany, Ahmad Affan, Trade & Investment in Spain, Khalid Hanif in Italy, Rao

Rizwan-ul-Haq in Netherland and Ghulam Mustafa in Sweden. RCCI President Nasir Mirza, Senior Vice President Osman Ashraf, Vice President Shahraiz A Malik, Chairman Regional Committee

Khurshid Barlas, members of the executive Committee attended the forum while a large number of members participated via video link. In his keynote address, RCCI President Nasir Mirza said that it

was an important opportunity for Pakistani manufacturers to take advantage of GSP Plus and explore export opportunities in new sectors. Undoubtedly, Europe is a big market.

Despite the GSP Plus status, our exports are far below the required volume while the potential is there. He said that the forum would help in tackling the challenges facing Pakistani exports with European countries. Addressing the forum, Daniel Clauss, Head of Trade and Communication Section of the European Union of Pakistan, said that the European Union has given GSP status to many developing countries, including Pakistan. Pakistan can benefit from zero duty. 75% of exports from Pakistan are from the textiles sector. This is an important opportunity for Pakistan to extend its scope to other sectors as well. Focus on areas such as gems and jewelry, tourism, IT, mining and handicrafts, he added.

Markets to
close at 6pm,
dining till
midnight

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In light of the recent spike in Covid-19 cases in Islamabad, the local administration has imposed a set of new restrictions to half further spread of the virus.

According to a notification, indoor dining will remain banned.

However, outdoor dining is permitted from Iftar till midnight i.e. 11:59pm with strict adherence to the Covid-19 SOPs.

There will be a complete ban on outdoor dining on the weekends i.e. Saturdays and Sundays. Besides, there will be a complete ban on all kinds of indoor and outdoor events, gatherings, festivals, sports tournaments, cultural activities, social activities, religious gatherings etc. Amusement parks will also remain closed, however, walking/jogging tracks will remain open.

All markets will operate from Sehr till 6:00pm on weekdays and remain closed on the weekends.

Carpet
sector to be
patronized
for exports

RAJA PERVAIZ

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Carpet Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PCMAEA) on Tuesday said the government should provide all possible patronage to the export sector in the current difficult situation and in view of this, relief should be given in coming annual budget 2021-22.

These views were expressed by the senior vice chairman of the association Riaz Ahmed while addressing a review meeting held through video link.

Chairperson Carpet Training Institute Pervez Hanif, Senior Central Leader Abdul Latif Malik, Saeed Khan, Muhammad Akbar Malik, Ejaz-ur-Rehman, Major (ret'd) Akhtar Nazir, Daniel Hanif, Faisal Saeed Khan and others were also present on the occasion, said a press release issued here.

The difficulties faced by the handloom carpet industry and related artisans were also discussed in detail.

Riaz Ahmed said other countries, including traditional rivals, are earning revenue from the export of handmade carpets and the government should take notice and issue directions in regard to patronizing carpet industry.

He said the government to prepare upcoming budget for the next financial year 2021-21 keeping in view the situation created due to Coronavirus pandemic. Reiterating his earlier stance, he said facilities and incentives should be given to the export sector.

He hoped that the government to provide relief to the sector upcoming budget and the handloom carpet industry would be facilitated on the line of those countries, who were our traditional foreign rivals in the carpet sector.

30,000 ration
bags to be
distributed
among people

RAWALPINDI: Al-Khidmat Foundation Islamabad would distribute ration bags to more than 30,000 deserving people during Ramzan ul Mubarak. In a statement issued here, Al-Khadmit Foundation President Hamid Athar Malik said that the first consignment of Ramzan rations has been dispatched to the rural areas of Islamabad.

He informed that last year, 18,000 ration bags were distributed to facilitate the underprivileged class of the society.

He urged the philanthropists to come forward and help the orphan and destitute.

He said that it was our religious obligation to nourish the needy people with dedication. "We must build a society where all people of all faiths can live with confidence and dignity", he added. — APP

Missing exports

ACCORDING to the World Bank's Pakistan Development Update report, there exists an extraordinarily large gap between our actual and potential exports. The ramifications of losing out on our export potential, valued at an estimate of \$88.1 billion, are dire enough to undergo major restructuring of our national policy that sides with protectionism, through levying high import duties, rather than encouraging large-scale exports. Pakistan's missing exports is one of the highest in comparison to other countries, judging by the fact that the World Bank ranked us in the top quartile globally. What this entails, on a realistic level, is that industries have failed to encourage exports due to stagnating production across the board, especially for value added products. As a result, we have lost over \$1.74 billion that would have been revenue through export taxes alone and have incurred an additional loss of over 893,000 jobs.

In our efforts to protect the domestic market from international economic competition, we are losing out on immense profits that can be reinvested into the country and sacrificing countless opportunities for earning for the average citizen. As a fix, our government must revamp our trade policies to include the reduction of import duties so that local industries are encouraged to increase their exports to match their desired market share. Furthermore, the government must explore different trade enhancement schemes that target high-potential destinations for exports rather than funnelling their limited finances in reaching low-potential areas that serve no actual benefit to the country.

Lastly, approaching other countries with high missing exports, particularly in Central Asia, may be lucrative for Pakistan since it can encourage trade partnerships for achieving mutual objectives. Rectifying the problem of missing exports is only as hard as the authorities make it out to be; if immediate steps are taken to acknowledge, address and propose solutions to the problem then the future looks to be promising.

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National census

SURPASSING the controversy that surrounded the 2017 census, the Council of Common Interests has cleared a path for the authorities to carry out a new national population and housing census by the end of 2021 by securing a majority vote. Given the animosity that dominated previously, especially since concerns expressed by the Sindh government were disregarded entirely, a fresh start was the only logical step that could be taken by the federal authorities. Initiatives for a national census have been scarce, to say the least, over the course of years. Governments in Pakistan had never adhered to the traditional practice of carrying out a census every ten years—a problem that needed to be fixed immediately. However, the solution is not to have multiple surveys within the span of 5 years—it is a humongous, expensive and tedious task that requires immense effort that cannot be deployed so often.

In light of this, the time is ripe for the government to direct all measures towards ensuring that this census is carried out to completion and in accordance to the interests of all provinces. Considering that the entire process will cost Rs23 billion, carrying out more than one every decade is not feasible and thus, we must learn from mistakes made in the past and start anew. Special consideration should also be given to previously neglected demands like the provision of photocopies of the data form to each individual during house enumeration.

The failure of previous governments to accept this request is what led to Sindh rejecting the census and believing that the province was being conspired against. Removing all apprehensions now, before the process actually begins, is vital so that come 2023, the national census is accurate and truly reflective of mutual co-operation between all of Pakistan's provinces. Redoing the census means that it will be free from the errors of the past in theory. It is hoped that the government on this occasion can also extricate this national exercise from party politics and the resultant controversy.

Uzbek-Pak virtual summit: An expert opinion

Dr. Mehmood Ul Hassan Khan



Both leaders discussed on various issues of mutual interest and showed their satisfaction on the different ongoing projects and results of inter-MFA political consultations and intensification of inter-parliamentary ties. Both leaders emphasized the need to further strengthening interaction within international organizations, interaction in the spheres of defense and security and last but not least, the role of Pakistan in the Afghan settlement process

PRESIDENT of Uzbekistan H.E. Shavkat Mirziyoyev virtual summit with Prime Minister of Imran Khan of today is a historic event which has actually opened a new window of opportunity for both the countries to excel in diverse sectors of economy, trade & commerce, security and defense cooperation, energy & food cooperation and last but not least, collaboration in textiles and tourism. It is culmination of Uzbekistan's foreign policy to create peace, stability and security in the region and beyond. It reflects Uzbekistan's President Mirziyoyev strategic foreign policy priority of 2020 based on development, good convergence and mutual beneficial relations with all the Central Asian Countries and South East Asia and especially Pakistan being the easiest and short route for greater regional connectivity. Resultantly, the volume of inter-regional trade among the Central Asian countries has increased by an average of more than 50 percent annually which shows successful of holistic conflict resolution policies of Uzbekistan's President Mirziyoyev which is now paying its numerous socio-economic-politico dividends.

It is indeed height of commercial diplomacy of Uzbek president Mirziyoyev who has been pursuing comprehensive structural economic reforms to liberalize its macro-economy, develop private sector, seek more and more FDIs, befitting joint ventures, beneficial land reforms, assurance of private ownership, relaxation & incentives of taxes and customs duties and last but not least, pledging of national currency to international currency basket to further strengthen its face value and increase more and more exports in the days to come. It is encouraging that during (2017- 2020), more than 300 agreements contracts were signed between Uzbekistan and the countries of the region which actually has further enhanced Uzbekistan's FDI ratios. Both leaders discussed on various issues of mutual interest and showed their satisfaction on the different ongoing projects and results of inter-MFA political consultations and intensification of inter-parliamentary ties. Both leaders emphasized the need to further strengthening interaction within international organizations, interaction in the spheres of defense and security and last but not least, the role of Pakistan in the Afghan settlement process. During the virtual summit because of ongoing pandemic of COVID-19 both leaders committed to expand cooperation in trade, economic, investment, transport and communication spheres and of course work jointly for the further strengthening regional connectivity. Projects in the spheres of education, health care, culture, "ziyorat tourism were also discussed. Enhanced interaction between the leading universities of Uzbekistan and Pakistan in the fields of the textile industry, agriculture, tourism, study of the Urdu and Pashto languages were also discussed. Being prominent regional expert of Uzbekistan & CIS I term today's virtual summit as a giant step towards a sustainable strategic partnership between the two brotherly countries. It will definitely provide an opportunity for the

development and strengthening of bilateral ties between Uzbekistan and Pakistan.

Uzbekistan president has been striving hard for further regional connectivity through holistic approach of friendly relations with all neighbors since its presidency. His annual speech of 2020 to his nation and its key note address to the SCO clearly demonstrate importance of peace and stability in Afghanistan and regional connectivity with Pakistan through sea and road means. In regard, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Uzbekistan have already signed a roadmap for a multi-billion-dollar rail project that is expected to boost trade relations between Central and South Asia. CPEC mega railway project ML-I may play a decisive role for the completion of this trans-regional railways projects of three countries in the days to come. Uzbekistan Deputy Prime Minister Sardor Umurzakov said stability and peace in Afghanistan is a key for economic growth and regional cooperation. The proposed 573km railway project will link Uzbekistan's capital Tashkent through Afghanistan capital Kabul and Pakistan's northern city of Peshawar. The project, which is expected to take five years for completion enjoys the backing of international lending agencies including the World Bank.

In the start of this year, the three countries signed a request seeking a loan of \$4.8bn from world financial institutions for the project. Pakistan and Uzbekistan have also agreed to form a joint working group (JWG) for future coordination in connection with "access to Pakistani seaports". On their visit to Pakistan, Karachi, Uzbekistan Railways Deputy Chairman Akmal Kamalov along with a delegation called on Maritime Affairs Minister Ali Zaidi. The delegation apprised the minister of their visit to the ports in Karachi and Gwadar, and discussed the way forward for cargo transportation. The deputy chairman of Uzbekistan Railways, Akmal Kamalov, said that a significant volume of Uzbekistan's cargo and containers would be availing the facilities at the Karachi Port Trust (KPT). At an interaction with the visiting delegates, Maritime Affairs Minister Syed Ali Haider Zaidi assured them of providing an enabling environment to promote maritime and trade development between the two countries. The KPT has also assured the Uzbek side that the port had sufficient capacity to handle their trade.

Previously, Uzbekistan, relies on Iranian seaport of Bandar Abbas for external trade but now seriously exploring other viable options and is prioritising Pakistani ports because of short distance, being more economical, secure and due to some other reasons. Uzbekistan is also engaging with Pakistan on the development of two options the first is the Trans-Afghan railway project while the second is the road route via China. In this connection, Uzbekistan showed its keen interest to join the Quadrilateral Traffic in Transit Agreement (QTTA), an agreement between China, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan to facilitate transit traffic and trade. Pakistan has been supporting Uzbekistan in this

regard also. The road project under this agreement would provide an alternative link between Pakistan and Central Asia while bypassing Afghanistan through the Karakoram Highway which connects Gilgit-Baltistan to China's Xinjiang region and further on to Central Asia. In the last month, Prime Minister Imran Khan had assured Uzbekistan Foreign Minister Dr Abdulaziz Kamilov of complete facilitation in access to Pakistani ports. Mr Khan, said that Pakis-tan's Karachi and Gwadar ports could become "the gateway to the landlocked Central Asia as Pakistan provided the Central Asian Republics the shortest route to international seas". Pakistan, would facilitate Uzbekistan's access to its ports he further added. Mr Khan welcomed the proposed Trans-Afghan railway project and underscored Pakistan's commitment to support all efforts for the Dr Kamilov's visit was also focused on regional connectivity and he extended invitations to Mr Khan and Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi for participation in Central Asia-South Asia Connectivity Conference in Tashkent in July. During the delegation-level talks, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi and his Uzbek counterpart Dr Kamilov exchanged views on enhancement of economic cooperation, mutual support in international fora, regional connectivity and tourism promotion. The two foreign ministers, expressed satisfaction at the progress achieved in advancing the rail connectivity between the two countries and agreed on early completion of the Trans-Afghan railway project.

Mr Qureshi called for establishing direct air connectivity between the two countries to boost up trade and tourism. He also stressed the need for quick facilitation of visas for businessmen and tourists. It is suggested that reciprocal Trade Houses between Tashkent and Islamabad may further accelerate mutual economic ties. A joint investment company "Pak-Uzbek Investment Company (PUIC) may be giant step towards immense infrastructural development between the two countries. Reciprocal economic free zones especially in textiles, garments, industry seeds, agriculture development and pharmaceutical industry would be a right step in right direction.

A joint tourism promotion company would attract more and more tourists from both sides in the days to come. Direct commercial cargo and preferential treatment to Uzbekistan's cargos at Karachi and Gwadar Seaports would further enhance volumes of bilateral trade between the two countries. Close liaison among the education institutes and universities would be a constructive approach for the further strengthening of human and cultural ties between the two countries. Constant joint military drills, technical military education, armed forces training and production would further strengthen scope, utility and future prospects of bilateral relations between the two countries.

— Dr. Mehmood Ul Hassan Khan, Director: Geopolitics/Economics, Regional Expert: Uzbekistan & CIS, Member Board of Experts, CGSS, Islamabad

Peace in South Asia: a question to PM Modi

Munir Ahmed



South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is dormant for years just because of the Indian hegemonic approach. About 2 billion people are suffering from poverty, hunger and impacts of climate change. Spending on defense security has increased multifold because of the strategic conflicts while human security is not on the priority of the regional agenda

THE world has seen how a chaiwala, Narendra Damodardas Modi, gradually climbed the ladder of political hierarchy in India to become the 14th prime minister in 2014. Born and raised in Vadnagar, a small town in northeastern Gujarat, he succeeded to become the Chief Minister of Gujarat from 2001 to 2014. He is the Member of Parliament for Varanasi, and a member of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a Hindu nationalist paramilitary volunteer organisation. He is the first prime minister born after India's independence, the second non-Congress one to win two consecutive terms after Atal Bihari Vajpayee and the first from outside the Congress to win both terms with a majority in the Lok Sabha. The rise of BJP and RSS is based on Hindutva that can be described in simple words as 'the India is only for Hindus'. The gradual rise and growth of the concept has tarnished the Indian image as one of the biggest secular democracies. Perhaps, it does not make any difference to PM Modi, BJP and RSS but it does have an impact on the lives of millions living in the region, and the peace in South Asia. Who would disagree with the notion that it ultimately has an impact on the Asian continent and the globe?

In the recent decade, we have seen decline of human rights in many parts of India that gave a rise and intensity to the separatist movements. India is also evidently blamed for the insurgencies in Balochistan and northern parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Pakistan. Other neighbouring countries are also consistently raising voice against Indian fiddling in their territories, social and political systems. What else could be the worst form of human rights violation and India state terrorism in Illegally Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJ&K) that has change their

legal status and intense rise in the humanitarian crisis since August 5, 2019? It would have served the purpose of the peaking up Hindutva but what about the human rights, one of the basic responsibility of the state.

Prime Minister Modi's administration has tried to raise foreign direct investment in the Indian economy and reduced spending on healthcare and social welfare programmes. In the garb to improve efficiency in the Indian bureaucracy, he has centralised the power by abolishing the Planning Commission. This policy has deprived many anti-BJP states and cities of their rightful budget for their development plans. It is commonly termed that under Modi's tenure, India has experienced democratic backsliding.

Following BJP's victory in the 2019 general election, his administration revoked the special status of Jammu and Kashmir. His administration also introduced the Citizenship Amendment Act, which resulted in widespread protests across the country. Described as engineering a political realignment towards right-wing politics, Modi remains a figure of controversy domestically and internationally over his Hindu nationalist beliefs and his alleged role during the 2002 Gujarat riots, cited as evidence of an exclusionary social agenda. South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is dormant for years just because of the Indian hegemonic approach. About 2 billion people are suffering from poverty, hunger and impacts of climate change. Spending on defense security has increased multifold because of the strategic conflicts while human security is not on the priority of the regional agenda. It is just because the Indian government sabotaged the SAARC platform, its summits and the action plans for the regional cooperation for development, peace and economic prosperity.

No one can challenge or change the reality that one day we all have to die with the maturity of our lives. The question is how we want to be known as after death. Same is my question to Prime Minister Modi. Sir, you know what havoc you have done to your own state and people, and to the part of Kashmir you occupied, and to the region after making the SAARC dormant.

You started off as the public advocate of basic rights to the people of your native village and surroundings, and then to your present approach. Fine, you have achieved a global galore whatever it is. If I may dare to ask Prime Minister Modi that if he would like to be remembered as a rigid and extremist Hindu or a more humane leader after he would be no more?

After getting historic blames of deepening and widening cracks within his own country – India, and global criticism and defame by peaking up state terrorism in Illegally Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJ&K), Prime Minister Narendra Modi still have an unrivalled historic opportunity to add a golden feather in his crown and global appreciation by reactivating SAARC and maturing comprehensive and inclusive frameworks to ensure human rights situation within his own country, his part of Kashmir and in the neighborhood, by a framework to resolve conflicts and eliminate terrorism and militancy, by initiating poverty alleviation action plan and larger economic framework, and by all inclusive regional climate action agenda. We all together can make the region a peaceful and prosperous piece of land on the map.

— The writer is a freelance journalist and broadcaster, Director Devcom-Pakistan, a policy advocacy and outreach think tank in Islamabad. His email: devcom.pakistan@gmail.com Twitter Handle: @EmmaveSyed

Briefs

UN envoy calls for truce in Yemen

FOREIGN DESK

NEW YORK: The UN's special envoy for Yemen urged the country's warring parties Tuesday to strive to ensure a "lasting and sustainable peace" during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. "I call on the parties to silence the guns and allow Yemenis to observe the month in safety and dignity," Martin Griffiths said in a Ramadan message. Griffiths wished Yemenis a "blessed and peaceful" Ramadan. "I hope this holy month of reflection and compassion will provide an opportunity for all of us to come together, think of those who are suffering, and overcome our differences," he said. Yemen has been beset by violence and chaos since 2014, when Houthi rebels overran much of the country, including the capital, Sana'a. The crisis escalated in 2015 when a Saudi-led coalition launched a devastating air campaign aimed at rolling back Houthi territorial gains. According to UN estimates, the conflict in Yemen has claimed the lives of at least 233,000 people, with millions more facing starvation and in need of humanitarian assistance.

Turkey hails 'new era' with Egypt

FOREIGN DESK

ANKARA: Turkey's foreign minister has said a new period was beginning with Egypt as Ankara pushes ahead with normalising relations with Cairo, local media reported. Turkey and Egypt broke off relations after the 2013 overthrow of the country's first democratically elected President Mohamed Morsi, who was supported by Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan. That year, Turkey and Egypt expelled each others' ambassadors and froze their relations. Turkish officials said last month Ankara had established the first diplomatic contacts with Cairo since 2013 as part of wider efforts to fix ties with other Middle Eastern rivals. "A new era is beginning," Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu was quoted as saying by NTV broadcaster. Asked about possible ambassadorial appointments, Cavusoglu said: "We have not discussed [that] yet. There will be a meeting at the level of deputy ministers and diplomats. It will come onto the agenda there. A date is not clear yet."

Army chief lauds Japan role...

From Page 01

cooperation in various fields were discussed. COAS said that Pak values its relations with Japan and acknowledged Japan's efforts for regional stability. Visiting dignitary praised Pakistan's role for peace & stability in the region particularly Afghan Peace Process and vowed to further enhance ties with Pakistan.

U.S. envoy extends Ramazan...

From Page 01

month of Ramazan teaches us patience and sacrifice. The US envoy delivered her message in Urdu language. She said this month also calls for self accountability.

WHO push to tackle rampant rise of diabetes

GENEVA: The World Health Organization on Wednesday turned the spotlight on the insulin market – and its domination by three Big Pharma giants – in a fresh bid to tackle the rapid rise of diabetes. The WHO marked the 100-year anniversary of the discovery of insulin by launching a new Global Diabetes Compact aimed at boosting efforts to prevent diabetes and giving access to treatment to everyone who needs it. – Agencies

'Azerbaijan-Belarus relations are far from any problems'

Aliyev said he was interested to discuss with Lukashenko restoration of Karabakh due to Belarusian companies' experience in creating agro-industrial complexes

DNA

BAKU: President Ilham Aliyev has said that there are close political ties and a high level of trust between Azerbaijan and Belarus. Aliyev made the remarks during the one-on-one meeting with the Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko in Baku on April 14. The president said that there are reciprocal regular visits by the two countries' leaders, which has brought dynamism to the relations. "That is why we are seeing good results in the framework of economic cooperation. Despite the pandemic last year, our turnover has increased, and so have exports from Azerbaijan to Belarus. Therefore, today we will discuss in more detail the issues related to industrial cooperation," Aliyev said he was interested to discuss with Lukashenko restoration of Karabakh due to Belarusian companies' experience



in creating agro-industrial complexes. "It is gratifying that we will continue to support each other in the international organizations in which we participate. In other words, our relations are far from any problems. Our regular

contacts allow us the opportunity to simply summarize the work done, outline further steps and move forward as two friends and two partners," Aliyev went on saying. In turn, commenting on liberation of Azerbaijan's

Armenian-occupied territories, Alexander Lukashenko said that Azerbaijan has taken a huge step towards achieving its national dream. Furthermore, he said that the Azerbaijani-Belarus relations "in political and economic areas are

very diverse in terms of specific directions, they are very appropriate and nothing can harm them. We do not hinder anyone and no one can hinder us." The meeting continued in an expanded format with the participation of delega-

tions and was followed by press statements by the two presidents. On the same day, Azerbaijan and Belarus signed three memorandums of understanding on agriculture, tourism and energy with the participation of Aliyev and Lukashenko. The signed document are "The Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation between the Food Safety Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food of the Republic of Belarus in the field of veterinary medicine", "The Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation between the State Tourism Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the National Tourism Agency of the Republic of Belarus in the field of tourism" and "The Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation between the Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Belarus in the field of energy".

US vows to revitalize NATO ties

FOREIGN DESK

BRUSSELS: The US is committed to rebuild transatlantic ties and revitalize the alliance within NATO, the country's secretary of state said. "I've come here to express the United States' steadfast commitment to the alliance, which has been the cornerstone of peace, prosperity, stability for the transatlantic community for more than 70 years," Antony Blinken said at a joint news conference with NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg. Blinken said the US wants "to revitalize the alliance to make sure it's as strong and effective against the threats of today, as it has been in the past." Stoltenberg welcomed the Biden administration's determination to strengthen the alliance, terming Blinken's first NATO visit a "unique opportunity to start a new chapter in the transatlantic relationship." He assured Blinken that he was "here not among allies but among friends" and stressed that "only Europe and America together in NATO" would be able to face the security challenges of the present and future.

PM Imran, Uzbek President...

From Page 01

security in South Asia, and underlined the imperative of peaceful resolution of the Jammu & Kashmir dispute. The Prime Minister also highlighted Pakistan's efforts to facilitate the Afghan peace process for lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan. He stressed that this historic opportunity must be seized by the Afghan parties to achieve an inclusive, broad-based and comprehensive negotiated political settlement. The Prime Minister also underscored the importance of countering Islamophobia and promoting inter-faith harmony. Following Agreements/MoUs were signed on the eve of the Virtual Summit: i. MoU for Developing Further Cooperation in the Field of Agriculture. ii. Agreement on Mutual Recognition in the Fields of Conformity Assessment of Products, Standardization, Metrology and Technical Assistance. iii. MoU on Defence Cooperation. President Mirziyoyev reiterated his invitation to Prime Minister Imran Khan to attend the high-level International Conference on regional connectivity, to be held in Tashkent in July 2021. Prime Minister Imran Khan thanked President Mirziyoyev and reiterated his invitation to him to visit Pakistan at the earliest convenience. The two leaders expressed confidence that the understandings reached during the Virtual Summit will further deepen bilateral cooperation and contribute towards forging a stronger, multi-dimensional relationship between the two countries. It was agreed to continue the Summit-level political dialogue in future. A Joint Declaration was adopted at the conclusion of the Summit.

Allies mull Afghan pullout...

From Page 01

Amid this backdrop, there was intense tension between the Europeans and the United States over aid, especially under former US President Donald Trump. There was a diplomatic crisis between the US and Germany. America's announcement to withdraw its troops aims to achieve the goals of the UN-sponsored Afghanistan Conference in Istanbul on April 24, as the Afghan Taliban threatened on Tuesday that if the US-Taliban agreement signed on February 2020 in Doha for the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan was not honoured, they will boycott the Istanbul Conference. The Istanbul Conference is to decide the formula for power sharing between the Afghan Taliban and the Ghani administration and other warring factions in Afghanistan. Pakistan, Iran, Russia, China and the US will participate in the Istanbul Conference. Ten years ago, a similar conference was boycotted by Pakistan held in Bonn in 2011. The reason for the boycott was the bombing of Pakistan's tribal areas by NATO forces in which a number of Pakistani soldiers were martyred.

ECB cancels warm-up games

SPORTS DESK

KARACHI: England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has announced that after discussions with the boards of India, New Zealand, Sri Lanka and Pakistan, it has been decided to cancel their scheduled men's tour matches against first-class counties. The teams will now play intra-squad matches as ECB plans to ensure safety and focus on delivering the safest possible environment. Pakistan were due to face Northamptonshire and Worcestershire on July 2 and 4 respectively as part of the preparations ahead of three ODI and as many T20Is against England. ECB Chief Executive Officer, Tom Harrison, said: "We are looking forward to staging a memorable summer of men's and women's international cricket when fans are set to return to venues. "Ensuring the safest possible environment for international cricket is our first priority and we are appreciative for the understanding of our fellow boards."

Pakistani climbers to ascend Annapurna

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Team Pakistan pushes for the summit in the hope that when the sun shines, it shines on the green flag waving freely at the summit of Mt Annapurna. In the end, it turned out to be 1st Pakistani expedition to Annapurna. Annapurna climbers are at Camp 4, preparing to set off for the summit tonight. Sherpas established the camp yesterday at 7,000m. Pakistani climbers Sirbaz Khan and Abdul Joshi. Sirbaz Khan hails from Aliabad, Hunza, who started his mountaineering career in 2016. Sirbaz has a mission 14 summit and had already, climbed five 8,000m peaks. Sirbaz Khan became the first Pakistani climber to scale Mt Lhotse (8,516metre) located in Nepal. The young climber reached the summit at 09:47 a.m. on May 14, 2019 along with a 12-member team of climbers. He climbed Nanga Parbat also known as Killer Mountain (8,124m) in Pakistan, successfully reaching the summit on 2 October 2017. He also climbed K2 as part of the same expedition. It was his first summit of this peak. Pakistani climbers also spent last night there. The rest of the climbers joined them this morning from Camp 3 in "fair wind" conditions, according to Chhang Dawa Sherpa. Most of them belong to Seven Summits Treks team, which includes Viridiana Alva-



rez, Badia Bonilla, and Mauricio López from Mexico; Lu Chung Han from Taiwan; Uta Ibraini from Albania-Kosovo; Angiolo Lavizino from the U.S.; Jaroslaw Zdanowicz and Waldemar Kowalewski from Poland, Sergei Kondrashkin, Dmitri Sinev, and Aleksandr Lutokhin from Russia; Antonios Sykris from Greece and Moeses Fiamoncini from Brazil. These last two climbers planned to climb without O2. Sykris confirmed that they would set off at 11 pm Nepal time (7:15 pm in Central Europe, 1:15 pm Eastern Daylight Time).

PTI leaders demand fresh intra-party polls in Canada

OPF Chairman Burhan Khan asks PTI's high command to probe party affairs in Alberta

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders pointed out a 'systematic rigging' in the intra-party elections, recently held in the western Canadian province of Alberta. The intra-party elections, held in Calgary cosmopolitan city, was supposed to be a contest among two groups – Team Insaaf, headed by Syed Seerat Abbas, and Team Pakistan, headed by Gul Rehman Khan. Both the sides had made over 1200 votes – the biggest number in any city or region in a foreign country. It is pertinent to mention here that the Canadian branch of the ruling party transferred over 72,000.00 (Canadian) dollars to the party's head office in Pakistan after the collection of 60 (Canadian) dollars from each 1200

members, registered with the party's overseas branch. Despite the corona pandemic and not so favourable financial position, the Canada-based party leadership collected and transferred a huge amount from Calgary cosmopolitan city just to support their party and Imran Khan's vision for a new Pakistan. In return, Team Pakistan leader Gul Rehman Khan said that the community has to face a division after a rigging by the election committee which clearly favoured Team Insaaf to win in the intra-party polls just to get upper executive seats at the national level. Overseas Pakistani Forum (OPF) Canada Chairman Burhan Khan (OPF) said that nations are not brought down by a war or natural disasters but they have been brought down by dishonesty, manipulations, corruptions and divisions. "We know road to power is

full of pain," he said, adding that power hungry don't care of anyone and anything as they just want to cling to the power. He said that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. "We the overseas members ask our party's higher command to investigate this matter immediately in order to avoid further division among the community and declare this election null and void," he said and demanded fresh elections under a third party surveillance. "PTI is not among those parties which support corrupts and corrupt practices," Burhan Khan said, and asked party leaders at centre to avoid interference. "We are all educated people and we know about the 'centre of corruption' in any party," he said. Gul Rehman Khan pointed out that the election commission turned their blind eye and deaf ears to party members.

ICC bans former Zimbabwe skipper Streak for 8 years

HARARE: Former Zimbabwe cricket captain Heath Streak has been banned from all cricket for eight years after he accepted five charges of breaching the ICC Anti-Corruption Code. Streak was charged as a participant under the Code by virtue of his status as the coach of Zimbabwe from 2016 to 2018 and as the coach of various domestic teams. The charges are as follows: 2.3.2 – disclosing inside information under both the ICC Code and various domestic Codes, in circumstances where he knew or should have known that such information may be used for betting purposes. In particular, he disclosed inside information in relation to matches in the 2018 Tri-Series involving Zimbabwe, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, the Zimbabwe v Afghanistan series in 2018, the IPL 2018 and the APL 2018. 2.3.3 – directly or indirectly soliciting, inducing, enticing, persuading, encouraging or intentionally facilitating any participant to breach the Code. In particular, he facilitated or attempted to facilitate the introduction of four different players, including a national captain, to someone he knew, or should have known, may have wanted to approach them to provide inside information for betting purposes. 2.4.2 – Failing to disclose the receipt of any gift, payment, hospitality or other benefit that the participant knew or should have known was given to them to procure a breach of the Code or that was made or given in circumstances that could bring the participant or the sport of cricket into disrepute. – Agencies

Babar stars in Pak's crushing win over SA

Chasing a target Of 204 runs, Rizwan and Babar hit the acceleration button in the third over after scoring only 11 runs in the first two. Babar hit Linde for consecutive boundaries before Rizwan dispatched the left-arm spinner for a six over midwicket

DNA

CENTURION: Highest record-opening partnership (197) for Pakistan between Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan helped Men in Green take a 2-1 lead over South Africa in the T20I series on Wednesday. Chasing a target Of 204 runs, Rizwan and Babar hit the acceleration button in the third over after scoring only 11 runs in the first two. Babar hit Linde for consecutive boundaries before Rizwan dispatched the left-arm spinner for a six over midwicket. The opening duo accumulated 15 runs off the 4th over of the innings to keep Pakistan up with the required run-rate. Pakistan needed to make use of the powerplay

and the opening duo responded by scoring 64 in the first six overs. Babar, who scored fifty in 49 balls in last game, brought up his fifty in this match in just 27 balls, to bring up Pakistan's 100 in just 10 overs for no loss. Rizwan, who was dismissed on first ball in previous game, also redeemed himself by scoring his second fifty in this series in just 32 balls. After reaching the number 1 spot in ODIs earlier today, Babar continued to make this day even more memorable by hitting his first T20I hundred in 49 balls, to keep Pakistan on track of the chase. Babar was dismissed on 122, highest score by a Pakistan batsman in T20Is, but not before taking Pakistan close to the finish line.



Rizwan remained unbeaten on 73, complete the customary finish and win the match for Pakistan by nine wickets. Earlier, fifties from South African openers, Aiden Markram and Janneman Malan, helped South African post 203/5. After being asked to bat first, opener Aiden Markram deposited Mohammad Nawaz for a six in the second over of the innings to break the shackles. Shaheen Afridi, who conceded only two runs in his first over, was smashed for a four followed by a six in his second over by Janneman Malan. Despite a bowling change, Malan and Markram continued to attack and took 19 runs off the first over of Hasan Ali. The openers completed team's fifty inside five overs to give an ideal

start to the Proteas. Faheem Ashraf tried to take the pace off the bowling but Malan was equal to it as he dispatched the all-rounder for two magnificent boundaries in the 9th over. At the other end, Aiden Markram cashed on his rich vein of form as he brought up his third consecutive fifty in the series off just 25 balls, to bring up South Africa's hundred in 10 overs. Pakistan needed a wicket and Nawaz provided the breakthrough by removing Markram for 63. South Africa promoted all-rounder George Linde to counter the spin threat from Nawaz. Linde took advantage of the angle and hit the left-arm spinner for a six in the eleventh over.

Briefs

20 people killed in road accident in Egypt

FOREIGN DESK

CAIRO: At least 20 people were killed in a deadly road accident in southern Egypt on Wednesday, the Ministry of Health said. The ministry said in a statement that 36 ambulances were dispatched to the accident, which took place as a bus and a truck collided on the eastern desert road in Assiut province. The accident resulted in the death of 20 people and the injury of three others, who were taken to hospitals. Local media, including Youm7 daily newspaper, reported that "a team from the Public Prosecution office has started an investigation into the accident to find out its cause". Traffic accidents take place in Egypt due to high speed and lack of safety standards, according to the official Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, amid government efforts to open new roads and expand highways to help reduce accidents.

Biden to address joint session of Congress

WEB DESK

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden will address a joint session of Congress for the first time on April 28. "The President has accepted the invitation of the Speaker of the House to address a Joint Session of Congress on April 28, the night before his 100th day in office," the White House said late Tuesday in a prepared statement. It comes after House Speaker Nancy Pelosi sent a letter to Biden formally inviting him to address a joint session of Congress. "Nearly 100 days ago, when you took the oath of office, you pledged in a spirit of great hope that 'Help Is On The Way.' Now, because of your historic and transformative leadership, Help Is Here!" said Pelosi in the letter. She asked Biden "to share your vision for addressing the challenges and opportunities of this historic moment."

Somalia: Landmine explosion kills 15

WEB DESK

MOGADISHU: At least 15 people were killed and several wounded on Wednesday when a minibus carrying civilians hit a landmine in southern Somalia, officials said. The minibus, en route from the capital Mogadishu for Jowhar in the Middle Shabelle region, was blown up by terror group al-Shabaab near the Balad district, killing 15 innocent people, Somali government spokesman Mohamed Ibrahim Moalimu said in a statement. Ibrahim Ali Nour, a radio journalist in the town of Jowhar, told Anadolu Agency by phone that he saw several survivors of the landmine explosion. Although the Horn of Africa government said al-Shabaab is behind the attack incident, no group has yet claimed responsibility. The terror group has been behind countless attacks in Somalia, including a 2017 car bomb attack in Mogadishu that killed some 300 people.

20 school children killed in Niger

NIAMEY: At least 20 students from a nursery school were killed on Tuesday in a fire that ravaged the establishment, located in the Nigerien capital Niamey, according to local media on Wednesday. "Twenty classes in straw huts were consumed by the fire and unfortunately 20 children were killed," Col. Sidi Mohamed, the head of the fire-fighters told the country's national broadcaster Tele Sahel. Reached by Anadolu Agency, Halidou Mounkaila, the secretary-general of the National Trade Union of Contractual Agents and Civil Servants in Basic Education said: "25 out of 38 classrooms in the school were devastated by the fire," adding that "the provisional death toll is 20." – APP



NEW YORK: Director General WHO, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus and Louise Mushikiwabo, secretary general Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF) posing for a photo after signing MoU between WHO and OIF. – DNA

Russia seeking to 'provoke' Ukraine conflict: Germany

Moscow has in recent weeks amassed tens of thousands of troops as well as tanks and artillery near Ukraine's eastern border

FOREIGN DESK

BERLIN: For the second time in a week, Germany has raised concerns over Russia's military build-up along its border with Ukraine, as fears mount over a possible escalation in hostilities in the region. Moscow has in recent weeks amassed tens of thousands of troops as well as tanks and artillery near Ukraine's eastern border. It also mobilised troops in the annexed Black Sea region of Crimea, which it seized in March 2014. Meanwhile, fighting has intensified in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk and Lugansk regions, where government forces have battled Russian-backed separatists since the rebels seized a

swath of territory there in April 2014. German Defence Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer on Wednesday told ARD public television she believed Russia was "trying everything to provoke a reaction" and was "just waiting for a move, so to speak, from NATO, to have a pretext to continue its actions". Her comments follow Chancellor Angela Merkel's plea last Thursday to Russian President Vladimir Putin to pull back the troops. Kramp-Karrenbauer stressed that NATO, of which Germany is a member, would stand by Ukraine in the conflict but added that neither the alliance nor Ukraine itself would be drawn into Russia's "game". She praised Kyiv for reacting in a "sober" manner so

far and voiced doubt over Moscow's claim that it had sent the troops for combat drills because of "threats" from NATO. "If it is a manoeuvre like the Russian side says, there are international procedures through which one can create transparency and trust," she said, adding that Germany was monitoring developments. A day earlier, NATO, which counts Ukraine as an ally, urged Russia to end its "unjustified" military build-up. Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg, speaking alongside Ukraine's foreign minister Dmytro Kuleba at NATO's headquarters in Brussels, called the movement of forces the "largest massing of Russian troops" since Russia annexed Crimea.

Also on Tuesday, the US, a leading NATO member, intervened in the crisis. President Joe Biden called on Putin to reduce tensions in the region and proposed a summit of the estranged leaders to tackle a number of disputes. The call, which marked the second conversation between the two world leaders since Biden took office in January, came after Russia warned Washington to keep US warships due to arrive in the Black Sea this week well away from Crimea. "The president voiced our concerns over the sudden Russian military build-up in occupied Crimea and on Ukraine's borders, and called on Russia to de-escalate tensions," the White House said. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry

Peskov said that Biden's offer of talks would be "studied". The Russian navy on Wednesday began a military exercise in the Black Sea ahead of the arrival of the US warships, Russian news agencies reported. The drills involve surface ships from Russia's Black Sea fleet, which is based in Crimea, as well as helicopters and planes. They will rehearse firing at surface and air targets, agencies said. Moscow has blamed NATO and the US for turning Ukraine into a "powder keg" with increasing arms supplies to Ukraine. While Kyiv has welcomed shows of Western support, they fall short of Ukraine's desire for full NATO membership – which Moscow

opposes. Ukraine has accused Russia of ignoring its request for talks between the two countries over Russia's military build-up. The Kremlin has repeatedly denied interfering in Donbas, but Ukraine and several Western countries have said separatist forces in the region have been armed, led, funded and aided by Russia. On Tuesday, in the first public description of the military build-up, Russian defence minister Sergei Shoigu said Moscow had moved two armies and three paratrooper units to its western border as part of a large snap drill meant to test combat readiness and respond to what he called threatening military action by NATO.

Biden admin. to proceed with \$23 billion arms sales to UAE

The Trump administration told Congress in November it had approved the sale to the UAE as a side deal to the Abraham Accords, an agreement brokered by the US in September

FOREIGN DESK

WASHINGTON: The administration of US President Joe Biden has told Congress it is proceeding with more than \$23bn in weapons sales to the United Arab Emirates, including advanced F-35 aircraft, armed drones and other equipment, congressional aides said on Tuesday. A State Department spokesperson said the administration would move forward with the proposed sales to the UAE, "even as we continue reviewing details and consulting with Emirati officials" related to the use of the weapons. The Democratic president's administration had paused the deals agreed to by former Republican President Donald Trump in order to review them. The sales to the Gulf nation were finalised right before Trump left office.



The Trump administration told Congress in November it had approved the sale to the UAE as a side deal to the Abraham Accords, an agreement brokered by the United States in September in which the UAE agreed to normalise relations with Israel. In the last months of the Trump admin-

istration, Israel reached deals with the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco as part of the accords. The \$23.37bn package contained products from General Atomics, Lockheed Martin and Raytheon Technologies, including 50 F-35 Lighting II aircraft, up to 18 MQ-9B Unmanned Aerial Systems and a package of air-to-air and air-to-ground munitions. Some US legislators have criticised the UAE for its involvement in the war in Yemen, a conflict that has fuelled one of the world's worst humanitarian disasters and are concerned that the weapons transfers might violate US guarantees that Israel will retain a military advantage in the region. Israel said it did not object to the sales. A legislative effort to stop the sales failed in December, as Trump's fellow Republicans in Congress backed his plans.

UAE to send rover to the Moon in 2022

DUBAI: Lunar exploration firm iSpace said Wednesday it will transport a United Arab Emirates unmanned rover to the Moon next year, as the Gulf state seeks to expand its space sector. The UAE – made up of seven emirates including the capital Abu Dhabi and freewheeling Dubai – announced in September 2020 that it planned to launch the "Rashid" rover by 2024. The rover "will be transported to the Moon on iSpace's lunar lander" during a mission in 2022, the Japanese company said in a statement. iSpace "will deliver the Emirates lunar mission's 'Rashid' rover to the Moon, provide wired communication and power during the cruise phase, and engage in wireless communication on the lunar surface". The UAE is a newcomer to the world of space exploration but is quickly making its mark. In September 2019, the oil-rich country sent the first Emirati into space as part of a three-member crew that blasted off on a Soyuz rocket from Kazakhstan for an eight-day mission. Then in February, its "Hope" probe successfully entered Mars' orbit on a journey to reveal the secrets of Martian weather, making history as the Arab world's first interplanetary mission. iSpace, which was founded in 2010, will use Elon Musk's SpaceX (Falcon 9) rocket for its first mission to launch a lander next year – set to blast off from Florida in the United States. Dubai's ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum has said that the Emirati-made rover will cover "areas not yet reached in previous exploration missions". – APP

Putin gets second dose of corona vaccine

FOREIGN DESK

MOSCOW: President Vladimir Putin said Wednesday he had received the second dose of a vaccine against the coronavirus and encouraged Russians to follow his example. "I want to inform you that right now, before entering this room, I also received the second vaccination," he said during a televised meeting.

"I assume that you, taking care of yourself and your loved ones, will do the same and follow my example," he added. The 68-year-old received his first dose on March 23 in private, declining to say which of Russia's three vaccines – Sputnik V, EpiVac-Corona or CoviVac – he had been administered.

In late March he called on Russians to get inoculated against the coronavirus, saying the country would be able to end all measures to limit the spread of the virus when around 70 percent of adults had been vaccinated.

He predicted that would happen by the end of the summer.

At the time he said that some 6.3 million of the country's 144 million people had received a first dose of a vaccine.

Despite beginning its vaccination campaign in early December ahead of most countries, Russia has struggled to inoculate its citizens.

Many Russians are sceptical of the vaccine, with a recent opinion poll showing fewer than a third are willing to get inoculated.

Although Russia has been among the hardest hit by Covid-19, it has lifted nearly all of its pandemic restrictions, with health officials saying the worst of the country's outbreak passed over the winter.

But infections in Moscow, the epicentre of Russia's outbreak, have begun climbing again recently, and authorities on Monday suspended most flights with Turkey citing rising cases there.

As of Wednesday, health officials had reported more than 4.6 million infections and 104,000 fatalities from the virus.

Turkey fines Google \$36.6m

WEB DESK

ANKARA: Turkish authorities on Wednesday fined Google 296 million Turkish liras (\$36.6 million) for violating the country's competition law. Turkey's Competition Authority said Google violated the law by complicating organic search results in the content services market by prominently placing text ads at the top of its general search results, excluding its competitors. The investigation included Turkish Google Reklamcılık ve Pazarlama Ltd., Google International LLC, Google LLC, Google Ireland Ltd., and Alphabet – Google's parent company – it added.

Joint Declaration of Uzbekistan – Pakistan Summit

1. The President of the Republic of Uzbekistan H.E. Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev and Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan H.E. Mr. Imran Khan held their first Virtual Summit on April 14, 2021.

2. President Shavkat Mirziyoyev and Prime Minister Imran Khan reviewed the existing status of bilateral relations and discussed its enhanced future trajectory. They also exchanged views on issues of regional and global interest, including the situation of COVID-19 pandemic.

3. Recalling the centuries-old linkages between the peoples of the two countries, the two leaders highly appreciated holding of the first Virtual Summit as a landmark event in boosting Uzbek-Pakistan relations.

4. The two leaders agreed to enhance their multi-faceted bilateral cooperation in all areas of common interest. They emphasized closer coordination at international fora on issues of mutual convergence.

5. The leaders also decided to regularly convene existing political and economic mechanisms between the two countries, including consultations between their respective Foreign Ministries and to strengthen parlia-

mentary collaboration.

Cooperation at International Fora

6. The two leaders expressed satisfaction on the level of bilateral cooperation within the framework of international organizations, including at the UN. They reaffirmed their resolve to continue to support each other at the UN, SCO, OIC, ECO and other international and regional fora.

7. As members of the UN Human Rights Council, the two sides also expressed readiness to support joint actions to curb human rights violations and combating Islamophobia as well as strengthening interfaith harmony.

8. They also underlined the significance of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as an important platform.

9. The two sides exchanged views on the Afghan peace process and reaffirmed their support for a negotiated political solution for lasting peace in Afghanistan and the region.

Security and Defence Cooperation

10. The two leaders expressed their readiness for maintaining regular dialogue and building constructive cooperation in the area of security and defence. They expressed satisfaction at

the level of defence cooperation.

In order to further promote cooperation in this area, the two leaders agreed to continue mutual participation in joint military exercises and trainings and to cooperate in the field of professional development, exchange of best practices, and collaboration between military institutions of the two countries.

11. The two leaders expressed readiness to expand cooperation between law enforcement agencies of the two countries, in particular in the fight against terrorism and drug trafficking.

Trade and Economic Cooperation

12. The two leaders agreed that cooperation in the trade and economic sphere was a key priority to consolidate partnership between the two countries. They also recognized the enormous economic potential for a mutually beneficial relationship.

13. They agreed to enhance volume of bilateral trade through adopting joint measures by diversifying of trade, increasing business-to-business contacts, exchange of trade delegations and extending visa facilitation.

14. They also noted interest to increase industrial cooperation between companies and entrepreneurs of Uzbekistan and Pa-

kistan, especially the growing inter-provincial cooperation after the visit of Governor of Punjab to Namangan region of Uzbekistan.

15. The two sides agreed to fast track finalization and signing of the Preferential Trade Agreement to enhance bilateral trade by eliminating trade barriers.

16. The two sides recognized the presence of huge opportunities to cooperate in spheres of agriculture, pharmaceuticals, textile, leather and chemical industry, energy and information technology. They agreed to promote mutual collaboration in these sectors.

Connectivity

17. The two leaders underscored the importance of regional integration and connectivity as cornerstone of economic development and progress. They welcomed exchange of high-level visits in the fields of trade, railway and aviation in this regard.

18. The leaders supported the project for the construction of "Termez – Mazar-e-Sharif – Kabul – Peshawar" Railway line, as an important initiative to establish railway connectivity from Central Asia to the Arabian Sea through Afghanistan and Pakistani Sea ports of Karachi, Gwadar and Qasim.

19. The two leaders are in favor

to resume regular flights between Uzbekistan and Pakistan by their respective airlines after stabilization of COVID-pandemic situation.

20. The importance of convening the Uzbekistan-Pakistan business week and business conference in Tashkent in July, 2021 was also discussed.

Culture and People-to-People Contacts

21. President Mirziyoyev and Prime Minister Imran Khan recalled the long-standing cultural, historic, religious and spiritual links between the two countries. They agreed to further enhance cultural relations and people-to-people contacts and welcomed proposals to build up collaboration between leading universities, research institutions, libraries and museums of the two countries and to conduct joint research on Baburi heritage.

22. They further identified development of tourism as priority area of common interest in particular the spiritual (Ziyarat) tourism between the two countries.

Agreements Signed

23. Following Agreements/MoUs were signed on the sidelines of the Virtual Summit:

– MoU for Developing Further

Cooperation in the Field of Agriculture.

– Agreement on Mutual Recognition in the Fields of Conformity Assessment of Products, Standardization, Metrology and Technical Assistance.

– MoU on Defence Cooperation.

Conclusion

24. The two leaders highly appreciated the opportunity offered by the Virtual Summit for productive engagement and dialogue. They expressed confidence that the understanding reached during the Summit will further deepen bilateral cooperation and contribute towards developing cooperation in a frame of multi-dimensional relationship. They agreed to continue the Summit-level political dialogue in future.

25. The President of Uzbekistan re-confirmed his invitation to Prime Minister Imran Khan, to attend the high-level International Conference on regional connectivity to be held in July 2021. Prime Minister Imran Khan thanked the President and reiterated his invitation to him to visit Pakistan at a convenient time.

26. The present "Joint Declaration of Uzbek-Pakistan Summit" was adopted as the outcome of the Virtual Summit on Wednesday, 14 April 2021.

Briefs

Sindh CM
hints at
imposing more
restrictions

DNA

KARACHI: The Chief Minister of Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah has hinted at imposing further restrictions in the province as coronavirus cases continue to surge. Addressing a press conference in Karachi, CM Murad Ali Shah said that if the coronavirus standard operating procedures (SOPs) are not properly followed, the virus could rapidly spread across the province.

Speaking about the current restrictions in place, he said that the transportation of goods has not been stopped by the government, while only public transport has been banned for the safety of the people.

"If the situation gets critical, then the federation will be asked to impose more restrictions on public transport," he said, adding that he had earlier requested the Centre to impose a ban on inter-provincial public transportation to contain the virus.

The chief minister said that [despite its efforts] the government of Sindh is unable to vaccinate as many people as it should. "This is a big failure [for the government]," adding that even if someone has been inoculated, they should continue to observe the government's mandated SOPs to keep themselves safe.

Covid infects
470 more
in Sindh

ATHAR SUFI

KARACHI: As many as three more patients of Coronavirus died overnight lifting the death toll to 4,533 and 470 new cases emerged when 9,923 tests were conducted. This was stated by Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah in a statement issued here on Wednesday. He added that three more patients of COVID-19 lost their lives lifting the death toll to 4,533 that constituted 1.7 percent death rate.

Murad Ali Shah said that 9,923 samples were tested which detected 470 cases that constituted 4.7 percent current detection rate. He added that so far 3,425,531 tests have been conducted against which 270,309 cases were diagnosed, of them 95.8 percent or 258,999 patients have recovered, including 466 overnight. The CM said that currently 6,777 patients were under treatment, of them 6,428 were in home isolation, 12 at isolation centers and 337 at different hospitals. He added that the condition of 310 patients was stated to be critical, including 38 shifted to ventilators.

According to the statement, out of 470 new cases, 262 have been detected from Karachi in which East 124, South 62, Central 53, Korangi ten, West eight and Malir five.

PNS NASR
arrives at
Karachi Port

DNA

KARACHI: Pakistan Navy Ship NASR arrived at Karachi Port after completing three months long successful Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Mission to African countries.

During the deployment to African continent, PNS NASR delivered 1000 tons of rice as gift from people of Pakistan at Djibouti, Sudan, Benin and Niger. The Ship also undertook goodwill visit to Mombasa, Kenya. The HADR mission was planned after Niger was hit by flash floods and drought in 2020, causing widespread devastation. During port calls, the Ship was extended warm welcome by the higher authorities of host navies. As a gesture of goodwill and humanitarian support, food aid was handed over to the local authorities of Djibouti, Sudan, Benin and Niger. The dignitaries of host countries paid special tribute to the Government of Pakistan and Pakistan Navy for this kind gesture and humanitarian assistance. Besides, during interactions warmth and mutual desire to further strengthen the bonds of friendship between Pakistan and the visiting countries was also highlighted.

Housing sector's promotion
to strengthen economy: PM

MAHBOOB AHEER

SARGODHA: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Wednesday said the government's special focus on housing and construction sector would strengthen national economy, stabilize industrial growth and generate employment for youth.

Addressing at the foundation-laying ceremony of affordable housing project under the Naya Pakistan Housing Programme in Sargodha district, the prime minister said promotion of housing sector would not only ensure economic activity, but also help the common man realize his dream of owning a home. Under the project, a total of 1,175 houses measuring three marlas each will be constructed at six places in Sargodha district. The Punjab government will provide land and other facilities for



the project. The construction work will be carried out by the Frontier Works Organization. The Bank of Punjab taking charge of mortgage facility will enable deserving people to pay total price of the house in easy installments.

Imran Khan said for the first time in country's history, a mortgage house finance was launched at such a big scale, but at lowest markup rate. He said the low-cost housing scheme would be expanded to all tehsils of the country by year's end.

Imran Khan regretted that delay in accommodation projects by previous governments led to mushroom growth of slums which had no basic amenities of life. He said no one in the past demonstrated empathy for the poor and kept them living in harsh conditions without proper shelters.

The prime minister stressed the important role of banks in lending loans to public and mentioned that the clearance of foreclosure law of banks after a long resulted into finalization of the

massive housing project. He pointed that banks were not providing proper services to those aspiring loans and called upon the relevant authorities to give the staff proper training to improve public dealing. The prime minister lauded Chief Minister Buzdar for successfully overseeing across-the-ministerial housing project. He appreciated that the Punjab government had taken lead in providing land for the project and expressed confidence that Khyber Pukhtunkhwa would also follow suit. Chief Minister Punjab Sardar Usman Buzdar said the project would be expanded to 146 tehsils. He said the monthly installment had been set at Rs 10,000 to make the project affordable. He said Rs 0.3 million subsidy by the government of Punjab would facilitate the people, adding that the Punjab cabinet had approved Rs 3 billion for the purpose.

PM extends
Baisakhi
greetings
to Sikh
community

ZUBAIR AHMED

ISLAMABAD, Prime Minister Imran Khan took to Twitter on Wednesday to extend greetings on Baisakhi festival to the Sikh community. "Wishing our Sikh community a happy Baisakhi festival. We have granted Sikh Diaspora & Indian Yatrees special permission to visit their holy Gurdwaras in Pak & attend the Baisakhi rituals," he wrote on his official Twitter handle.

Prime Minister Khan said they will be facilitated with "Langar, transport and accommodation" under strict Covid protocols. Baisakhi marks the beginning of a new harvest season. More than one thousand Sikh pilgrims have reached Pakistan to pay a visit to their religious sites on their religious festival of Baisakhi.

They arrived in Lahore through the Wagah border.

PM ready
to listen to
pro-Tareen
lawmakers

DNA

SARGODHA: Prime Minister Imran Khan said that he is ready to listen to the reservations of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's like-minded group of 20 to 30 party MNAs and MPs who have become active since investigations were opened against PTI leader Jangir Tareen over the sugar crisis.

The prime minister was responding to a question about the reservations expressed by this group. It is said that they had even reportedly requested a meeting with him.

"I am ready to listen to everyone, but people should understand why all of this happened. The price of sugar increased by Rs26 in just over a year," said Imran Khan.

To a question, Imran Khan said the sugar price had been increased by 26 rupees in one year and the mill owners extracted 126 to 140 billion rupees from the pockets of people. "And as a result of this, around Rs120 billion to Rs130 billion have gone from the people's pockets to the sugar mill owners. Obviously, it is the government's job to safeguard the public interest." The prime minister said that the government ordered the FIA to conduct an inquiry which revealed how sugar mill owners have formed a cartel and manipulates prices.

NAB rejects Sputnik
price fixing
allegations

DNA

ISLAMABAD: National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has rejected Mujeeb-ur-Rehman Shami's allegations that it may have been involved in fixing prices of Russian Covid-19 vaccine Sputnik V, saying the bureau has nothing to do with the price fixation. A NAB spokesman said in a statement that Mujeeb-ur-Rehman Shami's remarks in his Dunya TV programme "Nuqt-e-Nazar" aired on April 12, 2021 that "Corona's medicine is coming - sputnik dispute is there, how to fix the price, because NAB will have role," is totally baseless, concocted and against the facts as NAB

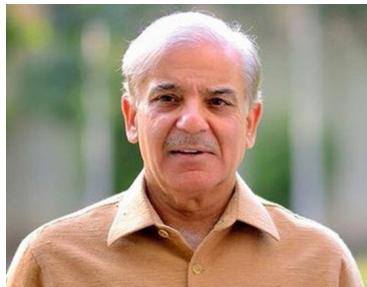
has nothing to do with the price fixation. Blaming NAB is part of the ongoing misleading propaganda campaign against NAB, and ignorance of the facts by the analyst. This is also the part of an ongoing propaganda campaign against the subjudice cases of NAB being heard in different learned accountability courts without obtaining the official point of view of NAB. NAB has decided to send legal notice to Mujeeb-ur-Rehman Shami in accordance with the law for spreading baseless propaganda against NAB, tarnishing its image and distorting facts about subjudice references which are under adjudication in the learned Accountability Courts.

LHC grants bail to Shahbaz
in money laundering case

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Wednesday granted bail to PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif in an assets beyond means case. Geo News reported. The PML-N president had approached the high court against his arrest by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) in the corruption reference also involving his family members.

Shehbaz was granted bail against two surety bonds of Rs5 million each. The LHC had earlier reserved its verdict after hearing arguments from both parties. Shehbaz was taken into custody on September 28 from the high court premises after his bail application was rejected. During today's hearing, the NAB prosecutor



argued that Shehbaz had no sources of income other than the Ramzan Sugar Mills and whatever he has now was acquired through TTs sent from abroad. To this, Shehbaz's counsel said if any witness of NAB, out the 110 witnesses, testifies against his client, they would withdraw the bail petition. The court asked the NAB prosecutor

why NAB was investigating the case if it falls under the jurisdiction of the Federal Board of Revenue.

According to NAB, the PML-N leader has acquired assets worth Rs7,328 million which are disproportionate to his known sources of income.

The reference states that the assets are held under the name of his close family members and benamidars who had no sources of income and added that the suspects committed offences of corruption and corrupt practices as envisaged under the provisions of the National Accountability Ordinance 1999.

In December 2019, NAB had issued orders to freeze 23 properties belonging to the former Punjab chief minister and his sons Hamza and Suleman Shehbaz over the allegation that they were acquired through corrupt means.

India records 1,84,372
new covid-19 cases

DNA

NEW DELHI: India on Wednesday reported a record single-day rise of 1,84,372 new Covid-19 cases with more than a thousand deaths in the last 24 hours, as the country reels under the second wave of coronavirus. The death toll increased to 1,72,085 with 1,027 daily new fatalities the highest since October 18 2020, the Union health ministry data updated at 8 am showed. Registering a steady increase

for the 35th day in a row, the active cases increased to 13,65,704, comprising 9.84 per cent of the total infections. The active caseload was at its lowest at 1,35,926 on February 12 and it was at its highest at 10,17,754 on September 18, 2020. The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 1,23,36,036, while the case fatality rate has further dropped to 1.24 per cent, the data stated. Meanwhile, national Covid-19 recovery rate has dropped for the third day in a row to 88.92%.



ISLAMABAD: SAPM on Information and Broadcasting, Raoof Hasan, called on President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. —DNA

Pakistan promoting regional
linkages to deal with challenges: FM

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi says Pakistan is adhering to the policies of economic diplomacy and promoting regional linkages to deal with the challenges of economic implications. Chairing a high-level meeting regarding corona pandemic,

economic diplomacy and regional security in Islamabad on Wednesday, he said, in this context, we have converted our geo-political priorities into geo-economic priorities. He said the corona pandemic has adversely affected the world's strongest and most powerful economies. The Foreign Minister said international community

will have to play its due role to stop grim human rights violations in IIOJK and establishing lasting peace in the region. He said Pakistan will continue its sincere efforts for regional peace and stability including the Afghan peace process. Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi has said Pakistan offers pivot

otal geo-economic location, regional connectivity, a huge consumer market, and skilled youth to investors. He said this while inaugurating Pakistan's country presentation at the virtual Sustainable Development Goals Investment Fair 2021, organized today by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs in New York.

Pakistan for steps to ensure
safety of UN peacekeepers

FOREIGN DESK

NEW YORK: Voicing concern over the increasing number of attacks against United Nations' peacekeepers, Pakistan has underscored the need for ensuring their safety and security as they serve in hot spots around the world. "We have lost 160 of our bravest peacekeepers over the last six decades, with three of these casualties coming in the last one year," Aamir Khan, deputy permanent representative of Pakistan to the UN, told the Security Council's Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations. As a leading troop contributor to UN peacekeeping operations, he said, Pakistan was therefore most interested in the discussions on safety and security of peacekeepers. "It is in this spirit that we

Munir Akram for joint
efforts to fight virus

UNITED NATIONS: The president of UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Pakistan's Ambassador Munir Akram, has urged the global community to support efforts to mobilize public and private investment in coronavirus-hit developing countries to spur economic development.

"I believe that the United Nations can play a key role in accelerating private investments for sustainable infrastructure," he told a panel of experts who held a meeting on the sidelines of the high-level ECOSOC's forum on Financing for Development (FFD). — DNA

call for upholding the fundamental principles of peacekeeping," Aamir Khan said, pointing out that Pakistani troops have served in some of the most successful UN peacekeeping missions, such as Sierra Leone, Burundi, Timor-Leste and Liberia. Referring to the surge in attacks against the peacekeepers

and the rising fatalities, the Pakistani representative stressed the need for the UN to recommit to the protection of its personnel, apply its duty of care to every security incident and ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice. "This is vital to preserve the sanctity of blue flag," he said, as also essential to upholding

the Security Council resolution 2518, which calls for investigating and prosecuting promptly those responsible for attacks on UN personnel. With peacekeeping environments becoming volatile, Aamir Khan made some recommendations aimed at strengthening the safety and security of peacekeepers. These included training in specialized capabilities, such as expertise in counter Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) and mine action as well as critical enablers including multi-role engineers, aviation and medical units that contribute to personal security; addressing gaps between mandates and resources; more impact-driven peacekeeping partnerships for capacity-building and the primacy of politics in establishing and sustaining peace.

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