



# Islamabad POST

Wednesday, April 28, 2021

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

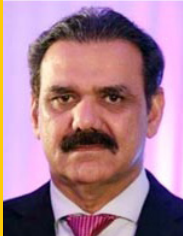
Price Rs. 20

**European Commission President blames sexism for 'sofagate'**

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**S. Balochistan's roads to improve connectivity**

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**China to provide vaccine to Pak till pandemic end**

Detailed News On Page-01



Sehr & Iftar Timings		
Ramadan Kareem		
CITY	SEHR	IFTAR
ISLAMABAD	03:49 am	06:50 pm
FAISALABAD	03:56 am	06:46 pm
LAHORE	03:50 am	06:41 pm
KARACHI	04:36 am	07:01 pm
SARGODHA	03:55 am	06:49 pm
FIQA JAFARIA		
CITY	SEHR	IFTAR
ISLAMABAD	03:39 am	07:00 pm
FAISALABAD	03:46 am	06:56 pm
LAHORE	03:40 am	06:51 pm
KARACHI	04:26 am	07:11 pm
SARGODHA	03:44 am	06:59 pm

## Briefs

### Deals signed to buy 30m doses

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Health Dr Faisal Sultan on Tuesday said that the government has signed deals to purchase 30 million doses of anti-coronavirus vaccine. "The process of vaccination in the country is going on uninterrupted. The government is not relying only on vaccines it got only through gifts and donations. This is a misconception. Pakistan is already buying vaccines from three different vaccine companies," said Dr Faisal Sultan. Addressing a press conference in Islamabad after the National Command and Control Center (NCC) meeting, he said three million doses have been bought already since March 30. Dr Faisal said, "We have signed deals of 30 million doses including a deal of transfer of technology with the Sinopharm company."

### PPP to decide about rejoining PDM

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Former prime minister and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) senior leader Shahid Khaqan Abbasi on Tuesday said that it's up to Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) if it wants to come back to the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM). "If there will be trust deficit on the part of the PPP then there would be no chance of coming back into the PDM," Abbasi commented while talking to media persons outside an accountability court in Islamabad. Shahid Khaqan Abbasi said the journey of progress is halted in the country and every individual is troubled by inflation.

# All exams cancelled till June 15

Shafqat says the country seems to be headed towards a complete lockdown in areas witnessing particularly high positivity ratios

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Education Shafqat Mehmood and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Health Dr Faisal Sultan on Tuesday announced that as per the suggestion of the National Command and Operation Centre, all board exams have been postponed till June 15 given the rising number of coronavirus cases in the country. The minister and the SAPM were holding a press conference related to Cambridge exam centres as well as the overall situation of infections in the country after attending a special session of the NCOC. During the press conference, Mehmood said that from April 18 (when the last meeting of the education ministry was held) until now, the number of coronavirus cases has rapidly risen, therefore, the government has decided to postpone all exams until June 15. He said the country seems to be headed towards a complete lockdown in areas witnessing particularly high positivity ratios. "Exams of 9, 10, 11 and 12, which were supposed to begin from the end of May, have been delayed further," the minister said. "No board exams will be held till mid-June (June 15)," Mehmood added that another meeting of the NCOC will decide in the third week of May whether these exams will be postponed further or not. "So if exams take place after June 15, they may continue in July and even August," the minister explained. Speaking about Cambridge exams, Mehmood said that O level exams will now be held in the October and November cycle and the same will be the case for A and AS level exams.

### Govt bans tourism, travel from May 8-16

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: The government has imposed a complete ban on tourism from May 8 to May 16, including during Eid holidays, in view of the increasing number of coronavirus cases. According to a notification issued by the Ministry of Interior on Tuesday, travelling will be banned during the Eid holidays while all tourist resorts, hotels, restaurants, parks, other recreational places and shopping malls will remain closed. According to the notification, inter-city and inter-provincial transport will be banned during Eid holidays; however, locals especially of Gilgit Baltistan (GB) will be allowed to travel. The ministry further directed that routes leading to tourist spots will be closed with special focus on Murree, Galiyat, Swat-Kalam, Sea View/beaches and Northern Areas. The Interior Ministry has also directed to ensure timely issuance of SOPs/guidelines for Itikaf, Shabe-e-Qadar, Jumma-tul-Wda and Namaz-e-Eid. Earlier, National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) on Monday proposed the government to announce week-long Eid holidays from May 10 to May 16. The new restrictions announced by the government are including: Timely SOPs to be prepared for Itikaf, Shabe-e-Qadar, Friday prayers and Eid prayers.

# Maryam slams govt for mishandling Covid-19

– says the government has failed to curb virus, implement SOPs, or safeguard people's health

ZUBAIR AHMED

ISLAMABAD: PML-N Vice President Maryam Nawaz said Tuesday the PTI-led government is a "curse" on people, as she criticised it for not handling the coronavirus situation in the right manner. "We want this curse (incumbent government) to end ... we can bear them, but people cannot," the PML-N vice president said while addressing a press conference alongside the Prime Minister of Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK) Raja Farooq Haider and other party leaders. Speaking about O/A Level exams, Maryam said

### PML-N's Javed Latif arrested

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Police took Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) MNA Javed Latif into custody on Tuesday after a sessions court dismissed his bail in a case pertaining to allegedly defaming state institutions. The PML-N leader appeared before the court as additional sessions judge Wajid Minhas resumed hearing. The court reserved a verdict after hearing arguments of both defence counsel and prosecutor. Latif left the courtroom before the pronouncement of the verdict. The Crime Investigation Agency (CIA) arrested him near Saggian Pul after the court dismissed his bail plea, according to his lawyer. Earlier, the Lahore High Court (LHC), while hearing Mian Javed Latif's plea seeking dismissal of case, had stressed that no relief will be given to the person who speaks against Pakistan. Justice Muhammad Qasim Khan reprimanded Javed Latif and said in his remarks that the PML-N leader should leave Pakistan and take nationality of any other country. The parliamentarians should do self-accountability, he affirmed.

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ISLAMABAD: MATSUDA Kuninori, Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan and Noor Ahmed, Secretary of the Ministry of Economic Affairs exchanging debt deferral agreement notes. – DNA

# Pak, Japan agree on debt deferral of JPY 40bn

Notes to this effect were signed by MATSUDA Kuninori, Ambassador of Japan and Noor Ahmed, Secretary Economic Affairs

NEHAL MIRAJ

ISLAMABAD: Japan and Pakistan agreed on debt deferral amounting to JPY 40 billion (approximately USD 370 million) for making fiscal space to fight against COVID-19 in Pakistan. This is in line with the G20 Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) agreed on April 15, 2020 and the MOU signed between Pakistan and the creditor countries on June 9, 2020. Notes to this effect were signed and exchanged be-

tween H.E. MATSUDA Kuninori, Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan and Mr. Noor Ahmed, Secretary of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, in Islamabad. The concessional loans, which are subject to the debt deferral, have been utilized for infrastructure development such as roads, tunnels, power plants and grids, irrigation, water supply, drainage facilities in Pakistan from the early 1990s to the mid-2010s. These concessional loans have favorable conditions for Pakistan in terms of low interest

rate, long grace and repayment period. Ambassador MATSUDA said, "after the stability of Afghanistan is realized, I believe some of these projects must be a part of the connectivity between Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia." Under this agreement, repayments for the debt and interest due between May 1, 2020 and December 31, 2020 will be rescheduled after June 15, 2022. Economic shock caused by the outbreak of COVID-19 has continued on a global scale. Japan provided Paki-

stan with direct support of USD 9.5 million and multilateral support of USD 7.41 million to contain COVID-19, as well as the quick delivery of diagnostic kits and non-governmental support, all of which were on a grant basis. International solidarity on the medical and economical front is necessary to fight against infectious diseases with no borders. Ambassador MATSUDA added, "This agreement, which we signed today, represents Japan's solidarity with Pakistan on the economic front."

### Pakistan to import oxygen: Fawad



KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Fawad Chaudhry said Tuesday Pakistan will import oxygen from Iran and China if the country's coronavirus situation worsens. The minister was addressing a press conference where he was speaking about the coronavirus situation in the country. Chaudhry said Pakistan would import oxygen from Iran and China if the coronavirus situation in the country worsens. He said it was a bit difficult to bring oxygen into the country from other states as it is not possible to transport it into the country via air. "Oxygen has to be transported via land," he said, adding that while Pakistan is facing a crisis, there is still no need to panic right now.

# Qureshi discusses Covid-19 situation with Canadian FM

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi received a telephone call from Foreign Minister of Canada Marc Garneau. During the call, matters pertaining to COVID-19 pandemic, bilateral ties and regional situation were discussed. The Foreign Minister stated that Pakistan and Canada had historically enjoyed cordial relationship and underlined the need to enhance the bilateral relations in political, economic, security and cultural fields for mutual benefit of the two countries. The Canadian Foreign Minister briefed the Foreign Minister on the decision by the Canadian Government to suspend flights to and from Pakistan in the wake of an upsurge in COVID-19 cases in Canada. The Foreign Minister offered condolences on the loss of precious lives in Canada due to COVID-19 and extended good wishes to the Government and people of Canada to combat the pandemic in a holistic manner. He apprised the Canadian Foreign Minister of the effective measures taken by the Government of Pakistan to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on the lives and livelihoods of Pakistani people and urged that the Canadian government may reconsider its decision of suspending flights from Pakistan. The Foreign Minister appreciated the inclusion of Pakistan in Students Direct Stream (SDS) while expressing hope that it would help to augment access of more Pakistani students to the educational institutes of Canada. He requested to re-establish Canadian visa processing center in Islamabad following improvement in law & order situation in Pakistan.

Continued on Page 06

### PM to announce projects for overseas Pakistanis

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan will launch two projects for overseas Pakistanis who have availed from the Roshan Digital Account scheme in his address on Thursday. According to the details, the announcement was made the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Senator Faisal Javed Khan on his official Twitter handle. Faisal Javed said that the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) was launching two new initiatives for overseas Pakistan under the Roshan Digital Account scheme. 'Roshan Apni Car [and] Roshan Samaaji Khidmat as we celebrate RDA reaching USD 1 Billion mark,' he said while further announcing that Prime Minister Imran Khan will be addressing overseas Pakistanis on Thursday at 11:00 am.

### Positivity rate reaches 10.2%

RAJA PERVAIZ

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan reported about 4,400 new infections in the last 24 hours, taking the total tally to 804,939 on Tuesday. The country's positivity rate has risen to 10.2% with 87,794 active cases, while the number of recoveries nationwide has reached 699,816 so far. According to National Command Operation Centre (NCOC), Pakistan conducted 43,981 tests for coronavirus out of which 4,487 returned positive. The country reported 142 new fatalities, raising the total coronavirus death toll in Pakistan to 17,329. However, the highest death toll in the last 24 hours was reported in Punjab with 107 new deaths. Amid a deadly third wave of coronavirus, the Sindh government has decided to introduce a series of measures.

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## NEWS DESK

BEIJING: China on Tuesday pledged to stand with Pakistan to provide support to control the third wave of COVID-19 and continue supply of vaccines to help the all-weather strategic cooperative partner till final defeat of the deadly virus. "As an all-weather strategic cooperation partner, China will continue to stand with Pakistan to provide support and help to the best of our

capability for the final defeat of the virus," Chinese Foreign Ministry's Spokesperson Wang Wenbin said during his regular briefing. He said on April 26 the Chinese government delivered to the Pakistani government a new batch of vaccine assistance. "This is a new measure of China to fulfill our pledge to make vaccines a global public good and to help our Pakistani friends to fight the virus." The third batch of one million doses of Chinese gov-

ernment-donated vaccines was airlifted from Beijing to Islamabad by special aircraft on Saturday and was handed over to the Pakistani authorities during a ceremony on Monday. Earlier, the Chinese government aided two

batches of vaccines to Pakistan, and the Chinese military also donated a batch of vaccines to the Pakistani Army. And Pakistan has also purchased several consignments of COVID-19 vaccines from China. Three special flights brought on Sunday 1 million doses of coronavirus vaccine from China, a Pakistan

International Airlines spokesperson confirmed, as the government stepped up efforts to contain the third and most dangerous wave of infections in the country. Three Boeing-777 aircraft were sent to Beijing to receive one million doses of the vaccine, according to the PIA spokesperson. The first flight reached Islamabad last night, while the second returned early Sunday. The third special flight arrived in Islamabad this evening, the spokesperson

added. The vaccine doses were brought on the instructions of the National Command and Operation Centre and the National Disaster Management Authority. Islamabad received 500,000 doses of Chinese-made Sinopharm vaccine on March 31. This was the first batch of the Sinopharm vaccine bought by Pakistan. China previously gifted three batches of the vaccine to Islamabad, which helped begin the Covid-19 vaccination drive in the country.





## Briefs

## Changan starts testing Autonomous cars

ATHAR SUFI

KARACHI: The future finally meets the roads of Pakistan. Master Changan Motors is leading Pakistan into the future of mobility by introducing new automotive technologies and testing them on the roads of Pakistan.

Danial Malik - CEO of Master Changan Motors states, "The Future is here, it is just not evenly distributed.

Changan Pakistan is here to change that by bringing the future to Pakistan, and indigenizing autonomous mobility. Changan Auto is the leader in advanced mobility technologies in China, and we see no reason why we cannot introduce them in Pakistan.

We aim to catalyze a safer tomorrow by bringing to Pakistan the very best in global autonomous technology."

"Master Changan's vision of "Future Forward, Forever," is the driving force under which we are testing proprietary Artificial Intelligence based autonomous driving technologies and adapting it to Pakistani roads," he added.

As Danial Malik has previously stated in an interview that "we (at Master Changan) believe people don't buy what you sell, they buy why you sell it - and with Master Changan, we have a very strong why; a why which runs through our people, products, plants, offices, and everything we do".

As soon as the teasers were released on Changan Pakistan's Facebook page, Pakistani social media was abuzz with palpable excitement and a clamouring to see such technologically advanced vehicles being potentially introduced to the Pakistani market.

## Another 22 die of coronavirus in Faisalabad

DNA

FAISALABAD: Another 22 patients died of COVID-19 in the district while 128 people tested positive during the last 24 hours.

A spokesperson for the health department said on Tuesday that 932 coronavirus tests were conducted in public and private sector labs during the period. He said that total active cases in Faisalabad were 2,586 while 14,628 patients had so far recovered from the disease.

He said that 305 beds were allocated at the Allied Hospital, 106 at the DHQ Hospital and 150 at Government General Hospital Gulshan Muhammad Abad for COVID-19 patients.

At present, 261 patients, including 177 confirmed ones, were under treatment at the Allied Hospital, 99 including 21 confirmed, were admitted to DHQ Hospital and 85 including 40 confirmed patients were admitted to General Hospital.

He further said that 1,349 confirmed patients were isolated at their homes in the district.

## 44 held with drugs, weapons

DNA

FAISALABAD: Police claimed on Tuesday to have arrested 44 criminals and recovered drugs and illegal weapons from their possession. The police teams nabbed 10 proclaimed offenders and 10 drug pushers and recovered 6.7 kg hashish and 64 liters liquor from their possession.

The police also held 16 gamblers with stake money of Rs 9,120.

In a crackdown against illegal weapons, police arrested 8 people and recovered 8 pistols and a number of bullets from them.

Further investigation was underway.

## Anti-corona SOPs to be implemented in true spirit

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Divisional Commissioner Saqib Mannan said that anti corona SOPs will be implemented throughout the division in true letter and spirit for greater national interest as corona pandemic is getting severe and preventive measures are the only solution for containing this disease. He was addressing a meeting of Coordination Committee for anti Corona measures which was attended by Brigadier Pak Army Mr. Kashif, RPO Raja Rifat Mukhtar, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Faisalabad Muhammad Ali, CPO Sohail Chaudhry, Vice Chancellor Faisalabad Medical University Prof Dr. Zafar Ali Chaudhry, Additional Commissioner Coordination Imran Raza Abbasi, Director Health Services Dr. Amanullah, DHO Dr. Bilal Ahmad while DCs of Jhang, Chiniot and Toba Tek Singh participated through video link.



The Divisional Commissioner directed the deputy commissioners to adopt precautionary measures against coronavirus strictly. He said that anti-corona SOPs should be implemented in toto to protect the citizens from corona disease while oxygen should be available in government hospitals. He said that complete lockdown on Friday and Saturday should also be implemented strictly besides checking the SOPs at every public place in Faisalabad division.

He said that Pak Army would help the local administration in implementation on anti-corona SOPs by sensitizing the general public for adopting preventive measures. During the meeting, Pak Army Brig. Mr. Kashif said that objectives of army Jawans is to serve and save the people from corona pandemic and in this connection, Pak Army will fully cooperate with civil administration for implementation on anti corona SOPs in the markets and bazaars. On this occasion, Deputy

Commissioner Faisalabad Muhammad Ali apprised about the details of third wave of corona pandemic and its intensity. He informed that during last 24 hours, 128 patients were tested positive from corona. He further informed that implementation of corona SOPs is being ensured strictly in markets, bazaars and public places in addition to distribution of face masks and sensitizing the people for adopting precautionary measures. He further said that 1315 shopping malls,

restaurants, marriage halls and private schools have been sealed during last 42 days in Faisalabad due to noncompliance of corona SOPs.

## 39,927 senior citizens vaccinated

As many as 39,927 senior citizens have so far been vaccinated against COVID-19 in Faisalabad district. District Health Officer Dr. Ata Al-Moenum said on Tuesday that vaccination process is continued at six vaccination centers, established in the district in double shift.

## 1500 plants being planted

As many as 1500 plants of different varieties are being planted on both sides of the canal expressway.

This was stated by Director Parks & Horticulture Authority Abdullah Nisar Cheema on Tuesday while planting saplings. He said that plants like Kachnar, Arjun, Pulkin, Sukh Chain were being planted which would beautify the expressway and help to make the environment friendly.



ISLAMABAD: Staff of the Embassy of Indonesia got vaccination doses at the National Institute of Health, on Tuesday. - DNA

## Dr. Firdous for following anti-corona SOPs

DNA

LAHORE: Special Assistant to Chief Minister on Information Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan on Tuesday said that CM had expressed reservations over the violation of corona SOPs during the month of Ramadan.

Talking to the media here, she said that Chief Minister Usman Buzdar chaired a cabinet committee meeting on corona and reviewed the current situation of corona in each district. She regretted that standard operating procedures (SOPs) were being announced all over the province but not being implemented in letter and spirit. The Special Assistant said the meeting also reviewed in detail the supply of oxygen and availability of beds in hospitals.

She said, "CM has directed the Health Minister to increase the number of ventilators." She said the Punjab government had decided to double the vaccination process in collaboration with the federal government and the Health department had been directed to provide complete data by tomorrow.

It had been decided to



overcome the delay in vaccine procurement while ensuring transparency. Foreign companies could take part in open bidding after registration with DRAP, she said. Dr Firdous said the meeting also reviewed the supply of essential items in Ramadan bazaars, adding that there was no shortage of edibles in Punjab. She said the government would not allow mill owners to increase the price of flour and a committee had been constituted to review the factors influencing the prices of wheat and flour.

The Special Assistant to Chief Minister said that CM had taken notice of mal-administration and delay in the provision of sugar in some cities and ministers had been directed to submit their fortnightly report regarding their visits to Ramadan bazaars in their respective areas.

## PHP Posts are sprayed to avoid Dengue: SP Anjum Kamal

Multitude of citizens belonging to different walk of life has been educated about traffic rule and Precautionary measures to ward off contract of COVID-19

## BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: The well being and sound health of Punjab Highway Patrol Personnel is the prime responsibility and for that purpose, Anti-Malaria / Dengue, disinfectant spray has started on all Patrolling posts including offices. SP Mirza Anjum Kamal told media that it is human friendly and its impact retains more than 60 days. Further, he told that anti-septic spray is a longer and safer solution against mosquitoes' bites having credentials of WHO and Health standards. The spray helps in reducing the chance of disease/epidemic outbreak.

Moreover, SP patrolling Mirza Anjum Kamal has given the task to Mobile education unit to visit different public, private places, banks, patrol pumps, union councils, and health care facilities, organize road shows and establish camps to sensitize citizens belonging to all walks of life about the COVID-19. Furthermore, while doing road shows, Mobile education unit distributed pamphlets and brochures carrying instructions about how to cross the roads, advantages of wearing helmet and seat belt.

Mobile Education Unit is the best instrument to create awareness about road safety and Pandemic Corona virus. Multitude of citizens belonging to different walk of life has been educated about traffic rule and Precautionary measures to ward off contract of COVID-19. The objective of Mobile education unit is

multifaceted and need of the hour to make people sensitize not only about road safety but also prevalent issues such as Novel Corona virus.

Before travelling, it is essential to take cognizance about weather condition, road condition and facilities on the road taken. Further, the commuters are advised to check the Patrol, oil, water, electrical equipment and tyre. The information about help line in case of distress is indispensable to

avoid any embarrassment, wastage of time and any untoward incident.

Moreover, In case of emergency, happening of incident/accident, the road commuters can call on help line 1124 of Punjab Highway Patrol police. If the road user faces any kind of harassment on the road or he notices any unlawful activity on the road, he can call on PHP Helpline 1124. Polite, helpful and compassionate is the sole motto of Punjab highway patrol.



## Six killed, 920 injured in 859 road accidents

DNA

LAHORE: At least six persons were killed and 920 injured in 859 road accidents in all 36 districts of Punjab during the last 24 hours.

Out of this, 515 people were seriously injured who were shifted to different hospitals. Whereas, 399 minor injured victims were treated at the incident site by Rescue Medical Teams thus reducing the burden of hospitals.

Further, the analysis showed that 407 drivers, 30 underage drivers, 146 pedestrians, and 367 passengers were among the victims of these road accidents. The statistics show that 266 road accidents were reported in Lahore which affected 271 persons placing the provincial capital at top of the list followed by 76 in Faisalabad with 79 victims and at third Multan with 55 accidents and 61 victims. According to the data 688 motorbikes, 121 auto-rickshaws, 101 motorcycles, 39 vans, 11 passenger buses, 36 trucks and 110 other types of auto vehicles and slow-moving carts were involved in aforesaid road accidents.

## Three policemen suspended

DNA

FAISALABAD: The superintendent police suspended three officials of City Jarawal police station over negligence and delinquency. A police spokesman on Tuesday said SP Jarawal Town Nasir Bajwa paid a surprise visit to City Jarawal police station and record of the station was not up-to-date while policemen were performing duty without official uniform. To which, the SP suspended Muharrar Mulazim Hussain, Naib Muharrar Gulam and Naib Muharrar Irfan, and also issued a show-cause notice to SHO Rana Asghar.

## 2 dacoits arrested

Mansoorabad police have arrested two dacoits and recovered illegal weapons from them.

A police spokesman said on Tuesday that a police team, headed by ASI Adil Gulam, conducted a raid late in the night on Monday and nabbed two dacoits from Mehndi Mohallah Phattak at Jhumra Road.

The police recovered illegal weapons and other items from them. The accused were wanted to the police in a number of dacoity, robbery and other cases.

## SHC directs to freeze CM Sindh salary over pension delay

DNA

SUKKUR: Sindh High Court (SHC) on Tuesday directed to stop salary of Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah, cabinet members and other government functionaries over delaying pension to the retired employees.

The two-member Sukkur bench of the SHC heard a case regarding a delay being made in the payment of pension to retired employees of the market committee.

The counsel of the pensioners pleaded that despite repeated court orders, the government has refused to release the pension of retired employees.

The court expressed its annoyance over the lack of implementation on its orders and directed that the cabinet members would not get their salaries unless the retired employees receive their dues. Besides the cabinet members and chief minister, the court also stopped the salary of chief secretary Sindh, secretary agriculture and secretary finance and adjourned the proceedings for May 11. In February, the double bench of the Sindh High Court, Sukkur bench, on Wednesday heard the petition of pensioners seeking immediate release of their pensions. During the hearing, the SHC remarked that the court will pass an order to freeze the salary of Sindh CM Syed Murad Ali Shah if the pensions of govt employees were not released till February 16.

## 'Indian N-prog aimed at getting big power status'

Dr. Sultan argued that India was already enjoying access to high end nuclear technologies because of its deal with the US and the 2008 waiver by NSG

DNA

ISLAMABAD: India's quest for Nuclear Suppliers Group's (NSG) membership is the continuation of its desire for big power status for which it has been aided by the United States and other Western countries, believe nuclear experts. They were discussing "South Asian Nuclear History" at a webinar hosted by Strategic Vision Institute, according to a press release issued here on Tuesday.

Dr. Adil Sultan, chair of Air University's Department of Aerospace Sciences and Strategic

Studies, said that India through NSG membership wants to get the prestige of being equated with other nuclear weapon states. He opined that if India succeeds in getting NSG membership it would enjoy more privileges than the nuclear weapon states, which had signed the non-proliferation treaty. They are obligated to work for disarmament and if India enters NSG, it wouldn't have any such obligation, the contended.

Dr. Sultan argued that India was already enjoying access to high end nuclear technologies because of its deal with the US and the 2008 waiver by NSG. Therefore,

in his view the benefits of a future NSG for India would mostly be political in nature as it would then be seen as a "responsible country" with a "legitimate nuclear weapons state" status. Pakistan, he maintained, if not given NSG membership alongside with India, would then technically be the only country possessing nuclear technology that would be ineligible for nuclear trade with NSG countries. Israel, the other non-NPT country, he said, already enjoys a special status and could get whatever it wants.

Dr. Rabia Akhtar, director School of Integrated Social Sciences, University of Lahore, said that

non-proliferation policies of successive US administrations, were designed to create an imbalance for preventing Pakistan from going nuclear.

Dr. Zafar Khan, professor of International Relations at Balochistan University of Information Technology, Engineering and Management Sciences, said security remains a dominant factor from Pakistan's point of view. South Asian nuclear history, he said, is somehow identical to cold-war nuclear history and rivalry between the US and Soviet Union.

Dr. Tughrul Yamin Malik, Associate Dean at National University of Science and Technology's Centre

for International Peace & Stability, deliberated on current trends in global politics of non-proliferation from South Asian perspective.

President SVI Dr. Zafar Iqbal Cheema, while opening the discussion, called for a closer study of Indian nuclear diplomacy that kept it shielded from the international safeguards. Pakistan's perspective, he said, is based on the geostrategic and security dimension.

After India's 1974 nuclear explosion, he recalled, Pakistan was compelled to acquire nuclear weapons capability because of existential threats from India.



Briefs

IHC seeks report of gov't land

**SHAAHEEN HANIF**

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Tuesday sought report from district collector regarding alleged illegal possession of government land by Senator Aurangzeb Orakzai. The officials of Capital Development Authority (CDA) informed the court that they visited the area on the directions of IHC. The civic body witnessed that the senator had illegally occupied a land of 110 square feet which was evicted by him. Chief Justice Athar Minallah, hearing the case, sought report from district collector and adjourned the case for three weeks.

**NAB summons Younus Dagha on April 28**

**DNA**

ISLAMABAD: The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has summoned former Commerce Secretary Younus Dagha on April 28 in the ongoing sugar scandal probe. The former Secretary has been directed to appear before the Rawalpindi office. According to details, the anti-graft watchdog has decided to include Younus Dagha in the investigation regarding export of sugar and has directed the former secretary to bring minutes off all inter-ministry meetings. The bureau has also asked him to bring all record about how prices for international and local sugar markets were determined. Earlier, NAB had also summoned PTI's Mohsin Khan Leghari. Sources privy to the matter have said that a combined investigation team of the anti-corruption watchdog will interrogate the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) lawmaker.

**OGRA authorizes HDIP to inspect meters**

**STAFF REPORT**

ISLAMABAD: Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) Tuesday notified the authorization of Hydrocarbon Development Institute of Pakistan (HDIP) to inspect industrial and commercial meters of Natural and Regasified Liquefied Natural Gas (RLNG) on consumers own request. The authority in a news release said that the HDIP could witness inspection of gas meters which "may include but not limited to the verification of accuracy of gas meters and field calibration of measuring devices to check compliance of the standards specified by the authority in the regulations. The inspection of an industrial meter will be carried out at the testing fee of Rs 10,000 and a commercial meter for Rs 5,000, which would be refundable if a meter was found defective.

**IESCO issue power suspension schedule**

**DNA**

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO)'s spokesman, System Maintenance/Development Work is in process. Therefore power supply of below mentioned Feeders/areas will be temporary suspended as per given schedule: On 28th April, 06:00 AM to 10:00 AM, Megan, Shams Colony, Bhikri, Garmala, Karnab Kaswal, Sukho, Bengali, CM Pak, Rahara, Bahria Enclave, PHA, ISI, Park Enclave, Chatta, Comcast University, Trait, Burma, Waheedabad, Suhdran Road, Chara, Club-1 feeders and surrounding areas will be remain without power. IESCO management apologizes to its esteemed customers for the power outage.

# Experts discuss pros and cons of moot in Uzbekistan

Idea of Central-South Asian connectivity encompasses broader paradigms, i.e., trade and transport connectivity for sustainable growth, revival of cultural and humanitarian ties as a way to strengthen friendship and mutual confidence

**MAHNOOR ANSAR**

ISLAMABAD: The experts from Pakistan and Uzbekistan discussed in detail the upcoming international conference being held in Tashkent. In this regard, the CGSS arranged an interactive session. During the meeting, the importance of the upcoming international conference on Central and South Asia regional connectivity: Challenges and opportunities was discussed. The meeting was hosted by Akromjon Nematov, First Deputy Director of the ISRS under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Akromjon Nematov, First Deputy Director of the ISRS under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan elaborated the significance of the upcoming conference that is to be attended by Uzbekistan's President Shaykat Mirziyoye, Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan, President of Afghanistan Ashraf Ghani and other important regional leaders. He explained that the idea of Central-South Asian connectivity encompasses broader paradigms, i.e., trade and transport connectivity for sustainable growth, revival of cultural and humanitarian ties as a way to strengthen friendship and mutual



confidence, analyzing regional security challenges, ensuring the security of cross-border infrastructure and devising strong policies to tackle common global threats. Dr. Mehmood Ul Hassan Khan, Regional Geopolitical Analyst & Member Board of Experts, Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS) appreciated the effort of ISRS for organizing the meeting. He stated that socio-economic integration, academic collaboration and broader prospects of regional integration hold immense importance in today's changing dynamics of the world. He elaborated the role of CGSS as a major stakeholder in bridging the gap between Central and South Asia via policy-making, researches, building trust and facilitating joint academic projects. Dr. Hassan also highlighted the significant contours of regional integration via resolving the

conferences in this domain. Prof. Dr. Shabir Ahmed, Director Area Study Centre (Russia, China & Central Asia), University of Peshawar and Member Board of Experts, Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS) stated that 21ST century is the century of Eurasian integration. He highlighted the importance of regional connectivity and cooperation of Central Asia with South Asia. He said that BRI, CPEC and other integration programs are there to enhance regional cooperation. However, regional states need to help themselves. He elaborated that there is a need to enhance regional connectivity in all spheres including political, economic and security. Dr. Shabir also highlighted the importance of the rail routes and the existing economic integration projects like ECO, BRI, CAREC etc. He stated that development of cross-border connectivity and physical infrastructure is a dire need of time. He proposed that addition of Central Asian Republics into CPEC would be beneficial. There are huge prospects for the investment. He concluded that the cooperation must dominate the competition in the region. The cultural and people-to-people contacts must be increased.

## IHC serves notice to NAB

**IBRAR KHAN**

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday served notice to National Accountability Bureau (NAB) in a case challenging the sealing of three floors of Safa Gold Mall. A division bench comprising Justice Mohsin Akhter Kiyani and Justice Fayyaz Ahmed Anjum Jandran heard the case. The petitioner's lawyer pleaded that the NAB had sealed the three floors of Safa Gold Mall on the instructions of NAB chairman. The reference was still under process against the Safa Mall before an accountability court, he said and prayed the court to turn down the decision for freezing the floors. Justice Kiyani noted that the petitioner had not challenged the decision of accountability court 2017 in this regard. The lawyer said the accountability court had not viewed all legal aspect of the subject. He further argued that even NAB had not mentioned the reasons in its notice for sealing more floors.

## PBM MD breaks fast with Panahgah's dwellers

**MEHMOOD ABUDLLAH**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM) Managing Director (MD) Malik Zaheer Abbas Khokhar Tuesday broke his fast along with the dwellers of a shelter home (Tarlai Panahgah), located in outskirts of the Federal Capital. The newly appointed MD made the visit on the very first day of his joining. The visit was aimed at reviewing 'Ifat' arrangements for daily wage earners and poor people at Tarlai Panahgah. Talking to the media, Zaheer Abbas said he was grateful to Prime Minister Imran Khan for assigning him such a humanitarian task. He said all-out efforts would be made to alleviate the poverty from Pakistan as taking forward 'Koi Bhokha Na Soye' vision of Prime Minister Imran was his first priority.

## UNICEF helps treat malnourished children

ISLAMABAD: The United Nations Childrens Fund (UNICEF) Pakistan has helped in providing medical help to some 4,239 severe acute malnourished children during the first three months of current year. About 2,345 girls and 1,894 boys were treated at the UNICEF supported outpatient therapeutic programme (OTP) sites with a cure rate of over 92 per cent, according to a document of the UNICEF Pakistan. Around 38,800 children (19,293 girls and 19,507 boys), and 42,884 pregnant and lactating women (PLW) also received multi-micronutrient supplements under the programme. A total of 42,200 mothers received counseling services on improved maternal, infant and young child nutrition with special focus on the first 1,000 days of life, the document said. – APP

## Govt believes in rule of law

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Climate Change Zartaj Gul Wazir Tuesday said the PTI government believed in rule of law and across the board accountability against the corrupts and plunderers. The incumbent government was taking solid actions against mafias without any discrimination as Prime Minister Imran Khan was committed from day one to continue the ongoing accountability process against looters, she said talking to a private news channel. The minister said the PTI had struggled for 25 years to make the country a corruption free to bring political and economic stability. She urged former prime minister Nawaz being a fugitive and absconder should come back the country to face the corruption cases in the courts. – APP



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate, Muhammad Sadiq Sanjarni exchanging views with a delegation of UK Pakistan Business Council, at Parliament House Islamabad. – DNA

## US Embassy brings CompTIA to Pakistan

**ZUBAIR AHMAD**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani IT professionals will soon be able to expand their knowledge and skills in information and communications technology (ICT) through a recently announced partnership that the U.S. Embassy's Foreign Commercial Service helped forge between Chicago, Illinois-based Comp-

TIA and Karachi-based Techtics, its delivery partner in Pakistan. CompTIA Inc., a nonprofit association for the technology industry and workforce, is a recognized name in ICT certifications and a leading voice and advocate for the global information technology ecosystem. Through its partnership with Techtics, a one-stop corporate training and education center that

offers tech-based certifications, ICT professionals will soon have access to internationally recognized training and certification programs. This partnership was announced at an April 12th virtual launch ceremony hosted by Nasser Wajahat, Secretary General of the American-Pakistan Business Development Forum, and attended by leading industry experts.

During the event, U.S. Embassy Foreign Commercial Service Counselor John Coronado noted, "These programs will help Pakistan's IT professionals, boost the competitiveness of its IT companies seeking to expand in the global marketplace, and open the door to further commerce with the United States, Pakistan's biggest trading partner."

## CDA install iron grill around Quaid Portrait

**RAJA PERVAIZ**

ISLAMABAD: Upon the special directions of Chairman CDA, iron grill has been installed round the portrait of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah at Expressway. Main purpose of the grill is to ensure the protection of the portrait. Features showing history and culture of Pakistan have been added. Different lights have been installed to highlight the portrait further. Prior to this, portrait was damaged due to no fencing. However, CDA has completed work on fence round the new portrait of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah at Expressway. This fence will ensure safety of the portrait. Designs on grill showing culture and history of Pakistan were prepared by Jamal Shah. Different lights have been installed which will make the portrait more attractive during the night time. 2 mm iron sheet has been used for making the portrait of Quaid. Portrait is 50 ft long and 59 ft wide. Features of Rohtas fort have also been added. Meanwhile, The Capital Development Authority (CDA) during its anti encroachment operation conducted on Monday retrieved two plots from the land mafia. The civic body is conducting operations against illegal constructions and encroachments across the city without any pressure. According to details, land grabbers illegally occupied plots worth of billion rupees in I-8 Markaz and JP Road. CDA Enforcement teams have conducted operation and retrieved the plots from mafia. The operation against the land grabbers across the city is being supervised by the Enforcement Department of CDA.

## NTC, Schlumberger sign MoU

ISLAMABAD: Following the government "Digital Pakistan" initiative, National Telecommunication Corporation ('NTC') and Schlumberger Tuesday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to collaborate on the deployment of AI and digital solutions enabled by the DELFI\* cognitive E&P environment, hosted on NTC's data centers in Pakistan. By working together, the two organizations will enable Pakistani energy companies to benefit from new digital and data-driven technologies that significantly increase operational efficiency and improve business performance, said a press release issued here Tuesday. "Our strategic collaboration with NTC accelerates digital transformation for the Pakistani energy industry. By hosting the DELFI environment on NTC's in-country cloud services Schlumberger provides customers with secure access to our leading AI and digital solutions on a rapidly expanding cloud service across Pakistan. With advanced cloud technologies and almost limitless capacity, geoscientists, engineers and data scientists can accelerate their workflows and insights to enhance critical business decisions," commented Zaurayze Tarique, Managing Director, Schlumberger Pakistan and Yemen. "Deployment of DELFI solutions will help the Pakistani energy sector elevate performance across the industry's value chain." "In resource and knowledge intensive industries, such as the oil and gas industry, companies can now deliver breakthrough performance thanks to the development and large-scale use of innovative digital technologies and new cloud-based business models. By collaborating with Schlumberger, NTC is extending commitment to invest in the development of the industry by working with the largest industrial and technological leaders from international and Pakistani oil and gas markets." – DNA

## RCGI urges for more allocation for industries in ADP

Mian Aslam Iqbal said that more allocation would be allocated in the annual development program than last year, around 150 billion to 200 billion will be added

**SHUJAAT HAMZA**

RAWALPINDI: Planning and Development Board, Government of Punjab organized a virtual consultative session on the Annual Development Program (ADP) for industries, commerce, investment, and skill development sector. Addressing the virtual session of the Annual Development Program (ADP) for the year 2021-22, Punjab Minister for Industries Mian Aslam Iqbal said that more allocation would be allocated in the annual development program than last year, around 150 billion to 200 billion will be added. He welcomed proposals of the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCGI) including setting up of Industrial Zones, IT

Park, Ring Road, Expo Center and access road for the Rawat Industrial Estate. The virtual session was attended by representatives of the private sector, including the Chamber of Commerce representatives from Punjab and relevant government officials and representatives.

The session had development talks with the stakeholders from the private sector for their valuable input to make the development program more focused, evidence-based and in line with the requirements of the industries. RCGI President Mohammad Nasir Mirza in his address said that the participation of the Punjab Government, especially the Provincial Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Industry and Planning in the consultative process regarding the formulation of the annual development program in the budget is very remarkable

and commendable. He suggested that the government should acquire land for Rawalpindi Ring Road. Section four should be imposed. "The health sector is going through difficult challenges in the country and we believe that immediate and special funds should be allocated in the ADP for the health and pharma sectors," he said. Rawalpindi has clusters of manufacturing units for Pharmaceutical and IT center and we demand dedicated special economic zones for these key sectors. Establishment of new industries, new sectors, and software technology parks has now become the need of the hour. More relief should be given in the budget to address the challenges faced by the software technology parks and construction sector, he added.





## Briefs

## IHC issues another notices to lawyers

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Tuesday issued another notice to the lawyers in a case pertaining to an attack on High Court's building by a group of lawyers. President Islamabad High Court Bar Association (IHCBA) Raja Zahid and other lawyers appeared before the court of Justice Mian Gul Hassan Aurangzeb. Issuing directives to the lawyers to submit their comments till next date, the court asked that the delay in submission of reply will not be tolerated. It observed that some lawyers had submitted the reply but others yet to submit their written replies, however after the final opportunity, every single case will be dealt separately. President Islamabad High Court Bar Association (IHCBA) pleaded that Raja Khalid Mehmood Advocate was employee of Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) but he has also been served contempt of court notice. Justice Aurangzeb asked the lawyers' body to inform the bench about the names which were included mistakenly till next date. The court adjourned further hearing on the case till after the Eid ul Fitr.

## ITP crackdown against unregistered vehicles

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) has launched a crackdown against unregistered vehicles plying on the roads in the city. Special Squads have been constituted to check such vehicles. SSP (Traffic), Farrukh Rasheed is leading the campaign initiated on the directions of Inspector-General Islamabad police, Qazi Jamil-ur-Rehman. SSP (Traffic) has asked the residents to get their vehicles registered at the earliest and affix only the ETO-issued number plates on their vehicles. The police would show no leniency in this regard, he added. Islamabad Traffic Police has erected special pickets at different points of the city to monitor movement of the possible unregistered vehicles as Deputy Superintendent of police (DSP) level officers of all the four zones have been given special directions to ensure rule of law. According to the details, the Islamabad Traffic Police issued tickets to 3683 unregistered vehicles and motorcycles during the current year.

## PUCAR organizes online Mehfil-e-Mushaira

SHAHEEN HANIF

RAWALPINDI: The Punjab Council of the Arts (PUCAR) on Tuesday organized an online Naatia Mehfil-e-Mushaira at Rawalpindi Arts Council (RAC) in the context of the holy month of Ramazan-ul-Mubarak. Prominent poet and intellectual Dr Abdul Aziz Sahar presided over the mushaira. Senior poet Dr. Farhat Abbas was the chief guest while Arif Farhad anchored the Naatia Mehfil-e-Mushaira. Famous poets of the country Dr. Abdul Aziz Sahar, Dr Farhat Abbas, Qayyum Tahir, Anjum Khaleeq, Akhtar Usman, Manzoor Naqvi, Naurin Talat Arooba, Shahida Akbar and Khalid Mehmood recited their poetries. The Council was conducting its online activities owing to closure of all cultural activities due to prevailing situation of COVID-19.

## Arab companies keen to attend 1st Arab-Pak Business Forum

Business Forum and Exhibition would provide a good opportunity to the private sectors of Arab countries and Pakistan to interact and explore opportunities of bilateral trade, JVs and investment in areas of interest

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: Haityam Yakhlu, CEO, United Exhibitions & Conferences, Palestine held an online meeting with Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) and discussed the possibility of holding a 1st Arab-Pakistan Business Forum and Exhibition in Pakistan in September or October this year for promoting trade and investment relations between Arab countries and Pakistan. He said that about 100 Arab businessmen and women have shown keen interest to attend the Arab-Pakistan 1st Business Forum in addition to about 50 participants in the exhibition. Fatma Azim Senior Vice President ICCI and Ms. Aya Arafat, Advisor to Palestinian Ambassador in Pakistan also attended the meeting. Haityam Yakhlu said that the Business Forum and Exhibition would provide a good opportunity to the private sectors of Arab countries and Pakistan to interact and explore opportunities of bilateral trade, JVs and investment in areas of interest.



He said that his company was also interested in promoting Pakistan's investment in Arab countries including Palestine. He said that ICCI should share the details of potential sectors of Pakistan's economy that offered good potential for collaboration

between Arab countries and Pakistan. Speaking at the occasion, Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry welcomed the proposal from Palestinian company to organize an Arab-Pakistan 1st

Business Forum in Pakistan in collaboration with ICCI and assured him of his full support to make it a highly successful event. He said that Pakistan was a diversified economy with great potential to promote trade and investment relations with Arab countries

and hoped that the said Business Forum would be a right step to transform potential opportunities into realities. He highlighted textiles, rice, fruits & vegetables, oil & gas, construction & real estate, cement, IT, pharmaceutical, leather, sports, electronics, light engineering and others as potential sectors for collaboration between Pakistan with Arab countries for trade, JVs and investment. He said that the Government of Pakistan was working for one window facility besides offering attractive incentives to foreign investors and emphasized that the investors of Arab countries should take advantage of these incentives to setup JVs and investment in Pakistani SEZs. Ms. Fatma Azim, Senior Vice President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry said that close cooperation between Pakistani and Arab countries businessmen would be very instrumental in further strengthening their trade and economic relations. Both sides shared many other ideas to increase business and investment relations between Pakistan and Arab countries.

## Chairman CII asked to protect and promote women's rights

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi has asked the Chairman of Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) to play his role in ensuring the protection and promotion of women's rights, particularly their right to inheritance. He said that CII could play significant role, through Ulama and prayer leaders, to address the cultural hindrances faced by women in Pakistan with regard to their social and economic rights. He stated this while talking to Chairman CII, Dr. Qibla Ayaz, who called on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, today. The President stated that our religion Islam had granted social and economic rights to women but unfortunately the cultural hindrances kept them deprived of their rights. He said that the government had enacted a law to protect women's property rights and ensure that such rights are not violated. He underscored the need for sensitizing the people about the rights of women particularly their rights to inheritance and urged CII



ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi in a meeting with the Chairman of Council of Islamic Ideology Dr. Qibla Ayaz at Aiwan-e-Sadr. – DNA

to play its role in creating awareness in this regard by using the services of Ulama and Pesh-Imams. The President said that no society could progress without the economic inclusion of women and he emphasized that women needed to be empowered by granting them their full rights so that they could play their role in socio-economic development of the country.

The President said that he had asked the concerned quarters to make arrangements for the tele-health program for women to guide them about health problems. The President congratulated Dr. Qibla Ayaz on his appointment as Chairman CII and advised him to prepare a vision, and roadmap and set time-lines for achieving the objectives.

The President acceded to the request of Chairman CII to hold a virtual conference with Ulama to chalk out a strategy for creating awareness among people about the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Qibla Ayaz assured the President of Ulama's cooperation to support his efforts about the empowerment of women and awareness on health-related issues.

## US Embassy, TIE Pakistan launch APWE

“We wanted to help star women entrepreneurs achieve global scalability for their businesses”

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Indus Entrepreneurs (TIE) Islamabad in partnership with US Embassy Islamabad launched the Acceleration Program for Women Entrepreneurs (APWE). Supported by Change Mechanics & Ejad Labs, APWE is a 19th-month acceleration program that enables twelve growth-stage startups led by women entrepreneurs, become investment ready, to seek funding from the world's top US based investors and Venture Capitalists (VCs), through customized acceleration services. “We wanted to help star women entrepreneurs achieve global scalability for their businesses” said Murtaza Zaidi, President The Indus Entrepreneurs Islamabad. “The objective is to raise foreign investments for

Pakistani startups and to achieve this, The Indus Entrepreneurs is in the process of partnering with leading investors and VCs in the Silicon Valley,” he added. The program includes world class acceleration including Business Model & Investment Deck preparation, followed by a 12-Week Exchange Program to USA. The 12-finalists tour leading ecosystems in Silicon Valley, Austin, Seattle, Washington DC and New York; networking, possibly collaborating and meeting investors from these regions, equipping them with learning and exposure and personalized mentorship from leading entrepreneurs, before arriving in Silicon Valley, California for a Final Day Demo. The applications for program are currently open and interested female entrepreneurs can apply by visiting [www.gowomen.pk](http://www.gowomen.pk)

## WAPDA constructing 8 mega projects

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Fauji Foundation Managing Director Waqar Ahmed Malik on Tuesday called on WAPDA Chairman Lt Gen Muzamil Hussain (Retd). Matters relating to cooperation in implementation of WAPDA projects were discussed in detail during the meeting, said a press release. Speaking on the occasion, the chairman said WAPDA has been constructing as many as eight mega projects including Diamer Basha Dam, Mohmand Dam and Dasu to improve water situation in the country and increase the share of low-cost and environment friendly hydropower in the national grid. These projects, scheduled to be completed one by one from 2022 to 2028-29, will cumulatively add 11 million acre feet to gross water storage capacity, mitigate floods, irrigate 1.6 million acres of land and generate 9000 megawatt of hydel electricity. The chairman further said an innovative financial plan has been devised by WAPDA to arrange funds for construction of Diamer Basha and Mohmand dams by exploiting its own financial strength with less dependence on national exchequer. WAPDA is the first public sector entity that has been given stable outlook equivalent to Pakistan by the top three international credit rating agencies of the world i.e. Moody's, Fitch and Standard and Poor (S&P). Therefore, these projects provide excellent investment and business opportunities for the international and local firms including Fauji Foundation, he said.

## ATC grants bail to lawyer

IBRAR KHAN

ISLAMABAD: An Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) on Tuesday granted bail to a lawyer Abdul Raheem Advocate in a case pertaining to vandalizing the session court during a protest. ATC Judge Shahrukh Arjmand granted post arrest bail against surety bonds worth Rs50, 000 to the accused lawyer. It may be mentioned here that the accused was arrested by the police after registration of first information report of the incident of vandalizing a lower court in F-8 Kachehri during a protest of lawyers.

## 3 criminals held, cash, mobile phones recovered

ISLAMABAD: Crime Investigation Agency (CIA) of Islamabad Police have arrested three criminals and recovered cash, eight mobile phones, motorbike and weapons from their possession, a police spokesman said on Tuesday. According to the details, DIG (Operations) Islamabad police, Afzaal Ahmad Kausar categorically directed all the police officers to accelerate their efforts to curb crime and secure the city against criminals. Following these directions, SSP (Investigation) Atta ur-Rehman constituted a special police team under the supervision of DSP CIA including ASI Haider Ali Shah and others for surprise checking in various areas of city. This team nabbed three members of a criminal former jail bird gang. They have been identified as Muhammad Liaqat, Muhammad Raisat s/o Shafi Khan Resident of Jabi Ali-pur Farash Islamabad and Muhammad Rashid s/o Muhammad Javid and Hazer Colony Rawalpindi. The police team also recovered cash, eight mobile phones motorbike and illicit weapons along with ammunition from their possession. Separate cases have been registered against them at Koral and Shahzad Town police stations and further investigation is underway. DIG (Operations) Afzaal Ahmad Kausar has appreciated the performance and directed all police officials to remain vigilant in their respective areas and to ensure safety and security of the citizens. – APP

## National Research Centers playing key role to combat Covid

RAJA PERVAIZ

ISLAMABAD: Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Director, International Center for Chemical and Biological Sciences (ICCBS) interacted with media on Tuesday to brief on the ICCBS establishment, programmes, projects and achievements. He said that the International Center for Chemical and Biological Sciences (ICCBS) was established through generous private sector contribution (Husein Ebrahim Jamal Foundation, and Dr. Panjwani Trust), and by international support, in 1966. Late Prof. Salimuzzaman Siddiqui and Prof. Atta-ur-Rahman, two the most famous scientists

of Pakistan, were remained involved in the development of this international centre as successive directors from 1966 to 2002. Prof. Choudhary informed that Prof. Rahman retired as director of ICCBS two decades ago and has not been involved with the centre in any administrative or financial capacity since then. The centre has been built and sustained with international grants from Germany, United States, United Kingdom, Japan and other countries as well as donations from the Husein Ebrahim Jamal Foundation and the Dr. Panjwani Memorial Trust and I have been serving ICCBS as Director since 2002, he said. While mentioning the IC-

CBS's services to the nation during COVID19 pandemic, he said that the National Institute of Virology (NIV) of IC-CBS conducted over 140,000 PCR based tests helping in national fight against the health crises. To achieve the large scale testing objective, NIV placed several PCR machines and deputed highly trained virologists to Indus Hospital. Prof. Choudhary mentioned that the nationwide genome surveillance was conducted to keep a close watch on the emergence of deadly variants in Pakistan to monitor the mutational changes in the SARS Cov-II virus at the Jamil ur Rahman Center for Genomics of the ICCBS, established through the person-

al donation of Prof. Dr. Atta ur Rahman, FRSc. So far 70 full genomes of SARS-CoV-2 virus have been sequenced and globally reported from the genome center of the ICCBS and 350 genetic mutations have been identified by the center. He introduced that the IAC of the ICCBS, is the largest industrial support facility of Pakistan in the academic setup, initiated 24 hours testing services of items manufactured locally to fight pandemic. IAC is an ISO 9000 and 17025 accredited center, and its reports are internationally recognized. IAC's services ensured that only those products are allowed to be sold which are as per international standards, he said.

## PRCS, OGDCL ink MoU with RCCH

Abrar ul Haq appreciated the OGDCL for donating an X-ray machine to the RCCH. He said the installation of state-of-the-art machine will boost diagnostic facilities at the hospital and help save lives through early diagnosis of any complications in Covid-19 patients

MEHMOOD ABDULLAH

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) and the Oil & Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) have signed a MoU under which the latter will donate an X-ray machine to the Red Crescent Corona Care Hospital, Rawalpindi (RCCH). The MoU was signed by PRCS Chairman Abrar ul Haq and OGDCL MD/CEO Shahid Salim Khan on behalf of their respective organizations at a ceremony held at the PRCS National Headquarters Islamabad.

Speaking on the occasion, Chairman Abrar ul Haq said the PRCS has rendered remarkable services in containing the Covid-19 pandemic in the country. He said the state-of-the-art Red Crescent Corona Care Hospital (RCCH) was set up within a record period of 15 days. He said hundreds of Covid-19 patients have been treated at the RCCH so far. He said besides free-of-cost treatment facilities, psychosocial support was also provided to the patients at the RCCH. He said in another feather in the PRCS cap, the government has also designated the RCCH



as Mass Vaccination Centre for vaccination of general public against Covid-19.

Abrar ul Haq appreciated the OGDCL for donating an X-ray machine to the RCCH.

He said the installation of state-of-the-art machine will boost diagnostic facilities at the hospital and help save lives through early diagnosis of any complications in Covid-19 patients. He said the OGDCL has always supported PRCS in delivery of humanitarian services. He also recalled OGDCL support for upgradation of ambulance fleet of the PRCS. Addressing the ceremony, OGDCL MD/CEO Shahid Salim Khan hailed the PRCS endeavors for supporting the vulnerable segments of the society. He said being the largest

CSR contributor of the country, the OGDCL is always on the lookout for an opportunity to serve those in need. He offered to extend further support to the PRCS in its humanitarian initiatives. It is worth mentioning here that the OGDCL has provided an amount of Rs 15 million to the PRCS for purchase and installation of state-of-the-art X-ray machine at the RCCH to boost its diagnostic facilities. PRCS Acting Secretary General Dr. Adeel Nawaz, PRCS and OGDCL senior officials also attended the ceremony.



## Uncertain peace

JUST as the US commander of foreign forces General Scott Miller announced that steps had formally been put in place to withdraw troops by the September deadline, the Taliban launched an attack in Logar, Afghanistan. With as many as 12 policemen dead as a result of this assault on a copper mine, the usual questions surrounding the peace plan and the future of Afghanistan come to mind. Although the US stated that the capacity to respond to threats will not be affected during this withdrawal, as bases start emptying throughout Afghanistan, the balance is likely to shift in favour of the Taliban. It is no secret that the Afghan defence forces rely heavily on foreign deployments for both manpower and equipment. The US will also be handing over its bases and any equipment left behind for the Afghan military, but it is unclear how this support alone will be enough to stem the tide of waves of Taliban fighters, if they challenge the Afghan forces for territory all over the country.

As it stands, the Afghanistan peace plan looks to be in tatters. While the US and the current Afghan government make statements on the process going forward, there has been an uneasy silence from the Taliban camp. Many predict that this indifference to talks will be maintained till all—or a sufficient number—of US forces are out of the country.

Following this, the Taliban will continue to push against Afghan forces all the way until Kabul is finally taken. This would enable them to set terms on the rule of law and the future of Afghanistan in whatever way they see fit.

The US policymakers must see this too. Although judging by the statements on aims in Afghanistan fulfilled, defeating al-Qaeda is touted as a success while removing the Taliban no longer seems to be an objective (or even a possibility). Two decades in, we have come full circle in Afghanistan. Every instance of violence gives the Taliban more ground to contest.

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## Crumbling healthcare system

MUHAMMAD OMAR IFTIKHAR

THE pandemic has brought to fore the truth behind the façade. In 2020, the US and many European countries faced an uphill task to accommodate Covid-19 patients in hospitals. Medical facilities and equipment became scarce as the number of infected patients increased. The US healthcare system deteriorated. It compelled the world to wonder if a superpower can experience such a catastrophe, how the developing or the least-developed countries will cope with the pandemic. India's healthcare is also on the verge of collapse. Videos being shared on social media show heart-wrenching footages as patients are collapsing on the sidewalks as the hospitals are working at full capacity.

Twitter is abuzz with the news that Indians need oxygen cylinders and hospital beds while both have become the most needed item at the moment. The authorities in Pakistan need to think proactively and arrange for medical equipment beforehand. However, it is the citizen's responsibility to give utmost priority to protect themselves from the infection. Unfortunately, seldom do people wear masks. They have also reduced the use of hand sanitizers. Social distancing is also not being followed as people are attending Sehri and Iftari events at restaurants in Ramazan. As Eid approaches, people will make their way to the market that will accentuate the spreading of the disease.

April 23-24 marked the day when 157 people lost their lives in a single day since the pandemic began. This news must instill fear among the people. Precaution is the most important act we need to follow. Each one of us must wear a mask, sanitize hands frequently, reduce going out, refrain from physical contact, and protect ourselves through all means necessary. God forbid, if a situation akin to that prevailing in India transpires in Pakistan, our healthcare system will also be on the verge of collapse. In such a situation, chaos will erupt that will make matters worse. Every citizen must guard themselves against the infection.

# Int'l Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy

Vladimir Norov



The SCO has initially positioned itself as a new type of organization that constructively and meaningfully complements the multidimensional efforts of the United Nations at the regional level. With a careful analysis of the SCO Charter one can easily notice the document's full consonance with the UN Charter

APRIL 24 marks the International Day of Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace, established by a special resolution of the 73rd session of the UN General Assembly in December 2018.

The establishment of this day is intended to highlight the fundamental importance of the purposes and principles enshrined in the UN Charter to advance the collective building of lasting and sustainable peace and the achievement of common goals. Recent trends in global political, social and economic processes clearly demonstrate the demand for multilateral diplomacy in the search for responses to key challenges of our time. Obviously, the most recent such challenge, and probably the most serious one,

is the coronavirus pandemic, which triggered not only a full-scale epidemiological crisis, but also an economic recession, the rise of protectionist and isolationist sentiments and a crisis of global governance in general. In a number of countries, leading multilateral institutions have been called into question by certain political forces, as in the case of WHO. Moreover, there has been no serious progress in reforming the existing international financial institutions as well as in developing comprehensive approaches to tackle a wide range of non-traditional challenges and threats, including terrorism, drug trafficking, organized crime, cybercrime, illegal migration, climate change, etc.

Even the emergence of a new epidemic has not led to a rallying of the world's leading powers and the pooling of their capacities in the interests of the speedy development of a vaccine and appropriate assistance to developing countries, but to the false politicization of the pandemic crisis and the dangerous phenomenon of "vaccine nationalism". In parallel, long-standing problems related to security issues in its traditional dimension became more acute: the loosening of the foundations of global strategic stability, the threat of a new arms race, and the risks of militarization of space. The emergence of new and persistent challenges to international security and the stability and sustainable development of the planet requires a qualitative rethinking and resetting of the concept of 'multilateralism'.

Despite the creation of the UN as a universal international organization responsible for the maintenance of peace and security and the development of economic and humanitarian interaction, the experience of the bipolar confrontation during the Cold War contributed to a very distorted perception of the very idea of multilateral cooperation mainly in the context of the formation of supranational structures based on rigid bloc discipline.

Unfortunately, this stereotype has persisted in the current era and has a large number of influential political supporters. With such a logic, the activity of any multilateral organisation, especially at the regional level, is viewed and analysed exclusively through the prism of its evolution into a deeply integrated politico-military or economic alliance. Meanwhile, in today's world there is a clearly visible trend of redistribution and alignment of the global balance of power through the establishment of new centres of economic development, especially in Asia.

Simultaneously, interconnectedness and interdependence among all participants of international relations are deepening. Accordingly, there is a growing natural need to find common ground and achieve consensus on the whole range of issues on the global agenda. However, effective implementation of these tasks is only possible within the framework of flexible and open diplomatic communication, which excludes the development of principled solutions in a narrow elite circle and the imposition of any obligations on countries at the expense of their legitimate desire to develop a multi-vector policy. One of the clearest examples of the structuring of this type of open interaction in the early twenty-first century was the creation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.

The SCO has initially positioned itself as a new type of

organization that constructively and meaningfully complements the multidimensional efforts of the United Nations at the regional level. With a careful analysis of the SCO Charter one can easily notice the document's full consonance with the UN Charter. Its participating states confirmed their readiness to jointly ensure regional security, cooperate in prevention and peaceful resolution of international conflicts, promote comprehensive and balanced socio-economic development, and encourage mutually beneficial humanitarian cooperation based on principles of equality, peaceful settlement of disputes, mutual consideration of interests, respect for sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs of states. The SCO's nature of non-targeting against other states and international organizations is clearly declared. This approach was subsequently reflected in the SCO Development Strategy to 2025 (adopted in 2015), which sets out a course for its development as a multidisciplinary regional organization that does not envisage the formation of a political-military union or an economic integration association with supranational governing institutions.

The democratic nature of the Organization's internal architecture makes it an attractive platform for interaction between states representing different civilizational and cultural areas of Eurasia and possessing diverse military, political, economic and demographic potential.

The accession of India and Pakistan has finally turned the SCO into one of the most influential institutions of trans-regional partnership.

The organization is steadily moving towards becoming the leading multilateral platform in the vast Eurasian landmass for the integrated discussion of issues related to the joint promotion of regional security and stability and the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. This prospect will become particularly prominent if we add the 10 SCO observer states and dialogue partners to the eight Member States of SCO sharing similar approaches on most issues. On 15 June 2021, our Organization will celebrate its 20th anniversary. In view of this landmark event, I would like to briefly share some outlines of SCO's further development in the context of promoting and strengthening the principle of multilateralism.

The Moscow Declaration of the SCO Council of Heads of State (approved on 10 November 2020) reaffirmed our shared commitment to strengthen the Organization's role as a pillar of the emerging more representative and just world order, based on the rule of international law, equal partnership of states, respect for civilizational diversity and the independent choice of peoples' political, social and economic development.

In the coming years, the world will continue to undergo dynamic changes due to the strengthening of the regional level of the global governance, the rise of developing countries and the growing interdependence of States as a result of globalization and technological progress.

The comprehensive and interpenetrating nature of global challenges and threats requires observance by all participants in international relations of the universal principles of equal and indivisible security which are equally applica-

ble to the Euro-Atlantic, Eurasian and Asia-Pacific regions. In that connection, we will continue to establish and strengthen the network of horizontal partnerships with other major regional groupings. We attach priority importance to enhancing interaction with the CSTO, CIS, CICA and ASEAN in the interests of complementing and synchronizing our efforts, taking into account the main areas of activity of these organizations.

In addition, the SCO Secretariat has been very active in developing contacts with the OSCE and the League of Arab States, contributing to a mutually beneficial and substantive discussion of security and sustainable development problems throughout the Eurasian continent.

International interest in the activities of the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure, which has established partnerships with such leading specialist bodies as the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, the International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol), the Eurasian Group on Combating Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism, the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism and others, is growing every year.

The SCO Development Strategy 2025 outlines the growing link between security and prosperity. The updated Action Plan provides for a list of activities aimed at deepening trade, economic and investment cooperation within the SCO, as well as increasing the humanitarian profile of the Organization, including in education, science, health and environmental protection. In doing so, the member states intend to pay increased attention to the juxtaposition of joint integration initiatives focused on joint development and the achievement of common benefits. An example is the ongoing coordination of the Eurasian Economic Union with China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

This format of interaction provides for the most flexible forms of involvement of individual countries in its work through their participation in joint trade, financial, infrastructure, humanitarian and cultural projects.

According to influential Western analysts, by 2030 China, India and Russia, as the powerhouses of the SCO, will account for up to 60 percent of global GDP, which certainly inspires deep optimism about the prospects for building effective economic mechanisms in our region.

It is gratifying that the multifaceted efforts of the SCO member states have been duly recognized at the highest international level. Thus, last November during the interactive meeting with the heads of regional organizations the UN Secretary General António Guterres positively assessed the SCO's approaches to combating the COVID-19 pandemic, peaceful settlement of regional conflicts, including those in Afghanistan, as well as strengthening of an open, inclusive and non-discriminatory multilateral trading system.

I am confident that the continued and unwavering adherence to the principles of the "Shanghai spirit" based on mutual trust and benefit, mutual consultation and movement towards joint development will further enhance the image of the SCO as one of the effective regional pillars of modern multilateral diplomacy.

— The writer is the Secretary General of the SCO.

# Surviving a second Ramadan amid coronavirus

Wajeeha Bilal



The daily news of rising cases and severe restrictions limit the freedom with which the fasts and prayers were usually practiced. Muslims in Pakistan and around the world happen to be experiencing a second Ramadan along with the effects of a pandemic that haunt the observers with daily efflux

UNLIKE physical wounds, the countless effects of war on the soul are unaddressed. There is a new form of battle, so there is a new kind of abrasion as well. A threat can be in the neighbour one minute or be in the kitchen speaking to a child, the next. War and home is becoming more intertwined and more complicated; both closer together and further apart. The unseen damage of the unknown, brings a common sacrifice of human happiness for it is clear by now that the fear of the virus surpasses the emotional dependence on our traditions. Everyone faces the challenges of the pandemic at equal rates. The global battle of the corona virus that first emerged in the city of Wuhan is, without question, something very much like war. Various world leaders have stated that we are at war with an invisible enemy that is not invincible.

The WHO has stressed regarding Covid-19, that the pandemic could aggravate in the Africa and the Middle East during Ramadan. The daily news of rising cases and severe restrictions limit the freedom with which the fasts and prayers were usually practiced. Muslims in Pakistan and around the world happen to be experiencing a second Ramadan along with the effects of a pandemic that haunt the observers with daily efflux. This year another Ramadan started in majority of the Muslim countries with a mutual fraternity of Muslims, who get together with their family and friends mostly to break their fast and enjoy the emotional connections of their rituals. But apprehensions and worries about the virus that have resulted in severe lock downs imply that Muslims will not be able to share their fraternal traditions in the usual ways.

The gap in the family unit, the loss of a loved one; they say it gets better with time as everything heals. The war would be over but not for the living

who had experienced death of their happiness in one form or another. World War I and II changed the political alignment and social structure of the globe. A new world was bound to evolve yet even after two great wars the world suffered at the hands of the empowered. United Nations was established for international co-operation and prevent future conflicts, but the influence of great powers waned, triggering rivalry between Superpowers. After the confrontations have closed, after the speeches have been given, the smoke dies down, and the danger moves from the outside to inside; the war continues to ring in the souls and thoughts of those who experienced it. They relive it many times yet dying inside every time the thoughts recur.

There is a dark thump in the soul, an emotional, spiritual blaze that not only burns away all naivety, but also modifies one's identity. There was a time when fasting and Ramadan left an endeared feeling with much more social gatherings and celebrations, but people are now once again dreading the consequences of the viral war.

Meeting for iftar and helping in social events for feeding the needy was a feeling of utter joy and the social reason to observe a long fast, yet the prevalence of this global war is making it more difficult to find peace in solitude or social services. Modern war is not simply more deadly, it is also more confusing and spirit-thumping. The enemy could be anywhere or could be anyone at any time. A public hall or a parking lot can become a war zone simply because of an unanticipated encounter. The daily movements tend to threaten the souls and make peace at home brittle.

The end of Ramadan is usually characterized with a festive observance of Eid-ul-Fitr. It is celebrated by Muslims all over the world by collective morning prayers and commencing feasts and meetings with

their friends and family. With the virus maturing through its third wave, religious celebrations are globally put under check and control. In the current war it can be impossible to distinguish the victims from the ordinary when the fear of the unknown keeps resurfacing to haunt the hopes of the survivors.

This daily war with the uncertainty of living in fear is bound to change our perspective about personal and social happiness. It comes with realizing and appreciating the Blessings that were once taken for granted. No doubt Ramadan, a month that has been blessed for the Muslims in numerous ways, brings together the Ummah once again in times of crisis. Though the feeling of isolation and social distancing is depressing and lonesome, yet none of us is truly alone. Across the globe we are joined in a fraternity from dawn till dusk, praying for the virus to end in some way and hoping for a world where we never have to experience such deadly wounds ever again. Desperate times require dire losses but that does not mean the sacrifice of our souls. The path to healing the human wound lies in our collective hopes and prayers where we take precautions despite our wishes to meet and celebrate. The month that teaches patience and self-control is a true testament of the full emotional and spiritual development through these invisible wounds. This life and every battle that we fight is a journey of guidance. It is a journey to overcoming disillusionment and restoring our sense of purpose and connection. Lives will transform if we take a deep look at the universal reality that we choose to ignore otherwise. Even though the global pandemic has pushed us apart in distance, in many ways it has brought us closer together in understanding the power of our brotherhood and unity.

— The writer has authored "The Conscious Ego" and "The Beautiful Present". She also runs "a purposeful life" blog



## Briefs

## Bayern Munich appoints Nagelsmann

WEB DESK

MUNICH: Bayern Munich has hired RB Leipzig coach Julian Nagelsmann to replace the departing Hansi Flick starting next season. The reigning German champions announced on Tuesday that the 33-year-old Nagelsmann will move to Bayern on July 1 with a contract that runs through 2026. Bayern said it agreed to terminate Flick's contract after he asked to be released early, after his relationship with the club's powerful sporting director HasanSalihamidzic has deteriorated over transfer policy.

"The position at FC Bayern is a unique opportunity for me. I would therefore like to thank Oliver Mintzlaff and the rest of the board at RB Leipzig for finding a solution with FC Bayern and making this possible for me," Nagelsmann said.

"I had requests from other clubs but I refused," he said, before repeating his "lifelong dream" was to coach Bayern. Nagelsmann has been with RB Leipzig for three years and led the team to the Champions League semi-finals in 2020.

Leipzig is in second place behind Bayern in the Bundesliga standings and has reached the semi-finals of the German Cup. RB Leipzig agreed to let their young coach leave in return for a "very high transfer fee", club boss Oliver Mintzlaff said.

## Two Spanish journalists killed in Burkina

WEB DESK

MADRID: Two Spanish journalists who went missing earlier this week in eastern Burkina Faso were killed in an ambush, Spain's government has confirmed. The two Spaniards, along with a Burkinabe national and an Irish citizen, disappeared on Monday near a national park close to the border with Benin after armed individuals attacked a convoy of security forces and expatriates. "The worst of news is confirmed," Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said on his Twitter account on Tuesday, sending his condolences to the two men's families. He named them as David Berain and Roberto Fraile.

The Spanish nationals are from northern Spain and were working on a documentary on how Burkina Faso's authorities were tackling poaching and on the communities of people living in the park, Arancha González Laya, Spain's foreign affairs minister, said in a news conference earlier on Tuesday. They were traveling at the time of the attack in a group with about 40 people, she added. "It is a dangerous area where terrorists, bandits, jihadists usually operate."

## Boris faces pressure on 'dead bodies' remarks

WEB DESK

LONDON: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is facing mounting pressure after repeated claims from various sources that the prime minister said he would prefer to see "bodies pile high in there thousands" than implement a third lockdown.

Government ministers have sought to play down the alleged remarks, denying that Johnson made the claim "no more [...] lockdowns - let the bodies pile high in there thousands." Anger and shock, however, from the bereaved public over the comments continue to rise, with British media outlets confirming the comments. Johnson's purported comments were first reported by the Daily Mail on Monday and were made after he reluctantly agreed to implement a four-week lockdown in November last year over soaring COVID-19 infections that left the UK with one of the world's worst death tolls. The prime minister, however, warned that this would be the last lockdown he would implement.

## Israel uses 'apartheid' to subjugate Palestinians: HRW

"Their decision not to share this report for review or comment with any Israeli authority is clear indication that it is a propaganda pamphlet, which lacks all credibility"

WEB DESK

LONDON: Israel is committing "crimes against humanity of apartheid and persecution" against Palestinians and the international community must reevaluate diplomatic relations with the state, a leading human rights group said in a report on Tuesday.

The 213-page report from Human Rights Watch (HRW) details how Israel has sought to maintain Jewish-Israeli hegemony over the Palestinian people from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea.

"While much of the world treats Israel's half-century occupation as a temporary situation that a decades-long 'peace process' will soon cure, the oppression of Palestinians there has reached a threshold and a permanence that meets the definitions of the crimes of apartheid and persecution," Kenneth Roth, executive director of HRW, said. "Those who strive for Israeli-Palestinian peace, whether a one or two-state solution or a confederation, should in the meantime recognise this reality for what

it is and bring to bear the sorts of human rights tools needed to end it."

Israel dismissed the organisation's report, calling it "propaganda".

"Human Rights Watch is known to have a long-standing anti-Israel agenda, actively seeking for years to promote boycotts against Israel," the foreign ministry said in a statement.

"Their decision not to share this report for review or comment with any Israeli authority is clear indication that it is a propaganda pamphlet, which lacks all credibility," The HRW report follows a conclusion reached by Israeli rights group B'Tselem, which published a study last January that found Palestinians, divided into four tiers of inferior treatment, are denied the right to self-determination. Ines Abdel Razek, an advocacy director for the Ramallah-based Palestine Institute for Public Diplomacy organisation, said the HRW report is a welcome development in shifting the goalposts of international engagement towards applying international law and human rights – rather than "sanctifying a two-state



solution as an empty mantra that has only comforted Israel in its impunity".

"[It] is clearly of major political importance in order to advance the urgent need to reframe the political understanding about Palestine and Israel," she told Al Jazeera, "although frustrating for Palestinians to see that the world needs validation from international or Israeli NGOs spelling out what we have been documenting, analysing, saying and writing for decades."

For Mouin Rabbani, a co-editor of Jadaliyya, an independent research website, the existence of apartheid has been "voluminously substantiated" by Palestinians and their supporters for decades.

"It is thus not Israel but rather HRW that has

crossed a threshold," he said. "HRW is the industry leader in its field, and that it has finally caught up with reality is in my view a significant development."

The report's significance, he continued, lies in HRW "explicitly denouncing Israel as an apartheid regime, calling for Israel to face real and serious consequences for what the report terms 'crime against humanity'".

"Perhaps most surprisingly, given its record on such matters, [HRW] is for once not 'balancing' its analysis of Israel with ritual denunciations of Palestinians," Rabbani added.

HRW's report lists a range of Israeli abuses committed against the Palestinians: sweeping movement restrictions against Palestinians in the occupied territories,

the demolition of homes and "near-categorical denial" of building permits, the military occupation, land expropriation, and rejection of the residency rights of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians.

In fact, the Israeli government's own words and actions – such as the 2018 nation-state bill, which defined Israel as the "nation-state of Jewish people", and its unrelenting settlement expansion policy, all point to its intent to preserve its domination, HRW said.

For Israel the term "apartheid" is explosive, vigorously rejected by itself and its supporters. It has long described itself as the only "democracy in the Middle East", but analysts say its rejection of the label "apartheid" is in keeping with Israel's tradition of denying any criticism as "anti-Semitic".

"Even as Israeli politicians openly speak of annexation, expansionism and of maintaining presence in the occupied territories, the Israeli government points to the Palestinian citizens of Israel, a fraction of the total Palestinians under its control, as proof that it is not

an apartheid regime, given their ability to vote and be represented in the high-level levels of government," Tareq Baconi, an analyst at Crisis Group, told Al Jazeera. "They constitute a fig leaf which ultimately fails to negate that Israel continues to control the majority of the Palestinian people without recourse to rights."

By responding to criticism or condemnation of its policies, Israel resorts to delegitimising and, where possible, criminalising its critics and using the anti-Semitic canard as the core of its response, Rabbani said.

"It's a well-worn playbook, often augmented with other dirty tricks and various forms of propaganda, such as denouncing critics as terrorists," he said.

Anti-Semitism, Abdel Razek noted, has been deliberately redefined by the Israeli government and its supporters to equate with any criticism of Israel.

"The very problematic International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of anti-Semitism explicitly includes as an example that calling Israel an 'apartheid state' is anti-Semitic," she said.



ROME: Lazio's Francesco Acerbi and Sergej Milinkovic-Savic vie with AC Milan's Theo Hernandez during a Serie A football match between Lazio and AC Milan in Rome, Italy. – DNA

## Turkey announces full lockdown amid Covid surge

ANKARA: Turks will be required to stay mostly at home under a nationwide "full lockdown" starting on Thursday and lasting until May 17 to curb a surge in coronavirus infections and deaths, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has announced.

Turkey logged 37,312 new COVID-19 infections and 353 deaths in the previous 24 hours on Monday, health ministry data showed, sharply down from mid-April but still the world's fourth highest number of cases. Announcing the new measures on Monday after a cabinet meeting, Erdogan said all intercity travel would require official approval, all schools would shut and move lessons online, and a strict capacity limit would be imposed for users of public transport. Turks will have to stay indoors except for essential shopping trips and urgent medical treatment. Certain groups including emergency service workers and employees in the food and manufacturing sectors will be exempt. The new restrictions take effect from 16:00 GMT (7pm local time) on Thursday and will end at 02:00 GMT on May 17.

"At a time when Europe is entering a phase of reopening, we need to rapidly cut our case numbers to below 5,000 not to be left behind. Otherwise, we will inevitably face heavy costs in every area, from tourism to trade and education," Erdogan said. The measures appear to be designed to avoid another spike around the time of traditional family gatherings and celebrations that take place when the holy month of Ramadan ends in mid-May. – DNA



## Saib unavailable for PSL 6

DNA

KARACHI: England's pacer Saib Mehmood will not be part of Peshawar Zalmi for the remaining matches of Pakistan Super League (PSL) season six. The 24-year-old Saib announced that due to his commitment with Lancashire County, he can't join 2017 PSL champion. "Really enjoyed my time with Peshawar Zalmi in PSL 6 earlier this year but given the timing of the rescheduled tournament in June I will be unavailable for the remainder and will be playing for my county Lancashire Cricket," he wrote on Instagram.

## 'Palestinians plan to call off elections'

WEB DESK

CAIRO: Egyptian officials say the Palestinian Authority plans to call off its first elections in 15 years, citing Israel's refusal to allow voting in occupied East Jerusalem. The decision effectively grants Israel a veto over the holding of elections, though President Mahmoud Abbas could also benefit from cancelling the vote, in which his fractured Fatah party is expected to lose power and influence to Hamas, the group governing the Gaza Strip. An Egyptian diplomat and an intelligence official – who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss closed-door talks in Cairo – said they were briefed on the decision, which will be announced on Thursday at a meeting of Palestinian factions. They said Egypt is in discussions with Israel to reach a compromise to allow the vote, but those efforts have so far failed.

The intelligence official said Hamas wants the elections to go ahead but no faction wants to proceed without guarantees from the international community that voting will be held in occupied East Jerusalem. The official said the factions are discussing the formation of a unity government instead that would include Hamas.

## China sends 9 satellites into space

WEB DESK

ANKARA: China launched at least nine satellites into space on Tuesday to provide an eastern province of the country with remote sensing services, as well as to observe small celestial bodies, according to local media reports.

The satellites will be used to provide remote sensing services to local governments in Shandong province for land surveying, urban development, agriculture, forestry, energy, disaster prevention and reduction, the state-run Xinhua News reported.

They will also be used to test technologies such as satellite platform design, real-time imaging and observation, data acquisition and transmission, and small celestial body observations and remote sensing services, it added. The launch ceremony of the satellites was held at the Taiyuan Satellite Launch Center in the northern Shanxi province at 11.20 a.m. (0320GMT).

## Babar Azam is best in the world: Miandad

ATHAR SUFI

KARACHI: Pakistan's batting maestro Javed Miandad has rated the current national team's skipper Babar Azam as the best in the first. The 63-year-old Miandad, on his YouTube channel, hailed Green Shirts T20I series win over Zimbabwe on Sunday. "He's a superb player and after a long time, Pakistan has got such a player. I rate him on a very high level and I think he is the best in the world at the moment. He plays solid with the bat and that is cricket. He is a very good striker and plays in the middle in his limit which is very good quality," he said. "Though you got a tough time from the opponents but at the end you won. All players played very well. Now people expect from you," he said. The former skipper said people expect a lot when a player performs.

## Zimbabwe recall Taylor for Pakistan test series

SPORTS DESK

HARARE: Zimbabwe have recalled batsman Brendan Taylor and picked five uncapped players in their 16-man squad for the two-test series against Pakistan that starts at the Harare Sports Club on Thursday. Taylor did not feature in Zimbabwe's previous series against Afghanistan in the United Arab Emirates due to ill health, but provides some much needed experience, especially in the absence of middle-order batsman Craig Ervine, who has a calf injury. Pakistan-born all-rounder Sikandar Raza, who has also been a stalwart of the middle order in recent years, misses out as he receives treatment for a bone marrow infection.

## Maryam slams govt..

From Page 01

the government had put students' lives at risk by conducting the examinations at a time when the coronavirus situation is worsening in the country. "Other countries in the region have opted for other ways to conduct the examinations, then why did this incompetent government put students in harm's way," she questioned. This government has failed to curb coronavirus, implement SOPs, or safeguard people's health, she said, adding there are no safety arrangements during Cambridge exams.

The PML-N vice-president asked the prime minister and the education minister whether they would send their own children to such examination centres.

Maryam also said that Prime Minister Imran Khan had given his government an NRO after his meeting a group of lawmakers backing estranged PTI leader Jhangir Tareen.

Meanwhile, taking over the presser, AJP PM Haidar warned the PTI-led government against rigging in the upcoming Azad Jammu and Kashmir elections, saying that the party would fight against it and not sit quietly.

The AJP PM said rigging in the election would go in "favour of India".

## Qureshi discusses Covid-19..

From Page 01

The Foreign Minister thanked the Government of Canada for positively revising travel advisory for Pakistan.

Foreign Minister Marc Garneau offered condolences on the loss of precious lives in the recent attack on Serena hotel, Quetta. He also appreciated the Joint statement adopted at the conclusion of the Trilateral Meeting of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Turkey on 23rd April 2021.

Both Ministers extended invitations to each other to visit the respective countries on mutually convenient dates. The Foreign Minister thanked the Canadian Foreign Minister for his telephone call. The Foreign Ministers agreed to remain in contact in future as well.

## India nears 200,000 Covid deaths, daily cases fall

Nursing staff and medical officers on staff appointments at military headquarters will be deployed to support overburdened health workers. The first "Oxygen Express" train for Delhi carrying around 70 tonnes of the life-saving gas also reached the national capital early on Tuesday

FOREIGN DESK

NEW DELHI: India's coronavirus death toll is nearing the bleak milestone of 200,000 with another 2,771 fatalities reported while its armed forces have pledged urgent medical aid to help battle the staggering spike in infections. Over the past 24 hours, India recorded 323,144 new cases on Tuesday, slightly below a worldwide peak of 352,991 reached on Monday, with overrun hospitals turning away patients due to a shortage of beds and oxygen supplies. India, home to approximately 1.3 billion people, has so far reported 17.64 million COVID-19 infections and 197,894 deaths but

experts believe the tally runs significantly higher.

"Please note that a huge fall in daily cases... is largely due to a heavy fall in testing," Rijo M John, a professor and health economist at the Indian Institute of Management in the southern state of Kerala, said on Twitter. "This should not be taken as an indication of falling cases, rather a matter of missing out on too many positive cases!" The Indian government has called on its armed forces to help tackle the devastating crisis.

Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat said late on Monday that oxygen would be released from armed forces reserves and retired medical personnel would join health facilities that are struggling

under the sheer number of cases. Briefing Prime Minister Narendra Modi about the army's preparations to deal with the crisis, Rawat said any oxygen cylinders the military had would be diverted to hospitals in need of the life-saving gas. Other retired medical officers have been urged to provide consultations through emergency helplines, according to a government statement. Nursing staff and medical officers on staff appointments at military headquarters will be deployed to support overburdened health workers. The first "Oxygen Express" train for Delhi carrying around 70 tonnes of the life-saving gas also reached the national capital early on Tuesday. But the crisis in the metropolis of

20 million people continues unabated. Dr K Preetham, the chief of medical administration at the city's Indian Spinal Injuries Centre which is treating dozens of COVID-19 patients, said the scarcity of oxygen was such the hospital was splitting oxygen cylinders between patients.

"For seven days, most of us haven't slept. Because of the scarcity, we are forced to put two patients on one cylinder and this is a time-consuming process because we don't have long tubes," he said. The World Health Organization said it was working to deliver 4,000 oxygen concentrators to India, where a "perfect storm" of mass gatherings, more contagious variants and low vaccination rates have sparked the outbreak.

"Many people rush to the hospital, even though home-based care monitoring... can be managed very safely," its spokesman, Tarik Jasarevic, told Reuters news agency in an email. Hospitals, patients and their families and friends in other main cities have also issued desperate appeals for medical oxygen, hospital beds and medicines. Many patients have been forced to turn to the black market where the prices of life-saving medicines and oxygen cylinders have skyrocketed. In some of India's worst-hit cities, bodies were being cremated in makeshift facilities in parks and parking lots, while television channels showed images of bodies crammed into an ambulance in the western city of Beed as transport ran short.



## Briefs

EU chief  
blames  
sexism for  
'sofagate'

WEB DESK

BRUSSELS: European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has said that a glaring diplomatic gaffe during a meeting with Turkey's president made her felt hurt and alone, and claimed that she was treated poorly simply because she is a woman.

The scandal known as "sofagate" took place on April 6, when von der Leyen and European Council President Charles Michel met with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Ankara for talks aimed at easing relations between the European Union and Turkey.

But only two chairs were set out in front of the EU and Turkish flags for the three leaders. Michel was quick to take the single chair set out next to Erdogan, relegating a visibly annoyed von der Leyen to a sofa away from her male counterparts. Before eventually taking her seat on the sofa, von der Leyen stood looking at the seated men, expressing her disquiet.

Much of the commentary on the affair has focused on Erdogan's diplomatic faux pas in failing to provide a chair for von der Leyen.

Iran, US  
warships in  
tense ME  
encounter

FOREIGN DESK

TEHRAN: American and Iranian warships have had a tense encounter in the waters of the Gulf earlier this month, the first such incident in about a year amid wider turmoil in the region over Tehran's tattered nuclear deal, the US Navy said on Tuesday.

Footage - dated April 2 - released by the Navy showed a ship commanded by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) cut in front of the USCGC Monomoy, causing the US Coast Guard vessel to come to an abrupt stop with its engine smoking.

The IRGC did the same with another Coast Guard vessel, the USCGC Wrangell, said Commander Rebecca Rebarich, a spokeswoman for the US Navy's Middle East-based 5th Fleet.

Iran did not immediately acknowledge the incident, which resulted in no injuries or damage. "The US crews issued multiple warnings via bridge-to-bridge radio, five short blasts from the ships' horns, and while the (Iranian) Harth 55 responded to the bridge-to-bridge radio queries, they continued the unsafe manoeuvres," Rebarich said.

Protesters  
demand  
civilian rule  
in Chad

WEB DESK

N'DJAMENA: At least two people were killed and 27 injured in Chad on Tuesday as demonstrators took to the streets demanding a return to civilian rule after the military took control following President Idriss Deby's death last week.

A woman died on Tuesday when anti-military protesters attacked a bus in N'Djamena, while a man was killed during demonstrations in the south of the country, prosecutors said.

"The demonstrators attacked a bus in the Dembe district, some passengers fled but a woman remained and was killed by the protesters," N'Djamena prosecutor Youssef Tom told AFP news agency. Tuesday's unrest underscores the tense atmosphere in Chad following Deby's death with the military transition already struggling to win over a population exhausted by 30 years of monolithic rule.

The ruling military council seized power after Deby was killed as he visited troops fighting rebels on April 19. A spokesman for the council said security forces were attempting to contain the protesters while limiting material damage.

Palestine embassy in Malaysia  
extends assistance to the needy

Ambassador Walid Abu Ali, the Ambassador of the State of Palestine to Malaysia, greeted financial and a sample honored by Mr. President Mahmoud Abbas Abu Mazen to the needy

DNA

KUALUMPUR: The Embassy of the State of Palestine delivers financial assistance and an honorable sample from President Mahmoud Abbas to needy families in Malaysia and Thailand.

Ambassador Walid Abu Ali, the Ambassador of the State of Palestine to Malaysia, greeted financial and a sample honored by Mr. President Mahmoud Abbas Abu Mazen to the needy and needy Palestinian families in Malaysia and Thailand in the presence of the first advisor Sofian Al Khaledi, Advisor First Mohamed Abu Dah and Mr. Swardi Bin Yacoub, Director of May Aqsa Foundation, Engineer Alaa Abdel Wahid, Head of the Palestinian Community in Malaysia, Youssef Al-Madhoun, the secretary of the region of Malaysia, Thailand, and Amar Mahariq, President



of the General Union of Palestine Students, Malaysia Branch. Ambassador Abu Ali said that the instructions and

directions of Mr. President Mahmoud Abbas Abu Mazen to make every effort to provide the needs and service of our Pales-

tinian people, especially the humanitarian situations and the needy and needy families. He added that this is the

honor we are used to, Mr. President. Mahmoud Abbas reflects President Abu Mazen's keenness to meet the needs and stand by his

people.

His Excellency Ambassador Mai Aqsa Foundation also thanks for its continued support and interest in the Palestinian cause, which also reflects Malaysia's permanent official position of the Government, people and civil society organizations towards our Palestinian people and their just cause.

For their part, the beneficiaries of this honor expressed their thanks and gratitude to President Mahmoud Abbas for this generous gesture that contributes to improving their life conditions.

For its part, the Palestinian community in Malaysia and Thailand has expressed its support and support for the efforts, attitudes and stability of President Mahmoud Abbas and the Palestinian leadership in supporting and supporting our people in the city of Jerusalem to confront the settler's herds.

SAARC Chamber expresses  
solidarity with people of India

It is time now SAARC member states must come forward with firm commitment and solemn determination setting an example to the world

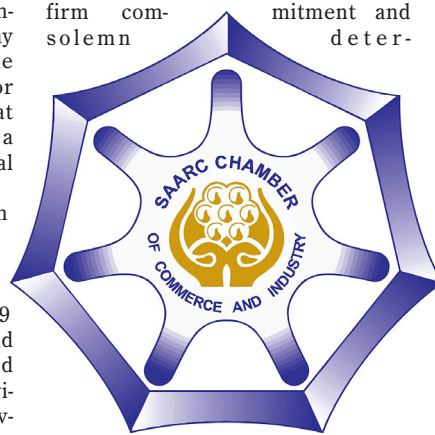
ABID RAZA

LAHORE: SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCC) Tuesday expressed solidarity with the people of India, making a strong pitch for SAARC nations to jointly combat coronavirus, proposed setting up a COVID-19 emergency fund to deal with the pandemic effectively.

Talking to a think tank delegation led by Mian Faiz Bukhsh Arain, here today SAARC Chamber Chief Iftikhar Ali Malik said "we in the wake of massive surge in covid 19 cases in India express solidarity and extend sympathies to the affected families combating the deadly virus". He said current wave of covid 19 pandemic has hit this region hard and stressed the urgent need for fighting this global challenge together. He said it is important for South Asian countries to focus on collaboration, not confusion, and

preparation, not panic.

He said it is time now SAARC member states must come forward with firm commitment and solemn



mination setting an example to the world, and contribute to a healthier planet putting all kinds of skirmish on the backburner as corona virus is a common threat for human beings.

Ifitikhar Ali Malik said the SAARC governments should make all out efforts to combat and actively coordinate for necessary emergency funding from both the local and international sources to ward off any negative impacts of coronavirus on livelihoods, jobs, especially the industry.

Appreciating Prime Minister Imran Khan for taking exigent measures against coronavirus in Pakistan, Ifitikhar Malik said the good thing is that Pakistan was exploiting all available resources to deal with the deadly virus.

He also urged all segments of the society especially business community to play their role in containing the spread of novel coronavirus by strictly adhering to SOPs.

While concluding he said Pakistan continues to work with south Association for regional cooperation countries to foster cooperation to tackle the pandemic.

FCCI president  
hails SBP's policies

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD. Non-Resident Pakistanis have deposited more than one billion dollar in Roshan Digital Account (RDA) within a short span of 9 months which will not only help Pakistan to get rid of foreign loans but also help strengthen the national economy on a solid and sustained basis.

Talking to the executive members through online, President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) Engineer Hafiz Ihtasham Javed said that despite of global recession due to coronavirus, huge investment in Roshan Digital Account is indicative of the confidence of non-resident Pakistanis in Pak economy. He appreciated the prudent measures taken by State Bank of Pakistan (SBP)

for the rehabilitation of the national economy and said that it had introduced various schemes to control unemployment due to corona related lockdowns. "Now SBP has launched this unique and innovative scheme of Roshan Digital Account which has paved the way to enhance foreign exchange reserves without getting foreign loans", he added.

He also appreciated that SBP was also contemplating to introduce yet 2 another schemes to refurbish national reserves. Appreciating the monetary and economic policies of the government, he said that Pakistani growth rate will surpass the down played projections of world financial institutions which is imperative for the expeditious progress and prosperity of Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for energy Hammad Azhar in a meeting with Nawaf Bin Saeed Al-Maliki, Saudi Arabian ambassador to Pakistan. - DNA

## CPEC: Oilseeds extraction plant being established

"At this stage, we have Afghanistan and Central Asian republics as our export targets. However, in the long run, we are eyeing the enormous Chinese market for our products"

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A oilseeds extraction plant near CPEC's flagship Rashakai SEZ is being established with a hefty amount of Rs. 600 million. This will be on the background of rising demand for vegetable oils in China and concessions granted by Iron Brother to Pakistani exporters under the China-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement-II. A report published by Gwadar Pro on Tuesday says, China has eliminated tariffs on 313 major export items from Pakistan under the upgraded FTA, which also includes various seed oils. The plant is being set up by Engineer Syed Mehmood. The first-of-its-kind facility in KP shows how big oppor-

tunities have been brought about by the China-driven investment to Pakistan's smallest and second-most deprived province.

The plant will be the second one of its nature in Pakistan, an official said.

Syed Mehmood told Gwadar Pro that the \$4 million plant will have a capacity to extract 300 tonnes of oil per day from oilseeds including soybean, palm, canola, olive, or sunflower.

"At this stage, we have Afghanistan and Central Asian republics as our export targets. However, in the long run, we are eyeing the enormous Chinese market for our products," the investor said.

"We also have a plan to invest in Rashakai SEZ to further expand our production capacity after a sustainable

export channel is established with China," he said. Syed Mehmood said that initially, they will rely on imported raw soybean and other oilseeds as the domestic production will not be sufficient to withstand their demand.

"However, the locally-grown soybean and olives will greatly benefit us in terms of competitiveness," he said.

The Pakistani government is robustly promoting olives plantation in the country, especially in KP province. Nowshera, where the plant is being established, has been declared as the most suitable region for olives, where Prime Minister Imran Khan launched a campaign for olive cultivation in March.

According to the data of the General Administration

of Customs, China's olive oil imports in 2019 were 53,699 tons, up 35.64% year on year, China Economic Net (CEN) earlier reported. In an article published in CEN, Cheng Xizhong, Visiting Professor at Southwest University of Political Science and Law, stressed that technical assistance in olive cultivation and olive oil production should be the focus of China-Pakistan agricultural cooperation under the second phase of CPEC given the enormous potential of Pakistan.

A media's report, quoting Director of KP olive trees project Ahmed Syed, stated that over 4.4 million hectares of land were available for olive plantation in Pakistan. Ahmed said that Spain was producing about 45% of the world's total edible

oil from olive cultivation on only 2.6 million hectares of land.

China has also offered assistance to Pakistan in the cultivation of soybean. The CEN hosted an online event on agricultural cooperation in mid-March between the two Iron Brothers, which had a full session on soybean cultivation. China's soybean imports surpassed 100 million tonnes during 2020, according to a report of Global Times, which cited Customs' data.

Iqbal Sarwar, an official of KP Economic Zones Development and in charge of the export processing zone where the Aziz Oils and Solvents Pvt. Ltd. is being established, said that the plant will also process oilseeds for several other products.

UN chief  
'realistic' as  
Cyprus talks  
open

FOREIGN DESK

GENEVA: United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres says he is being "realistic" about the prospect of progress during key talks on reunifying Cyprus, and urged Greek and Turkish Cypriot parties to "be creative" in their approach.

The Geneva-based meeting over the divided Mediterranean island's future will begin later on Tuesday.

Guterres invited officials of the two communities in Cyprus, as well as the foreign ministers of Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom - a former colonial ruler in Cyprus - to attend in an effort to resume peace negotiations that collapsed in mid-2017. Discussions are anticipated to last three days and could lead to formal negotiations.

Guterres will first hold bilateral meetings between the two island communities, followed by talks with all parties on Wednesday.

"The purpose of this informal meeting will be to determine whether common ground exists for the parties to negotiate a lasting solution to the Cyprus issue within a foreseeable horizon," Guterres' spokesman Stephane Dujarric told reporters hours before the talks were set to begin.

"The parties are welcome to be creative and the secretary-general will be encouraging them to use diplomatic language in a sincere and frank manner. The reason he is inviting them is to see if there is a common vision for the future."

Saudi Arabia  
foiled boat  
attack

WEB DESK

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia says it intercepted an explosive-laden boat off the Red Sea port of Yanbu after maritime security firms cited "unconfirmed reports" of an attack on a vessel in the area.

A Saudi defence ministry statement did not say whether there had been any damage as a result of the operation by the Saudi navy to intercept and destroy the remote-controlled drone boat on Tuesday.

The state-run Saudi Press Agency quoted Saudi military spokesman Turki al-Maliki saying: "The booby-trapped boat was dealt and destroyed according to the rules of engagement."

Security firm Dryad Global had earlier said it received "unconfirmed reports" that a vessel, possibly the oil tanker NCC Dammam owned by a unit of Saudi firm Bahri, had been attacked off Yanbu. Chief executive Abdullah Al-dubaihi told Reuters news agency that no vessels owned by the National Shipping Company of Saudi Arabia (Bahri) had been attacked. Maritime security firm Neptune P2P Group reported that black smoke was seen billowing near the south entrance of the Yanbu port.

US population  
growth slowest  
since the  
Depression

WEB DESK

WASHINGTON: The first batch of once-a-decade data from the US Census Bureau shows lower population growth in the United States than at any other time since the count began in 1790, except for the Great Depression-era 1930s.

Meanwhile, the new data from the 2010s showed the US population shifting to the South and the West. While the data released on Monday was relatively basic - containing national and state-level population figures and details of how they affect states' representation in Congress, it contained some surprises and pointed to some sequential trends.

The US population grew to 331 million, a 7.4-percent growth from the last census in 2010.

While that may sound like a big number, it is just barely above the 7.3-percent growth in the 1930s, a period of slowed growth rooted in the widespread poverty of the Great Depression.

The past decade's sluggish rate had similar beginnings in the long shadow of the Great Recession following the 2008 financial crisis.





## Briefs

Shehbaz  
condemns  
Javed Latif's  
arrest

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President and Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday strongly condemned the arrest of party leader Mian Javed Latif. In a statement, Shehbaz Sharif said that Javed Latif was a party loyalist, and it saddened him a lot to learn about his arrest. "The arrests of PML-N leaders and workers show that the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) government is in a state of jittery," he said, and added that countries were governed through patience, consultations and understanding. The PML-N president expressed the hope that the courts would do justice to Javed Latif in his case. The reaction came as police personnel arrested Javed Latif after sessions court canceled his bail plea in a case registered against him on charges of inciting people against state institutions. The security officers apprehended the PML-N leader, who had left the court without hearing the decision, near Saggian Bridge.

Capital  
hospitals delay  
scheduled  
surgeries

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Previously scheduled routine surgeries at public hospitals in Islamabad have been suspended to ensure a continuous supply of oxygen for coronavirus patients. Pakistan has more than 5,000 coronavirus patients on critical care, with the country reporting the highest number of deaths in a single day, since the pandemic began, a few days ago. To cope with any untoward situation related to the supply of oxygen for COVID-19 patients, all previously scheduled surgeries have been halted at the CDA Hospital, the National Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine, the Government Services Hospital, the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences, and the Polyclinic. Islamabad's administration said scheduled surgeries would remain suspended until further notice. One hundred and fifty-one patients are currently in PIMS's coronavirus ward, 11 are being provided treatment at the hospital's emergency department while seven patients have been put on ventilators. All ventilators at the Polyclinic have been occupied while 28 patients are undergoing treatment at the hospital's COVID-19 ward.

Govt decides  
to import  
oxygen  
cylinders

BUREAU REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Federal government has decided to import oxygen cylinders and concentrators to deal with increased oxygen supplies in the wake of rising COVID-19 cases. According to sources having knowledge of the decision, the industries ministry has decided to import oxygen cylinders and concentrators and has conveyed the decision to the National Command Operations Centre (NCOC). "The concerned authorities have also approached international markets for purchasing oxygen cylinders and concentrators," they said adding that the decision was made to ensure an uninterrupted supply of oxygen to the health sector in the country. The sources said that reports have emerged regarding hoarding of oxygen cylinders by the private sector, which has led to jack-up prices in the open market. Meanwhile, besides arranging oxygen supplies from abroad, a four-member technical team has been constituted on the instructions of the federal government to rehabilitate the Pakistan Steel Mills oxygen plant.

FM urges greater international  
solidarity against pandemic

The conference hosted by State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi of China was joined by the Ministers of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi on Tuesday said Pakistan was in the midst of a "more aggressive third wave" with higher positivity rate and called for greater international solidarity to overcome the aftermath of pandemic. "The crisis is far from over.... We need the right mix of national actions, regional collaboration, and multilateral cooperation," he said in his address at the Six-country Foreign Ministers' Video Conference on COVID-19. The conference hosted by State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi of China was joined by the Ministers of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. The conference focused on joint response to COVID-19,

international and regional cooperation on epidemic response and the post-COVID economic recovery. Qureshi said the government of Pakistan was being compelled to enforce "smart lockdowns" in virus hotspots as the vulnerable population was again at risk. He said though all countries wanted to reinvigorate their economies and build back better, adding that such fiscal space and liquidity could not be done in isolation. He said Pakistan welcomed intensified cooperation between China and South Asian countries in these areas, which he said was consistent with the socio-economic developmental priorities of Pakistan's government. He said Pakistan supported the three concrete proposals put forward by China for regional cooperation with the participation of the participating countries.



Qureshi said a China-South Asia Emergency Supplies Reserve would help all participating countries to better respond to health emergencies and natural disasters in the future. "Our countries are vulnerable to climatic changes and

natural disasters...The pooling of our resources and expertise would go a long way in timely delivery of assistance to affected areas," he said. He mentioned that a China-South Asia Poverty Alleviation Cooperative De-

velopment Center would provide the opportunity to learn from China's remarkable accomplishment in eradicating extreme poverty from the country. He said Pakistan remained ready to contribute to this initiative by sharing its own

policies and interventions for poverty reduction. Through the China-South Asia E-Commerce Cooperation Forum on Poverty Alleviation in Rural Areas, he said, the countries could benefit from emulating China's achievements in using e-commerce to directly connect farmers with the agricultural products' markets. Qureshi said Pakistan and China had been closely collaborating since the outbreak of COVID-19 as the latter extended valuable support to countries all across the globe to combat the pandemic. "We thank China for the generous assistance provided to Pakistan, including vaccines provided as gift and on commercial basis," he said, mentioning State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi for his personal role in helping Pakistan effectively fight the pandemic.

Court  
extends stay  
order in Jati  
Umra case

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: A civil court Tuesday extended its stay order in a case pertaining to the ownership of Jati Umra residence of the Sharif family until May 6. Judge Syed Faheemul Hassan Shah heard suits filed by Yousaf Abbas and three other children of Abbas Sharif, the late brother of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif. The court once again issued a notice to the Punjab government over its failure to file its response. The plaintiffs alleged that the government is maneuvering the ownership record of the land illegally. They requested the court to restrain the government from disturbing the ownership and possession of the plaintiffs. At a previous hearing, the judge ruled, "In the meanwhile, till the next date of hearing, subject to notices, status quo be maintained regarding the suit property." However, the court cleared that the injunction can be modified at any stage if new facts surface. The land where former prime minister Nawaz's residence is built in Raiwind is alleged to have been acquired by way of a fraud. A 600-kanal piece of land, belonging to the Board of Revenue, was transferred to a woman, named Waheeda in 1989. Later in 1993, the Sharif family purchased 200 kanal from her. On April 13, 2021, the revenue department cancelled the transfer of the land after the alleged fraud came to light.

Egypt  
approves  
Sinovac  
vaccine

CAIRO: The Egyptian Drug Authority (EDA) approved the Chinese Sinovac COVID-19 vaccine for emergency use in Egypt, said the authority in a statement on its Facebook page on early Wednesday. Mahmoud Yassin, head of EDA's Central Administration for Biological and Innovative Products, said "the step is part of the state's efforts to control the spread of COVID-19 and provide the vaccines for all citizens." He added that "the EDA has authorized the license of using the vaccine after carrying out the required assessment based on the international and domestic conditions to ensure the effectiveness and quality of the vaccine." Egypt has approved so far China's Sinopharm, Russia's Sputnik V, and Oxford/AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines for emergency use, the statement added. In January, Egypt began a nationwide campaign of COVID-19 vaccination, starting with the medical staff of government hospitals. On April 21, Egyptian Holding Company for Biological Products and Vaccines and Chinese biopharmaceutical company Sinovac signed an agreement to manufacture the Sinovac COVID-19 vaccine in the North African country. — APP

Talks to  
revive Iran  
nuclear deal  
resume

VIENNA: Parties to the Iran nuclear agreement are expected to resume their negotiations on Tuesday in Vienna to revive the tattered accord. The remaining partners to the 2015 deal have been engaged in talks since early this month to try to return the United States to the accord. Delegates from Britain, China, France, Germany, Iran and Russia are to meet from 3:00 pm (1300 GMT) in the third round of the EU-chaired negotiations in a Vienna luxury hotel, the EU said in a statement. Iran has refused to negotiate with the US directly, but US delegates are staying in an adjacent luxury hotel and are being regularly updated by the EU negotiator in a round of shuttle diplomacy. The 2015 accord aimed to give Iran sanctions relief in exchange for it curtailing its nuclear programme, but the deal started to unravel in 2018 when then US president Donald Trump walked out of it. — APP

Supreme Court  
orders removal of  
53 FIA officials

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan Tuesday ordered Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) to sack 53 of its employees with immediate effect. Three-member bench of the apex court headed by Justice Tariq Bandial heard a contempt case against FIA for making unlawful recruitments in the agency and not implementing the court order in this regard. Justice Ijazul Hasan remarked on FIA report that the Supreme Court had given three instructions to the FIA in 2001. The chief justice said the agency was required to make recruitments through public service commission

But the agency's report revealed that it did not follow the rule and hired workers without conducting their competition exam and interview, the SC judge observed. The FIA lawyer told the court that four employees have already died and three have passed the competition exam. The judge remarked that the Supreme Court judgment cannot be overruled by the high court. He said after the judgment of the apex court, the FIA employees took their cases to other courts. He asked the FIA to dismiss all those officials with immediate effect who didn't pass their FPS exam and directed DG FIA Wajid Zia to submit a report in this regard within 15 days.



ISLAMABAD: Special Representative to Prime Minister on Religious Harmony and Middle East, Hafiz Tahir Ashrafi in a meeting with Ambassador of Palestine, Ahmed Jawad Rabei. — DNA

MoST to take steps  
for timely registration  
of ventilators: Shibli

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister of Science and Technology, Senator Shibli Paraz Tuesday assured that his ministry will make all out efforts for the timely registration of ventilators with Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) to ensure availability and induction of these ventilators in the health care system. The minister was speaking while chairing a meeting regarding the efforts being made to counter the effects of COVID-19 pandemic. During the meeting an update on Pakistan Manufactured Ventilators System (PMVS) and innovative products developed with facilitation and coordination of Ministry of Science and Technology/ Pakistan Engineering Council was presented to the federal minister. The minister emphasized that the Pakistan Manufactured Medical Devices including ventilators should



conform to international standards and quality. He appreciated the efforts of PEC and all stakeholders in this regard and reiterated that MoST will make all out efforts for the timely registration of ventilators with Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) so that these ventilators are timely available for induction in the health care system and export. During the meeting it was highlighted that out of initial 57 ventilator designs, only 16 could meet the requirements of Intensive Care Unit (ICU) ventilators as per Acceptance Test Procedure (ATP) defined by DRAP and PEC.

Tareen-aligned group expresses  
reservations against Shahzad

"We met the prime minister in a very cordial atmosphere. He has assured us that justice will be served after we expressed reservations over being singled"

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A group of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) members that has extended its support to party stalwart Jahangir Tareen on Tuesday met with Prime Minister Imran Khan and expressed their reservations against aide on accountability Shahzad Akbar. Speaking to the media after the meeting with the prime minister, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf MNA from Faisalabad Raja Riaz said that the prime minister has assured the group that he is "personally monitoring" the inquiry against Tareen and will see to it that justice is served. "We met the prime minister in a very cordial atmosphere.



He has assured us that justice will be served after we expressed reservations over being singled. The prime minister said there is no question of such treatment being meted out to anyone," Riaz said. "The prime minister has asked for some time and

InshaAllah justice will be served," the PTI leader added. When asked what was discussed regarding Akbar, Riaz said that the group shared their reservations, after which "the prime minister said he will not allow injustice to be done with anyone and that we

should leave it to him and he takes responsibility". Riaz clarified that the prime minister has not "acknowledged" that Akbar has meted out "unfair treatment" to Tareen, but the group has simply shared their concerns and the premier has assured them of looking into it. The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf MNA claimed that the prime minister said: "You are all my allies. Even those who are opposed to me, I wish to tell them, no one will be treated unfairly and justice will be done." Riaz said the group thanked the premier for his assurances. "We have full confidence in our captain and our prime minister and InshaAllah we will secure justice," he added.

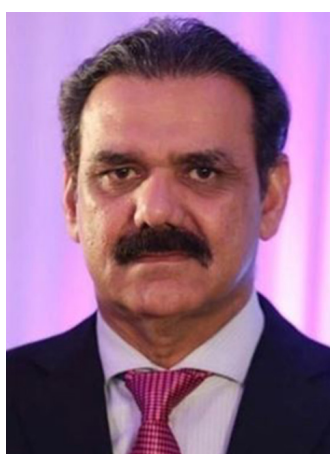
## South Balochistan's roads to improve connectivity

60 percent construction work of Basima-Khuzdar road had been completed while construction of Hoshab Awaran road had also been started

ISLAMABAD: CPEC Authority Chairman Lt General (ret'd) Asim Saleem Bajwa Tuesday said the development of roads in South Balochistan was key priority of the government to improve connectivity of Gwadar with North. In a tweet, he said about 60 percent construction work of Basima-Khuzdar road had been completed while construction of Hoshab Awaran road had also been started. "The prime minister's vision of uplifting remote areas especially South Balochistan is being realized," he added. The 146 kilometers Hoshab-Awaran project is an integral

part of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Central Alignment which connects Gwadar Port with the Sindh. The project is expected to be completed in three years at an estimated cost of Rs20 billion. Similarly the Basima-Khuzdar road (N-30) is 106 km long having a cost of Rs11.749 billion. This project is expected to be completed by end of current year. With respect to the completed road projects under CPEC, an official in CPEC authority told APP that the 449 km Quetta to Hoshab road (N-85) has been completed and is operational while the 235 KM long Surab-Quetta

(N-25) road has also been completed and is operational.



Similarly the official added that the 193 km Gwadar-Hoshab (M-8) road and 250 km Ratodero-Khuzdar (M-8) road is also operational. Earlier on Sunday, Asim Saleem Bajwa said work on the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Western route was in full swing. He said the Hakla-DIKhan motorway was near completion and would likely be opened for traffic in August/September this year. "Hakla-DI Khan Motorway construction work is in full swing, current progress is 86 percent. Will be commissioned by Aug/Sep," he said in his tweet. The Chairman informed that with pri-

ority on the Western route now, two other segments (Zhob-Quetta, Hoshab-Awaran) had already been started. According to an official in CPEC Authority, under the CPEC, some 1,100 kilometer roads had been completed while 850 kilometres were under construction. On the Western route, he said, the four-lane Hakla-Dera Ismail Khan Motorway was in the final stages. Its total length was 285 kms, which had been divided in five packages. The first 55 kms package would be completed on priority, which started from Yarik near D I Khan and ended at Rehmani Khel, the official told media. — APP