



# Islamabad POST

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**So far, the global response to COVID19 is a test we have failed**

Detailed News On Page-01

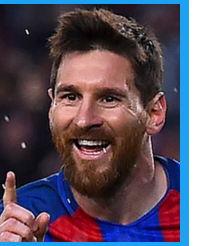
**India should restore special status of IIOJK**

Detailed News On Page-07



**Leo Messi fires Barcelona to win the Copa del Rey**

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**Sehr & Iftar Timings**

CITY	SEHR	IFTAR
ISLAMABAD	04:02 am	06:43 pm
FAISALABAD	04:07 am	06:40 pm
LAHORE	04:02 am	06:35 pm
KARACHI	04:45 am	06:57 pm
SARGODHA	04:07 am	06:42 pm

**FIQA JAFARIA**

CITY	SEHR	IFTAR
ISLAMABAD	03:52 am	06:53 pm
FAISALABAD	03:57 am	06:50 pm
LAHORE	03:52 am	06:45 pm
KARACHI	04:35 am	07:07 pm
SARGODHA	03:57 am	06:52 pm

## Multiple deaths in banned TLP, police clashes

Police says the violence occurred after "miscreants" – an apparent reference to TLP workers – allegedly attacked a police station and abducted the DSP

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Clashes erupted in Lahore between police and workers of banned Tehreek e Labaik Pakistan. Police said the violence occurred after "miscreants" – an apparent reference to TLP workers – allegedly attacked a police station and abducted the DSP, adding that it acted only in "self-defence". An operation against the TLP activists is still underway. "Today in the early morning, miscreants attacked Nawankot Police Station where Rangers and Police officers were trapped inside the police station and DSP Nawankot kidnapped and taken to the markaz," the Punjab police said in a statement, referring to the TLP headquarters. It added that "at least one oil tanker with 50,000 litres of petrol has been taken by the miscreants to the markaz." According to the statement, the miscreants were armed and attacked Rangers/police with petrol bombs. "Police and Rangers pushed them back and took back the possession of the police station," it said, adding that police did not plan or conduct any operation against the mosque or the madrasah. "The action, if any, was in self-defence and to protect public property." On Thursday, a notification declaring TLP as a proscribed organisation was issued by the Ministry of Interior shortly after the federal cabinet approved a summary to ban the party.

## 'No negotiations underway with TLP'

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Interior Sheikh Rashid Ahmed on Sunday said the government was not negotiating with the outlawed Tehreek-i-Labaik Pakistan (TLP) and no one would be allowed to challenge the writ of the government. "No negotiation process is underway with the TLP. We have been trying to reach a consensus with them for the past two months but they are not ready to compromise on their demands," he said while talking to media here on Sunday. He explained when an organisation was proscribed, bank accounts and identity cards of its stakeholders were blocked and their movement was restricted. Regarding blockage of roads and highways across the country by the supporters of the proscribed organization, the minister said 192 locations across the country had been sealed by the banned outfit, out of which 191 had been cleared. "The situation is a bit tense at Yateem Khana Chowk in Lahore where the Jamia Masjid Rahmatul Lil Alameen is located," he said adding, "Currently, all roads including the GT Road and the Murree Expressway are open for traffic".

## Briefs

### President urges to follow SOPs

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi Sunday once again urged the nation to fully implement the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) as the country witnessed a sharp spike in coronavirus cases in a single day. On his twitter handle, the president said the country had reported 6127 new Covid-19 cases during the last 24 hours which was close to peak figures during the 1st wave of the pandemic on June 13. He stressed upon the people to implement SOPs to contain its further spread. "6127 new Covid-19 cases reported yesterday, close to the peak in the 1st wave of 6825 on Jun 13. So PLEASE implement SOPs. 1- Wear Masks 2- Implement social distancing in bazaars and all activities 3- Ensure 3ft distance in masjid prayers. Wash hands frequently," he posted.

### Prestige, repute of NAB increased

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD, Justice Javed Iqbal, Chairman NAB has said that NAB has solid evidence against big fish in the cases related to money laundering, fake accounts, misuse of authority, assets beyond known sources and cheating the public at large. NAB has filed 1269 corruption cases having an accumulative value of Rs 950 billion which are subjudice in the learned accountability courts. Chairman NAB said that NAB during 2020 has recovered Rs 321.4829 billion from corrupt elements which is a record achievement in only one year as compared to other years which shows commitment and dedication of NAB of officers towards performance of their national responsibilities in eradication of corruption from the country.

## Classes from grades 9-12 begin in staggered manner

Rest of the classes to start after Eid; strict virus SOPs to be followed: Shafqat Mahmood

ZUBAIR AHMED

ISLAMABAD: Federal Education Minister Shafqat Mahmood on Sunday announced important decisions taken during a meeting of the health and education ministers of all provinces. The minister took to Twitter to share the decisions taken during a meeting of the health and education ministers of all four provinces. He announced decisions taken during the special meeting with consensus. The minister said classes of grades 9-12 will begin in affected districts in a staggered manner so students can prepare for their upcoming board exams. "A special meeting of Health and Education Ministers of all provinces and AJK/GB was held today. The following decisions were taken with complete consensus. 1) Classes 9 to 12 would commence in affected districts in a staggered manner to allow students to prepare for

## Highest single day death toll in 2021

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Amid the deteriorating coronavirus situation, Pakistan has recorded 149 new deaths on Saturday – the second-highest coronavirus fatalities since the pandemic emerged last year. This also makes it the highest number of coronavirus deaths reported this year, a worrying sign of the third wave of the coronavirus is intensifying across the country. The country's highest death toll from the virus till date was recorded on June 19, 2020 when 153 people passed due to the virus. As per the official statistics issued by National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC), 6,127 new positive cases have been reported during the past 24 hours after 71,836 tests were conducted across the country.

Board exams," he tweeted. As the minister had announced earlier, exams for classes 9-12 will take place according to the new dates announced by boards. He said this will not begin before the fourth week of May. Mahmood said Cambridge had announced it will not give teacher assessment grades this year hence those not appearing for the exams this semester can do so in October and November. "Meeting was also informed that Cambridge has decided not to give teacher assessed grades this year therefore those not taking exams will take them in the next cycle Oct/Nov. Cambridge also assured that all SOPs will be strictly followed," he tweeted.



KARACHI: Prime Minister Imran Khan visits under construction Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital. – DNA

### 'My visit to strengthen UAE, Pak relations'

DNA

DUBAI: Minister for Foreign Affairs Shah Mehmood Qureshi on Sunday said his visit to United Arab Emirates would strengthen existing bilateral ties of both the countries. Speaking at a press conference here, he said that he would hold a meeting with the Foreign Minister of UAE (United Arab Emirates) on Monday. He clarified that he had no meeting scheduled with the Foreign Minister of India Jaishankar. He said a mega event would be organised by Pakistan in Sharjah in October this year to showcase the hidden treasures of Pakistan. At the event, professionals among the Pakistani community in UAE would be invited, he said. The event would highlight the role played by the Pakistani community in the progress and prosperity of UAE, he said adding, he would invite Prime Minister Imran Khan to the mega event. Qureshi said Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates would complete their 50 years long friendship.

## Qureshi, Afghan FM discuss peace process

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi and his Afghan counterpart Mohammad Hanif Atmar, in a telephonic conversation, discussed the ongoing Afghan peace process. Foreign minister Qureshi has been in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, on a three-day official visit. During the telephonic conversation, foreign minister Qureshi reiterated that a peaceful and stable Afghanistan was in the interests of Pakistan, a press release said. He said Pakistan shared all the peaceful efforts made for peace and stability in the region including Afghanistan and desired end to violent incidents in the country. The foreign minister further reiterated



that Pakistan would continue its consistent reconciliation efforts for peace and stability in Afghanistan. He expressed the hope that under Istanbul Process, the Doha Agreement would be helpful in ensuring durable peace in Afghanistan. Afghan foreign minister appreciated diplomatic,

Continued on Page 06

## Covid death toll passes 3m

PARIS: The global Covid-19 death toll passed three million on Saturday as the pandemic continues to speed up despite vaccination campaigns, leading countries like India to impose new lockdowns to fight spiralling infection numbers. It is the latest grim milestone after the novel coronavirus surfaced in central China in December 2019 and went on to infect more than 139 million people, leaving billions more under crippling lockdowns and ravaging the global economy. An average of more than 12,000 deaths were recorded globally every day in the past week, shooting the overall toll past three million at around 0830 GMT on Saturday, according to an AFP tally. For comparison, three million people is more than the population of Jamaica or Armenia, and three times the death toll of the Iran-Iraq war which raged from 1980-1988. And the pandemic is showing no sign of slowing down: the 829,596 new infections reported worldwide on Friday is the highest number yet, according to AFP's tally. The daily average of 731,000 cases registered over the last week is also close to being a record. India's capital New Delhi went into a weekend lockdown Saturday as the world's second-most populous nation recorded 234,000 new cases and 1,341 deaths. – AFP

### Vaccination of 50 above citizens from Wednesday

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The government has decided to start vaccination of people in the age group of 50 to 59 from Wednesday. The decision to this effect was taken at a meeting of National Command and Operation Center chaired by Minister for Planning and Development Asad Umar in Islamabad. Asad Umar once again asked the people to get them registered for the vaccination.

## UNSC welcomes Saudi initiative

The initiative provides for a nationwide ceasefire, reopening of Sanaa International Airport and allowing fuel and food imports through the port of Hodeidah

NEWS DESK

NEW YORK: The UN Security Council has welcomed Saudi Arabia's peace initiative launched last month to end the Yemeni conflict and reach a political solution to the crisis. In a press statement released on Friday, the council said the Saudi initiative is in line with the UN Special Envoy for Yemen Martin Griffiths' peace proposal, Saudi Press Agency reported. The initiative provides for a nationwide ceasefire, reopening of Sanaa International Airport and allowing fuel and food imports through

### Saudia, Iran hold secret talks over Yemen

BAGHDAD: Senior Saudi and Iranian officials have held direct talks in an effort to repair relations between the two countries, four years after cutting off diplomatic ties, the Financial Times reported on Sunday. The first round of talks took place in Baghdad on April 9, included discussions about attacks on Saudi Arabia by Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi group, and was positive, the FT reported, citing officials briefed on the discussions. The report also cited a senior Saudi official, however, denying that any talks had taken place. The two regional rivals severed ties in 2016 over Riyadh's execution of Shi'ite Muslim cleric, Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr, an outspoken opponent of the ruling Al Saudi family. The talks took place as Washington and Tehran try to revive a 2015 nuclear accord, which Riyadh has objected to. The US is also pressing for an end to the ongoing conflict in Yemen, which is seen in the region as a proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran. – DNA

the port of Hodeidah. The statement added the council called on all Yemeni parties to constructively engage with the UN Special Envoy and negotiate without preconditions, for an immediate ceasefire throughout the country and a comprehensive political settlement, in accordance with the relevant UN Security Council resolutions. The council also urged the participation of Yemeni women and the country's youth in talks in accordance with relevant resolutions, underlying its members' commitment to the sovereignty and territorial unity of Yemen.

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## Briefs

### Smart lockdown imposed in 10 areas of Rawalpindi

SHAHEEN HANIF

RAWALPINDI: Amid the steep rise in corona virus cases, at least ten areas in Rawalpindi have been put under smart lockdown. According to the notification issued by the local administration, the lockdown has been imposed in Tabarak Line, Adiala Road, Judicial Apartments Civil Line, Kashmir House Mundra, Mohalla Gulshan, Kamalabad street no 3, Peshawar Road line number 5, Wah Cant, Dhok Chania, Gojjar Khan, Hashmi Colony and other localities. The lockdown will remain intact in the above-said localities of Rawalpindi until April 27. Punjab remains the worst-hit province in terms of deaths followed by Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Till now 7,430 individuals have lost their lives to the epidemic in Punjab 4,551 in Sindh, 2,867 in KP, 636 in Islamabad, 433 in Azad Kashmir, 223 in Balochistan, and 103 in GB. Meanwhile, the country has reported 149 more deaths from corona virus, making it the country's highest death toll in a single day since June 29 last year while the positivity rate of infections was recorded at 8.52 per cent.

### IESCO Chief for smooth power supply

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chief Executive IESCO, Ch. Abdul Razaq said that during the Holy month of Ramzan it is our professional as well as religious responsibility to ensure continuity of Power Supply round the clock. To fulfill these commitments our all formations are mobilized. He said that before Ramzan monitoring cells were established at Sub Division, Division, Circle and Head Office levels and teams are monitoring Power transmission and redressal of customers' complaints round the clock. Chief said that being a custodian of IESCO he is personally monitoring all field activities. He said that before Ramzan all weak transformers were replaced due to which transformers damaged cases due to over loading have been minimized. IESCO Chief Committed that we will continue the provision of best services to our valued customers and will prove our self a customer's friendly company. IESCO Chief said that for registration of customer complaints IESCO help line number 118 and complaint and monitoring cell numbers 051-9252933-6 are available round the clock.

### CTO directs officials to maintain traffic flow

RAWALPINDI: Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Rawalpindi, Rai Mazhar Iqbal has directed the traffic wardens and field officers to take strict action against double and wrong parking of vehicles which create hurdles in smooth flow of traffic on city roads. According to a City Traffic Police spokesman, all the field officers including deputy superintendents of police (DSPs) and Inspectors had been directed to take strict action in accordance with the law against double parking, wrong parking and one-way violators particularly in congested areas to ensure smooth flow of traffic. He urged the motorists not to park vehicles in wrong way on roads which causes inconvenience for other road users. Enhanced number of Traffic Wardens had been deployed at busy roads to clear wrong parking while lifters were also available to lift vehicles and motorcycles parked in a wrong way, he added. He said, wrong parking which was one of main cause of traffic mess on the roads would not be tolerated, adding, the vehicles and motorcycles found parked out of parking area would be impounded. - APP

# Masood lauds UN report on HR situation in IOJK

"Voices for freedom won't be muzzled; staged encounters won't be masked by cutting off information. Truth is out; will be out. Don't coerce media persons into not reporting on these crimes. Such restrictions betray insecurity and panic," Khan said

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: While welcoming a letter written by the UN human rights experts to Indian government regarding human rights situation in Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK), AJK President Sardar Masood Khan said that the situation is far worse than the human rights violations mentioned in the letter. He said that the UN rapporteurs have confined their report to mentioning only the violation of some of the rights of Muslims and other minorities, while we believe that the Modi government of India is engaged in hatch-

ing conspiracies against the very existence of Muslims in Jammu and Kashmir. They want to turn the Muslim majority into a minority and make the territory of Kashmir a complete Hindu state. "India is trying to reduce the occupied state of Jammu and Kashmir to a political nonentity, reinforce religious and colonial othering of its people and finally strip off their defenses. Well, Kashmiris will never cease defending themselves," the president said. Five United Nations human rights experts, through a letter to the Indian government, have voiced their concern over India's decision to revoke Kashmir's special status and enact laws that could

curtail the political participation of Muslims and other minorities. The special rapporteurs were for minority issues, promotion, and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association; contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance; and the special rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief. President Masood strongly condemned the latest restrictions imposed by the Indian government on Kashmir based journalists for reporting facts about the incidents of violence in IOJK, he appealed to the global journalist's bodies to raise their

voice against the unjustified restrictions on journalists and media outlets in IOJK. "Voices for freedom won't be muzzled; staged encounters won't be masked by cutting off information. Truth is out; will be out. Don't coerce media persons into not reporting on these crimes. Such restrictions betray insecurity and panic," Khan said. He said restrictions on independent reporting by journalists as an attempt by the Delhi government to infringe on human rights and freedom of expression. Sardar Masood added that journalists in Occupied Kashmir would never accept and endorse the Indian government's illegal activities.

Sardar Masood Khan further said that now the situation in IOJK had reached the point that Indian military and para-military troops stationed in Kashmir have started disobeying the illegal orders. The latest example of which is the female police officer who said that this is my Kashmir and I cannot be a part of the persecution against the people here. The female police officer's bold statement cost her her job. "The day is not far when cops and soldiers in Kashmir will start asking themselves how they would redeem their souls if they continue to be part of these killing sprees at the behest of fascists of a distant, foreign land," the state President concluded.

### Commissioner inspects various sections of RRP

IBRAR KHAN

RAWALPINDI: Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Syed Gulzar Hussain Shah visited Ring Road project site to inspect various sections of the project. Director General Rawalpindi Development Authority Capt. (R) Abdul Sattar Isani and Dy Project Director Abdullah were also present on the occasion and briefed commissioner on the project progress. Commissioner Rawalpindi division emphasized that project planning and execution was streamlined and timelines were met. The commissioner said that the officers and personnel working on the Ring Road project should complete the set targets as per the deadline. Strict action would be taken against those, who were using delaying tactics, negligence and incompetence, he added. He said that the project was very important for the people which would have a positive impact on the economic and civic life of the residents.

### Dumping station threatening lives

RAWALPINDI: The dumping garbage transportation station of Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) Albayrak giving bad and stinking smell established at Liaquat Bagh. The pedestrians, motorists on Murree Road particularly have to face bad smell while driving. The people and offices in Arya Mohallah, Gawalmandi, Raja Bazaar, Chamanzar, Mareer Chowk, Moti Mehal, College Road, China Market, Rawalpindi Press Club (RPC) Water and Sanitation Agency, Rawalpindi Development Authority, Punjab Horticulture Authority, Rescue 15, Sports Complex, National College of Arts (NCA), TMA and several other offices have to face unbearable smell. A Journalist Sajid Bangial told APP that despite repeated complaints and protests the civic body has not moved an inch to settle the issue, fearing that this would spread multiple diseases and safe haven for the mosquitoes and spreading of dengue fever, he added. Another Complainant Waheed Anjum pointed out that the station should immediately transfer as the corona third wave was most dangerous, the government was taking solid steps to contain corona virus. He said that no one can deny the importance of cleanliness, he stressed the need to keep the surroundings clean to avoid the diseases. - APP

### 6 thousand citizens facilitated through CFCs

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration has facilitated over 6,000 people through three 'Citizens Facilitation Centers' (CFCs) during the last month, a senior official said. Talking to media, he said all the CFCs had issued around 3,896 land fard, 984 domiciles, 546 international driving permits, 252 marriage certificates and 23 birth / death / burial Certificates in March. He added that 328 arms' licenses were renewed while 46 firms were registered during the same period. To a query, he said its facilitation centers were fully operating at various areas including G-11/4 sector of Islamabad, Tarlai and Bhara Kahu. The official said all the three facilitation centers had completely revamped and more services were added to serve the masses in an efficient manner. He said at least 14 services were being provided at the centers that included issuance of domicile certificate, International driving permit, marriage / divorce certificates, no objection certificate for events, land fard, birth / death / burial certificate, renewal of arms license and others. The official added that earlier, the services were limited to only three.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Uzbekistan Aybek Usmanov reading Daily Islamabad POST. Ambassador Usmanov has been appointed for the second time as ambassador in Pakistan. - DNA

## 433 criminals held, looted items worth millions of rupees recovered

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Senior Superintendent of police (Operations) Islamabad Dr. Syed Mustafa Tanveer said that Islamabad police accelerated its efforts against criminals and arrested 433 outlaws during the last two weeks with huge recovery of looted items worth 23.28 million, a police spokesman said. He said that, following directions of Inspector General of Police Islamabad Qazi Jamil ur Rehman and

Deputy Inspector General of Police (Operations) Afzaal Ahmad Kausar, renewed efforts were made and police achieved remarkable success. SSP (Operations) told that, 67 culprits were arrested involved in dacoity, robbery, car/motorcycle theft with recovery worth 17.62 million while 45 absconders were held during the same period. Complete challans of 292 cases were sent to concerned apex courts, he added. Syed Mustafa Tanveer further said that ICT

Police had launched a special campaign against drug sellers/bootleggers for elimination of this menace from Capital. During this campaign Islamabad Police have nabbed 30 accused and recovered 14.745 kilogram hashish, 832 gram heroin, 560 gram ice, 86 gram cocaine, 172 wine bottles from them. 27 accused were also held for having illegal weapons and recovered 24 pistols, 02 Kalashnikovs, 02 guns, 02 daggers and 127 rounds from them, the SSP maintained.

The SSP emphasized that, besides the law and order situation in the Capital, police accelerated their efforts against criminals and 264 accused involved in crimes of different nature were also arrested. Dr. Syed Mustafa Tanveer reiterated that criminal elements would not be spared and those involved in such acts would have to face action as per law. He has also appealed to the citizens to cooperate with Islamabad in curbing activities of such elements.

## Profiteers to make quick buck in Ramzan

ISLAMABAD: The prices of daily use items have sky rocketed as profiteers, racketeers and extortionists have started their annual looting season of people by creating artificial price hike in local markets of twin cities with the advent of the blessed month of Ramadan-ul-Mubarak. The traders are brazenly defying the official price list without any fear besides fleecing the people with both hands by openly flouting official rate lists, issued daily by local administration ceremoniously. The rising trend in prices of essential items have multiplied the miseries of fixed income people, besides taking away several commodities off the Iftar menu as racketeers have made all sorts of arrangements to loot already inflation-hit middle and lower middle class. A survey of several markets of federal capital including Aabpara market, Super market, Sitara market, Bhara Kahu, PWD, Tench Bhatta, Saddar, Lalkurti, Commercial Market and several other markets of the twin cities reveals that banana is available at Rs 150 to Rs 400 per dozen while per kg rate of guava is over Rs 200. - APP

## Psychiatrist caught on camera sexually exploiting female

RAJA PERVAIZ

ISLAMABAD: A renowned psychiatrist in Islamabad has been exposed after he was caught on camera allegedly sexually exploiting his female patient during the treatment, media reported on Saturday. The Islamabad psychiatrist was exposed by a team of media news programme, Sare-Aam, that carried out a sting operation in which a woman was sent to the doctor as a patient suffering from mental issues. The woman secretly filmed the entire conversation with the health professional, showing how he was asking for a sexual favour from the planted patient. The Sare-Aam host later approached the doctor with the video evidence, however, instead of admitting his guilt, the doctor started giving lame excuses to defend his visible sexual offers to the patient. After seeing the patient accompanying the media team, the doctor claimed that she had visited him four times and was leveling baseless allegations against him to tarnish his image. "I have neither made any sexual offers to her nor committed any sexual act with her," the psychiatrist said despite his conversation during the video in which he could be heard making sexual offers while terming them a bid to lower the stress level.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior, Sheikh Rashid Ahmed visiting Ramzan Bazaar and talking to a vendor about the current rates of goods. - DNA

## Around 2m citizens applied for registration in NPHP

"The possession of 1,508 apartments and housing units completed in collaboration with WWF under NPHP, has been handed over to the applicants," a Ministry of Housing official told media

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Around 2,003,940 citizens have applied for the registration in 'Naya Pakistan Housing Programme' (NPHP) during Phase-I and II, out of which 17,99,533 are eligible. "The possession of 1,508 apartments and housing units completed in collaboration with Workers Welfare Fund (WWF) under NPHP, has been handed over to the applicants," a Ministry of Housing

official told media. He said, the ministry was taking various steps to facilitate low income people of the country by restarting stalled schemes, constructing new apartments worth Rs 109 billion. The official said the ministry revived some stalled projects including Kurri Road Islamabad, Wafaqi Colony Lahore, G-10/2 Islamabad, I-16/3 Islamabad and I-12/1 Islamabad. These long stalled projects have been put on track and completed by the Pakistan Housing Authority (PHA), however, the

work on I/16-3 and I/12-1 projects were in progress, he added. Regarding the initiatives taken in Balochistan, he said Kuchlak road Quetta project was consisted of 1,350 housing units, which was inaugurated in 2019 on the land provided by Government of Balochistan. The official said the membership drive was executed and over 7,700 applications were received and automated balloting was also held successfully. The PCI has been approved from Development Working Party

(DWP) and endorsed by the PHA-F's Board of Directors. Bidding and tendering process has been completed, he said adding, letter of commencement to the contractors has been issued and work has also been started, he added. Regarding initiatives taken in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, PHA Residencia Sorazai Project, Peshawar, he said land measuring 8500 kanal was provided by Government of KP and in first phase, PHA-F would construct 10,000 housing units.

About the awareness campaign of the projects, the official said all such updates regarding projects and schemes were available on the web page of Ministry of Housing and Works to keep stakeholders and allottees informed. Simultaneously, he said PHA and FGEHA have their social accounts on Facebook and Twitter, having complete information of the projects. Moreover, projects campaigns were also being publicized through newspapers, seminars and media talks, he said.



## The third wave

THE most devastating coronavirus statistic which indicates the need for urgent change is not the infection rate, but the fatality numbers. Currently, both are on a surge in Pakistan. According to data released by the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC), the total number of total deaths climbed to 15,982 while the total number of cases reached 745,182. It is true that Pakistan is conducting more tests than ever, with the government having conducted 65,279 tests in the last 24 hours. However, the rise in deaths attributed to the pandemic should wake everyone up to alarm that the third wave is well and alive in Pakistan, when the vaccination rate is quite low. 112 deaths have been reported just in the last 24 hours and according to the government's Covid-19 portal, 4149 more patients are in critical condition. Health experts had earlier estimated that the third wave would begin in March and recede in mid-April, but it is continuing even beyond that and our infrastructure and facilities are not prepared. Hospitals are on the verge of saturation, with Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (Pims) having exhausted its capacity and starting queues for beds in emergency rooms. The spike in cases can no doubt be traced back to the skirting of restrictions in the last few months, with ongoing wedding functions, gatherings and rallies, with no heed paid to wearing masks and social distancing. The government in the last few weeks has tried to change gears and announced strict restrictions but again these do not seem to be taken seriously; the riots in the last days are just an example. Stories being released of government members themselves violating SOPs privately further damage the resolve to adhere to pandemic regulations. Stringent SOPs and a faster vaccination drive need to be the government's top priorities this month. The example of our neighbour India, with its record 200,000 new Covid-19 cases in a day, should be a reminder of what our country could escalate to if the required precautions aren't taken.

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## Welcome to 1984

MUHAMMAD OMAR IFTIKHAR

THE dystopian novel by George Orwell, titled "1984" was first published in 1949, discusses the life of Winston Smith who is frustrated by the omnipresent eyes of Big Brother. This entity is a group working from behind the curtains aiming to control the lives of the people. Unfortunately, we are not living in very different times as shown in the novel. The blackout of digital media websites in Pakistan on Friday, April 16, 2021, was nothing but an attempt by the concerned authorities to keep a certain faction within the confines of order. Without dwelling much on what happened on the streets of Pakistan during the days leading to the blackout, one must wonder what the future holds for freedom of speech. It is indeed the right of every citizen to speak their heart out and to communicate their thoughts and ideas to the masses. However, to do so while damaging the public property or to hinder in the daily routine of the city and the country is not recommended at all. One must obey and adhere to the laws governing the dynamics of society. Here, the objectives of the government blacking out digital media are also not aligned with the freedom of speech. To blackout, social media websites for two to three hours show the government's competency to counter any retaliation from any faction that may arise within the country. It also suggests that by blocking such websites, the government might feel comfortable containing any uprising – in any form that may occur. Truth be told, a faction that is well-connected needs no digital media website to mobilize. The factions of the society who have the intention to share their thoughts and demands must do so within the limits of decency. This will help in creating a positive image of themselves and the government will also facilitate their demands if done with modesty and respect.

# The Indonesia Economic Model

Dr. Mehmood Ul Hassan Khan



Critical analysis of its macro-economy upholds that Indonesia's economic growth is starting to accelerate again after the economic slowdown

INDONESIA'S macro-economy has been geared up with the constant upward development of its domestic factors and healthy contribution of channel of production since its inception. It has blended its natural resources, tourism potential, widespread of SMEs, service sector and last but not least nationalistic private sector to achieve numerous socio-economic miracles. It has been succeeding to achieve its desired goals of constant socio-economic prosperity, qualitative life, eradication of poverty, social networking and political stability because of supremacy of doctrine of a balanced and holistic approach between "growth" and "stability". Structural reforms have been playing a positive and productive role in the macro-economy of Indonesia which is a market economy in which the state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and large private business groups play a significant role. They account for about 60 percent of Indonesia's gross domestic product (GDP) and create employment to nearly 108 million Indonesians. Major industrial sectors of its economy include petroleum and natural gas, textiles and apparel, mining, footwear, plywood, rubber and chemical fertilisers. The services sector is equally as important to Indonesia's economy, accounting for 43 per cent of GDP in 2015. Agriculture on the other hand only accounted for 14 per cent. Indonesia has a market-based liberalized economy in which its government plays a significant role, including administering prices for some basic goods such as fuel, rice and electricity. In terms of value added, the industrial sector accounted for more

than 45 per cent of GDP. It is largest economy in Southeast Asia, which is a diverse archipelago nation of more than 300 ethnic groups. It has charted impressive economic growth since overcoming the Asian financial crisis of the late 1990s. Statistical data upholds that now Indonesia is the world's fourth most populous nation, the world's 10th largest economy in terms of purchasing power parity, and a member of the G-20. It has made enormous gains in poverty reduction, decreasing the poverty rate by more than half since 1999, to 9.78 percent in 2020. Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, Indonesia was able to maintain consistent economic growth, recently qualifying the country to reach upper middle income status. Indonesia has its own unique economic model which heavily relies on domestic production, savings, investments, proper mobilization and channelization of local resources, nurturing of human capital core and last but not least, positive domestic consumption. It follows a 20 year development plan, spanning from 2005 to 2025. It has been following people's friendly social development policies, business and investment friendly programs and plans since long which is now paying its huge socio-economic dividends. It is segmented into 5 year medium-term plans, called the RP-JMN (Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Nasional) each with different development priorities. The current medium-term development plan the last phase of the long-term plan starts from 2020 to 2024. It aims to further strengthen Indonesia's economy by improving the country's human capital and competitiveness in the global market. Now its macro-economy is feeling the heat of unending COVID-19 due to which social development is compromised but its economic resilience is trying to streamline it. According to its national data its government implemented emergency fiscal packages equivalent to 3.8 per cent of GDP in 2020 and to 4.2 per cent of GDP in 2021, to deal with the health impact, provide relief to households and firms, and support the vaccine roll-out, and the recovery. The World Bank is supporting the Indonesia's COVID-19 emergency response, including enhancing social assistance and health care systems, while also strengthening the resilience of the financial sector. Despite COVID-19 it still holds great economic potential. The central government supported to curb Indonesia's traditional reliance on raw commodity exports, while raising the role of the manufacturing industry within the national economy. Infrastructure development is also a key goal of the government, and one that should cause a multiplier effect within the economy with lots of multiplier effects. In the past so many years, it was often rated as an appropriate candidate to be included in the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China). Furthermore, CIVETS (Colombia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Egypt, Turkey and South Africa) also gained attention as its members have reasonably sophisticated financial systems and fast-growing populations which showed high levels of economic diversification, productivity, and sustainability of Indonesia. Standard & Poor's, Fitch Ratings and Moody have upgraded its credit ratings. Resilient economic growth, low government debt and prudent fiscal management have been termed as reasons for the upgrades and are key in attracting financial inflows into Indonesia in terms of FDI and FPIs. These FDI inflows, which had been relatively weak for Indonesia during the decade after the Asian Financial Crisis had seriously shaken up the foundations of the country, showed a

steep increase after the global financial crisis of 2008-2009. With promulgation of New Mining Law 2009 Indonesia reduced its traditional reliance on raw commodity exports and boosted the manufacturing industry. With the passage of time, the country is passing through from transition to transformation. The Indonesian government under the visionary leadership of Joko Widodo has initiated numerous structural reforms aiming at long-term growth. The government rates high priority on infrastructure development and on investment and fiscal incentives that are offered to private investors. Moreover future of its macro-economy is healthy, productive and positive because of having abundant and diverse natural resources with young, large and burgeoning population, immense political stability, institutionalization of prudent fiscal management since the late 1990s, strategic location in relation to the giant economies of China and India, low labour costs and an emerging market. Indonesia's micro, small and medium sized enterprises account for 99 percent of the total amount of enterprises which are active in Indonesia. They account for about 60 percent of Indonesia's GDP and create employment to nearly 108 million Indonesians. These micro, small and medium sized companies are the backbone of the Indonesian economy. Critical analysis of its macro-economy upholds that Indonesia's economic growth is starting to accelerate again after the economic slowdown. Now it has again started its journey from the 'Asian Miracle' to an emerging economy of the world. Right from the beginning, Indonesian government has consistently prioritised stability over growth and followed a holistic approach to achieve its economic goals. President Joko Widodo's program of infrastructure development and economic reform has made progress. However, infrastructure investment needs to be substantially higher, public saving increased through a more comprehensive tax strategy, and business climate reforms recalibrated towards liberalising markets rather than just cutting red tape. Due to constant structural economic reforms, Indonesia is widely rated as a future economic giant. Now it is the world's 7th largest economy by purchasing power parity. It hopes that it may be the 5th largest economy in the world by 2030 and fourth soon after. On a market exchange rate basis, Indonesia ranks 16th in the world but will likely enter the top ten by 2030. Being prominent regional expert I would like to suggest that Indonesian government try to change its national health system. More stringent, cross-sector regulations with detailed protocols for the safe operation of different types of businesses, with specific implications for the various stakeholders should be introduced at once. Lockdowns have channeled many people online for shopping, learning, entertainment, and working, accelerating the shift to digital services should be the new normal. Simultaneously, companies are pushing ahead with internal digitization for staff, customers, and suppliers (for instance, enhancing supply-chain visibility, offering digital learning experiences, and providing new channels to customers which ought to be implemented. Undoubtedly, culture of working from home, reducing long-distance travel, and other lockdown habits could lead to a permanent shift toward behaviors that are better for the environment. Companies and governments will seek to address supply-chain flaws revealed by the crisis encouraging domestic sources for strategic goods, such as food and medicine; and generally accelerating the digitization of supply chains.

On part of tourism sector, Indonesia could start marketing its lesser-known tourist attractions to a domestic audience to travel. It could also improve its tourism infrastructure, such as airports, and standards within the hospitality industry. A mix of modern technology, automation may generate more jobs in Indonesia than are lost between 2014 and 2030. Resultantly, 9-24 million new jobs may be generated. It can build from the online-learning efforts and habits developed during the pandemic to teach those new capabilities more broadly and more quickly. So, journey towards smarter economy and key to further socio-economic prosperity rests on rigorous modernization of macro-economy. Qualitative infrastructure development is still a concern. There is an urgent need for better logistics to support home deliveries and improved digital infrastructure in general. Improved sanitation and access to clean water, as well as other improvements in conditions, such as a reduction in overcrowded living spaces and multiple access points to homes are the need of the hour. As we know that Indonesia's domestic economic structure is different than most countries as about 90 percent of its GDP is comprised of a combination of household consumption (58 percent) and investments (32 percent). As a result, the impact of COVID-19 on household spending has grave repercussions for the country's GDP. Household consumption is expected to drop 4.4 percent, or IDR 395 trillion, in 2020 which should be resolved through strengthening policy to boost household consumption by accelerating the social protection program to help the targeted community receive the support in time, for example with voucher disbursement and cash handouts. Moreover, suppress unemployment by being more proactive in supporting businesses in priority sectors to help more Indonesians keep their jobs may be a noble idea in this regard. In terms of financial reforms, further strengthening of capital market policy to expedite the index recovery to its pre-crisis level should be initiated. Indonesia can use knowledge from potential development and resolving it before creating a chain of bankruptcies. One approach is through a top-down injection of credit, such as providing working capital support to larger distributors, other countries, such as Malaysia, which has almost recovered its capital market. All efforts should be coordinated to prevent a massive credit crunch by quickly identifying it. Revitalizing manufacturing, acceleration of making Indonesia 4.0 initiatives to reposition its manufacturing strength from a low-cost labor location for commodity products to a high-productivity location for more value-added products should be implemented as soon possible. Indonesia should also focus on developing its digital economy. Its digital service ecosystem is still at initial stage with a focus on the domestic market. Boosting of ICT spending to stimulate growth may be quick remedy in this regard. Increase of the quantity and quality of digital talents to enable the supply of innovative digital services may be a workable solution. Revolutionize logistics and supply chain with digital technologies should be the future of its macro-economy. Establish remote working as a standard model, dissemination of online education for high-quality access, improvement of the urban system for better efficiency and safety along with enhanced FDI with technology transfer and acceleration of government digitalization are the way forward.

## G20's missed opportunity

THIS month, G20 finance ministers agreed to a proposal to issue \$650 billion worth of the International Monetary Fund's reserve asset, special drawing rights (SDRs), and an additional six-month moratorium on debt payments for up to 73 developing countries. But while the agreement represents a step in the right direction, the G20 missed the opportunity to address the looming debt crisis in the Global South head on. Past debt crises ought to have taught us that doing too little, too late will delay recoveries and drive up the cost of debt restructuring for debtors and creditors alike. The world is still at high risk of repeating the mistakes that resulted in two lost decades of development in the 1980s and 1990s. Even before the pandemic, the Global South was heading for a debt crisis; but now, the situation has deteriorated dramatically. To its credit, the G20 was quick to respond in April 2020, when it approved the Debt Service Suspension Initiative. But while the DSSI gave some 43 countries breathing space by allowing them to postpone payments to public creditors, it did not change the net present value of those countries' debts. Thus, in November 2020, the DSSI was complemented by a Common Framework for Debt Treatments Beyond the DSSI, which allows the 73 low-income countries that are eligible for the DSSI to request debt restructuring. But this, too, was a step in the right direction that fell short. For starters, the new Framework applies only to low-income countries. Many of these countries do indeed need relief, but so do highly indebted middle-income countries that have been hit hard by the pandemic. Of the 124 million people estimated to have been pushed into extreme poverty in 2020, the World Bank reckons that 80% were in middle-income countries. Moreover, the Framework deals with countries' debt problems on a case-by-case basis, and thus fails to address the problem of lasting stigmatisation of any country that avails itself of relief.

Aside from the fact that many developing countries have already effectively lost access to capital markets, those that can still finance themselves through international bonds face growing risks. In anticipation of tighter credit conditions, emerging-market economies have weakened across the board since the beginning of this year. And developing countries have accounted for 95% of all downgrades by the three leading credit rating agencies since the start of the pandemic. Finally, the Framework lacks a commitment by creditors and debtor countries alike to align newfound fiscal space with globally agreed climate and development goals. There is ample empirical evidence to show that climate-vulnerable countries tend to pay a higher cost on their public debt, and that climate change heightens sovereign risk. Countries that cannot invest in climate resilience and development will have even less debt sustainability in the future. Even without accounting for the additional climate risks facing low-income countries, an IMF analysis suggests that, as of the end of February 2021, more than half of those the Fund assessed were already in or at high risk of debt distress. Making matters worse, many developing countries are experiencing continuing net capital outflows, and the pandemic-aid money provided by international organisations is being used to repay private creditors. Given these problems, the Framework urgently needs to be revamped to allow for comprehensive debt relief oriented around a green, inclusive recovery. To that end, we suggest the following amendments. First, instead of waiting for countries to come forward and apply for debt relief individually, the framework should recognise that a systemic crisis demands a systemic solution. The G20 should encourage all low- and middle-income countries whose debt is considered unsustainable to participate in debt restructuring. And when assessing debt burdens, the analysis must include climate and other

sustainability risks as well as estimates of a country's financing needs for climate-change adaptation and mitigation. Equally important, governments receiving debt relief would need to commit to reforms that align their policies and budgets with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris climate agreement. Some portion of the restructured repayments should be channelled into a Fund for Green and Inclusive Recovery that would be used by the government for investment in SDG-aligned spending. Moreover, the Framework needs to incorporate adequate incentives to ensure that private creditors participate and bear a fair share of the burden. If a debt-sustainability analysis asserts that a country's sovereign debt is of significant concern, the IMF should make its programs conditional on a restructuring process that includes private creditors. Here, Brady-type credit enhancements for new bonds that would be swapped for old debt would facilitate restructuring negotiations. To this end, we propose a Guarantee Facility for Green and Inclusive Recovery managed by a multilateral development bank. If payments on the new bonds are missed, the collateral would be released to the benefit of private creditors, and the missed payment would have to be repaid by the sovereign to the guarantee facility. Delaying an inevitable debt restructuring will leave over-indebted countries and their populations worse off. Governments will fail to safeguard their populations during this terrible health and social crisis, and they will be unable to invest in climate-proofing their economies. There is still time for the G20 to step up and provide all countries with the opportunity to pursue a green, inclusive, and resilient recovery.

— Project Syndicate (Courtesy Gulf Times)  
 — The writer is a former governor of the State Bank of Pakistan, is Chair of the Board of Directors of Karandaz Pakistan.

Shahshad Akhtar

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## Briefs

**Syria to hold presidential elections on May 26**

## FOREIGN DESK

DAMASCUS: Syria is set to hold a presidential election on May 26, the country's second in the shadow of civil war, seen as likely to keep President Bashar al-Assad in power. The announcement was made by the parliament speaker on Sunday. Syrians abroad will be "able to vote at embassies" on May 20, Hammouda Sabagh said in a statement, adding that prospective candidates could hand in their applications from Monday. Millions of people displaced by Syria's long-running war were not eligible to cast ballots. President Assad, who took power following the death of his father Hafez in 2000, has not yet officially announced he will stand for re-election. He won the previous election in 2014, three years after a bloody crackdown on anti-government protesters and amid the raging conflict. At the time, he was given nearly 90 percent of the vote.

**Three killed in shooting at Wisconsin tavern**

## WEB DESK

NEW YORK: Three people have been killed and two wounded in a shooting at a tavern in Wisconsin. The shooting took place early on Sunday at Somers House Tavern in the village of Somers, Kenosha County Sergeant David Wright said. The suspected attacker is still on the run and Wright said the shooting appeared to be a "targeted and isolated incident". Officials were still working to determine the identities of the people who were killed. The road leading up to the tavern was closed early Sunday while officials were investigating. On Thursday night, at least eight people were killed in a late-night shooting at a FedEx facility in the US city of Indianapolis by a gunman who is believed to have then killed himself. Multiple others were injured when gunfire erupted at the facility near Indianapolis International Airport, police spokesperson Genea Cook said. Last month, four people, including a child, were shot dead in an office building in southern California.

**Chad: U.S. embassy to withdraw staff**

## FOREIGN DESK

N'DJAMENA: The United States has ordered its non-essential staff in Chad to leave the African country as rebel fighters approached the capital on Sunday after early election results showed President Idriss Deby on course to extend his three-decade rule. Deby, who seized power in 1990 at the head of an armed rebellion, is a staunch ally of France and the United States in the fight against Islamist militants in the arid Sahel region. "Due to their growing proximity to N'Djamena and the possibility of violence in the city, non-essential U.S. government employees have been ordered to leave Chad by commercial airline," the U.S. state department said in a statement. The British government on Saturday urged its citizens to leave because, it said, two armed convoys from the rebel Front for Change and Concord in Chad (FACT) were advancing towards the capital. One convoy was seen approaching the town of Mao, about 220 km (137 miles) to the north of N'Djamena, it said. Large numbers of heavily armed Chad security forces were patrolling the streets of the capital on Sunday morning, a Reuters witness said. Chad's army said it had destroyed a rebel convoy in the north of Kanem province on Saturday afternoon. "The column was totally decimated," army spokesman Azim Bermando Agouna said in a statement late on Saturday.

**US, China agree to tackle climate crisis with urgency**

"The United States and China are committed to cooperating with each other and with other countries to tackle the climate crisis, which must be addressed with the seriousness and urgency that it demands"

## FOREIGN DESK

WASHINGTON: China and the United States, the world's two biggest carbon polluters, have agreed to cooperate with other countries to fight climate change. The joint statement on Sunday followed two days of talks between Chinese climate envoy Xie Zhenhua and his US counterpart, John Kerry, in Shanghai. "The United States and China are committed to cooperating with each other and with other countries to tackle the climate crisis, which must be addressed with the seriousness and urgency that it demands," their statement said. The two countries will also continue to discuss "con-

crete actions in the 2020s to reduce emissions aimed at keeping the Paris Agreement-aligned temperature limit within reach", it said. In the Paris accord, countries agreed in 2015 to keep rising global temperatures to below 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit). China and the US are the world's top carbon polluters, pumping out nearly half of the fossil fuel fumes that are warming the planet's atmosphere. Their cooperation is key to the success of global efforts to curb climate change, but frayed ties over human rights, trade and China's territorial claims to Taiwan and the South China Sea have been threatening to undermine such efforts. Kerry's trip to Shanghai

marked the highest-level travel to China by a US official since President Joe Biden took office in January. Biden, who has said fighting global warming is among his highest priorities, had the US rejoin the Paris climate accord in the first hours of his presidency, undoing the withdrawal ordered by his predecessor, Donald Trump. The new US president has also invited 40 world leaders, including Chinese President Xi Jinping, to a virtual summit to discuss the issue on April 22 and 23. The US and other countries are expected to announce more ambitious national targets for cutting carbon emissions before or during the meeting, along with pledging financial help

for climate efforts by less wealthy nations. When Kerry was still in Shanghai, Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Le Yucheng signalled on Friday that China is unlikely to make any new pledges at next week's summit. "For a big country with 1.4 billion people, these goals are not easily delivered," Le said during an interview with The Associated Press news agency in Beijing. "Some countries are asking China to achieve the goals earlier. I am afraid this is not very realistic." On whether Xi would join the summit, Le said, "The Chinese side is actively studying the matter." During a video meeting with German and French leaders on Friday, Xi said climate change "should not

become a geopolitical chip, a target for attacking other countries or an excuse for trade barriers", though he called for closer cooperation on the issue, according to the official Xinhua News Agency. Xi pledged last year that China would achieve "carbon neutrality by 2060" and ensure its greenhouse gas emissions peak before 2030. The top emitters of greenhouse gases are also preparing for the next United Nations climate summit taking place in Glasgow, United Kingdom, in November. The summit aims to re-launch global efforts to keep rising global temperatures to below 1.5C as agreed in the Paris accord. According to the US-China statement, both Washington

and Beijing "intend to develop" their respective long-term strategies to achieve carbon neutrality by the Glasgow meeting. Other moves in the near term include boosting "international investment and finance" to support the transition to green energy in developing countries, as well as phasing out production and consumption of hydrofluorocarbons, gases used in refrigeration, air conditioners and aerosols. Longer-term actions that need to be taken to keep the temperature goals of the Paris accord "within reach" include reducing emissions from industry and power generation while stepping up renewable energy, clean transportation and climate-resistant agriculture.

**Chinese delegation to visit Pakistan**

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: A Chinese trade delegation from Guangxi province will soon visit Pakistan to explore new investment venues in different sectors like roads and infrastructure, energy and power, IT, agricultural and industrial sectors, machineries and technology and construction sectors. This was stated by COO of Shanghai Feiyun Culture Development Company who visited FPCCI Capital Office Islamabad to meet Qurban Ali, Head Of FPCCI Islamabad and other officer bearers. The meeting was also attended by Muhammad Ali Quaid, Ex-Vice President FPCCI. He said that FPCCI is playing an important role in bringing the business communities and investors of Pakistan and China closer. He said that Qurban Ali himself took initiative to contact investors of Guangxi province and their government as well and drew their attention towards investment potential in Pakistan. The government of Guangxi province also responded positively expressed their endeavor of full support and cooperation. The CEO of Shanghai Feiyun Culture Development The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry FPCCI Capital House, Aiwane-Sanat-o-Tijarat Road, Islamabad, Pakistan Tel: 051-2251891-93, 2289303 Email: islamabad.capital@fpcci.org.pk URL: www.fpcci.org.pk Company expressed that their company is working hard on various projects with Pakistani brothers.

**Iran marks National Army Day**

TEHRAN: Iran has marked its National Army Day by parading the latest military achievements, including home-grown air defense systems, inside selected military bases across the country due to the coronavirus pandemic. Iranian military units on Sunday held a motorcade parade in the capital Tehran where various types of unmanned aerial vehicles, tanks, anti-aircraft batteries, advanced missile systems and different kinds of electronic warfare systems were put on display. Army chief Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi, and commanders of the army's air force, navy and ground force as well as senior commanders of the IRGC were present to oversee the parade. - Foreign Desk

**Germany mourns 80,000 Covid dead**

## WEB DESK

BERLIN: Germany is holding a national memorial day on Sunday for its nearly 80,000 victims of the coronavirus pandemic. President Frank-Walter Steinmeier and Chancellor Angela Merkel attended memorial events, just as the country battles a renewed surge in COVID-19 cases. The two leaders first took part in a morning service at Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church - a memorial in Berlin against war and destruction. "Sickness, dying and death cannot be just pushed away in this long year, they have cut deeply into the lives of many people," said Georg Baetzing, the chairman of the German Bishops' Conference, at the service. Later Sunday, Steinmeier and Merkel attended a ceremony at the capital's Konzerthaus, where the president gave a speech. With pandemic curbs still in force restricting the number of people who could attend, the ceremonies were broadcast live on television. Steinmeier called on the audience to remember the people behind the statistics and figures, asking them "to consider the human tragedy of the pandemic." The president said it was "understandable" that "we have been obsessing over infection rates and the number of deaths each day."

**Cuba's Raul Castro leaves the political stage**

## WEB DESK

HAVANA: Raul Castro, who is retiring from high public office, for most of his life toiled in the shadow of his older brother, Fidel Castro. Yet he also played a key role in Cuba's 1959 leftist revolution and the preservation of Cuban socialism. While Fidel was the charismatic leader who rallied Cubans to defend the revolution and defy the United States, Raul, 89, built the military into a formidable fighting force that saw off enemies including a U.S.-backed invasion at the Bay of Pigs. Later, after the fall of former benefactor the Soviet Union sent Cuba into an economic tailspin and left it politically isolated, he launched market-style reforms to its centralized economy and sought to normalize relations with Western powers. But he leaves office amid an economic crisis that has caused shortages of even basic goods and is threatening the universal access to quality healthcare and education hailed by supporters of Cuban socialism as among the most important achievements of the revolution.



KABUL: Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with U.S. troops during his trip to Kabul. - DNA

**US backs Japan's Fukushima plans despite S Korea's concerns**

## FOREIGN DESK

TOKYO: US climate envoy John Kerry has reaffirmed Washington's confidence in Japan's decision to release contaminated water from its crippled Fukushima nuclear plant into the sea despite concerns raised by South Korea. Kerry arrived in Seoul on Saturday to discuss international efforts to tackle global warming, on a trip that included a stop in China ahead of President Joe Biden's virtual summit with world leaders on climate change this month. South Korean Foreign Min-

ister Chung Eui-yong sought to rally support behind the country's protest against the Fukushima plan at a dinner meeting with Kerry. Under the plan, more than one million tonnes of water will be discharged from the plant wrecked by an earthquake and tsunami in 2011 into the nearby sea off Japan's east coast. Seoul strongly rebuked the decision, with the foreign ministry summoning the Japanese ambassador and President Moon Jae-in ordering officials to explore petitioning an international court. "Minister Chung conveyed our government and people's serious concerns about

Japan's decision, and asked the US side to take interest and cooperate so that Japan will provide information in a more transparent and speedy manner," the ministry said in a statement. But Kerry, at a media roundtable on Sunday, said Tokyo had made the decision in a transparent manner and will continue following due procedures. "The US is confident that the government of Japan is in very full consultations with the IAEA," he said, referring to the International Atomic Energy Agency. "The IAEA has set up a very rigorous process and I know that Japan has weighed all

the options and the effects and they've been very transparent about the decision and the process." The former US secretary of state added that Washington would closely monitor Japan's implementation "like every country, to make certain there is no public health threat." "We think we have confidence in the ability of IAEA and Japan and our relationship with the agency. We need to see how it progresses, and how they do, but we don't think it is appropriate for the US to jump into a process that's already underway and where there are very clear rules and expectations," Kerry said.

**Pakistan and China tea's blend can be a potential product for int'l market**

BEIJING: "Broken tea from China and Pakistan can be blended and make new products for the international market," said He Qingyuan, a senior official of Tea Research Institute, Yunnan Academy of Agricultural Sciences. According to a China Economic Net's report, Yunnan has many advantages in developing the black tea industry. "One is that the ecological environment is very good and the quality of tea is very high. Second, the variety of Yunnan black tea is very unique, which is rich in nutrients and contains very high levels of tea polyphenols and theaflavins." He Qingyuan said. In Pakistan, the demand for broken black tea is high. "The main producing areas of broken black tea in Yunnan are Lincang, Baoshan, and Dehong. Broken black tea is mainly used to make teabags. Its price is not high in China. Yunnan is also searching for ways to increase its export." According to He Qingyuan, broken black tea has the highest level of mechanization among black tea products. "Tea trees are perennials and can only be planted artificially. Trimming and picking machines are used in tea garden management. - DNA

**'Republic of N. Cyprus going to Geneva'**

## FOREIGN DESK

LEFKOSA: The president of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) on Sunday attended an online meeting on the "Strategic Vision of the TRNC" organized by Eurasia Economic Relations Association. Hikmet Eren, the chairman of the association's board of directors, moderated the meeting, while Ahmet Hamdi, the adviser to the TRNC's Presidency on agriculture, animal husbandry and entrepreneurship, was also present at the meeting, according to a written statement by the presidency.

At the meeting, innovative and developmental strategies and the new vision of the TRNC under the country's political, economic, social, and cultural transformation were discussed. Northern Cyprus will go to Geneva with a new vision, including cooperation based on sovereignty equality of the two states, and this is a significant step, said Tatar regarding the informal, Cyprus-themed conference. The conference is held under the leadership of the UN with the participation of the guarantor countries on April 17-19 in Geneva, Switzerland. "With Turkey's growing power in the region and its support for the TRNC.



DUBAI: Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Quraishi visits Expo2020 in Dubai today. While visiting Pakistan Pavilion at the Expo, FM appreciated the role of Pakistani community in United Arab Emirates. - DNA

**'India should restore special status of J&K'**

Pakistan has long been committed to resolving all outstanding issues, including Jammu and Kashmir dispute, with India through peaceful and meaningful negotiations

## DNA

BEIJING: India should restore original special status of Jammu and Kashmir, withdraw its military and security forces from Jammu and Kashmir to pave way for peaceful and meaningful negotiations for settlement of Kashmir issue. These views were expressed by Cheng Xizhong, Visiting Professor at Southwest University of Political Science and Law and former Defense Attach in South Asian countries said on

Sunday. Pakistan has long been committed to resolving all outstanding issues, including Jammu and Kashmir dispute, with India through peaceful and meaningful negotiations. However, despite the strong opposition of the international community and regional countries, India unilaterally scrapped Article 370 of the Constitution in 2019, stripped Jammu and Kashmir of special status, and downgraded Jammu and Kashmir from statehood to union territory status.

As a result, the peaceful settlement of the Kashmir issue has lost its basis, which has worsened the relations between India and Pakistan, and seriously damaged peace and stability in South Asia, he said in a statement issued here. In his opinion, whether India and Pakistan can resume dialogue and normalize relations depends on the following three conditions: First, India deeply reflects on what it has done in recent years, quickly corrects its mistakes, and restores original special status of Jammu and Kashmir by legal procedures. Second, India withdraws

all the military and security forces from Jammu and Kashmir that are being deployed to suppress Kashmiri people, immediately stops serious violations of human rights and gives the Kashmiri people the right to self-determination. Third, India completely abandons regional hegemonism and deals with its relations with its South Asian neighbors, including Pakistan, in an equal manner. Cheng Xizhong welcomed the statement of Pakistan Foreign Office spokesperson in which he said that Pakistan had always underscored the need for a mean-

ingful dialogue on all outstanding issues including the core issue of Jammu and Kashmir. "We are fully agree with what the Pakistani Foreign Office spokesperson said. Moreover, I think Pakistan's position of normalizing relations with India is sincere, reasonable and very constructive," he added. He said that India and Pakistan are the two major powers in the South Asian subcontinent, because of the long-standing Jammu and Kashmir dispute, they have been hostile to each other for decades.

