



Islamabad POST

Saturday, May 08, 2021

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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Heydar Aliyev - The Liberator of the Azerbaijani statehood

Detailed News On Page-08

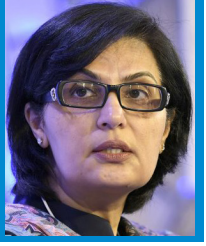
Turkish envoy lauds PAF's professionalism

Detailed News On Page-08



Pak calls for Post-COVID framework

Detailed News On Page-08



Sehr & Iftar Timings		
CITY	SEHR	IFTAR
ISLAMABAD	03:36 am	06:57 pm
FAISALABAD	03:44 am	06:53 pm
LAHORE	03:39 am	06:48 pm
KARACHI	04:27 am	07:06 pm
SARGODHA	03:44 am	06:56 pm
FIQA JAFARIA		
CITY	SEHR	IFTAR
ISLAMABAD	03:26 am	07:07 pm
FAISALABAD	03:34 am	07:03 pm
LAHORE	03:29 am	06:58 pm
KARACHI	04:17 am	07:16 pm
SARGODHA	03:34 am	07:06 pm

Shahbaz gets permission to travel abroad

The LHC has allowed the PML-N leader to go abroad from May 08 to July 15

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) Friday gave conditional permission to Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President and Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly (NA) Shehbaz Sharif to travel abroad. The LHC has ordered to remove the name of Shehbaz Sharif from the Blacklist. Shehbaz has been allowed to leave the country for eight weeks. Shehbaz has already booked a ticket in the Qatar Airways flight for May 8 to go to England for a medical check-up. The LHC has allowed the PML-N leader to go abroad from May 08 to July 15. Earlier, the LHC reserved its verdict in Shehbaz Sharif's petition, seeking deletion of his name from the Blacklist. Shehbaz, in the petition, had prayed to the court that since he had already set a precedent by returning home in 2020, leaving his ailing mother behind in the UK, the federal government be ordered to remove his name from the Blacklist, so that he could fly abroad for treatment. He had further contended that barring him from travelling abroad was a violation of basic human rights. Later, Mian Shehbaz Sharif has said that no one is willing to put their trust in Prime Minister Imran Khan because of his U-turns. Talking to reporters in Lahore, Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly said that by the Grace of Allah, he was released with dignity and on merit. "Being in court in this scorching heat raises my spirits", he added. He said that all Prime Minister Imran Khan does is pin the opposition against the wall, and added, "The first time I was out on

Fawad Ch says bail decision surprising

NEHAL MIRAJ



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hussain on Friday said that the opposition parties need to review their conduct. In a statement, the minister said that he became surprised over the criticism of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) president and Opposition Leader in NA Shehbaz Sharif. Prime Minister (PM) Imran Khan has always given importance to labor class, he added. Fawad Chaudhry further advised the opposition to refrain from scoring points all the time. Earlier, Chaudhry Fawad Hussain said that PML-N escape from negotiations on electoral reforms in the country was very unfortunate. He said that PML-N's claim that the reform process has to be done by the ECP instead of the Parliament showed that they have no understanding of the system and no interest in reforms.

production order in the National Assembly, I called out the NAB-Niazi nexus, which time later proved. Bashir Memon confirmed my statement on the NAB-Niazi nexus." Shehbaz Sharif said that if the government was focused on the public and the nation, the situation would have been different.



JEDDAH: Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Bajwa in a meeting with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman. DNA

Pak committed to defence of holy mosques: COAS

Saudi Crown Prince acknowledges Pakistan's role towards regional peace & stability

NEWS DESK

JEDDAH: General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) called on His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed Bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Crown Prince, 1st Deputy Prime Minister & Defence Minister and His Royal Highness Prince Khalid Bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Deputy Defence Minister at

Jeddah, today. During the meeting, matters of mutual interest, regional security situation including recent developments in Afghanistan Peace Process, bilateral defence, security, collaboration for regional peace and connectivity were discussed. COAS said that Pakistan is resolute in its commitment to safeguard the sovereignty and territorial integrity of KSA and defence of the

two Holy Mosques. The Crown Prince acknowledged Pakistan's role towards regional peace and stability. He also said that the relations between KSA & Pakistan are based on bonds of brotherhood & mutual trust and both nations will continue to play their part for peace, stability & betterment of Muslim Ummah. The Saudi Crown Prince acknowledged Pakistan's role towards regional

peace and stability. Abdulaziz Al-Saud said relations between Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan are based on bonds of brotherhood and mutual trust. The Saudi Crown Prince said both the nations will continue to play their part for peace, stability and betterment of Muslim Ummah. The Saudi Crown Prince acknowledged Pakistan's role towards regional

Briefs

Pak-KSA relations historic: PM

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan has said that Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have long-standing and historic fraternal relations, rooted deep in common faith, shared history and mutual support. The remarks came in an article authored by the premier, published in Arab News Pakistan. PM Imran would embark on a three-day official visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia from May 7 (today), as per a statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) on Thursday on the invitation of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz.

Sanjrani to visit Djibouti

ZUBAIR AHMED

ISLAMABAD: At the special invitation of the newly-elected President of the Republic of Djibouti H.E Ismail Omar Guelle, Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani will embark on a four-day official visit to the Republic of Djibouti on 13 May 2021. Sadiq Sanjrani will attend the swearing-in ceremony of the newly-elected President of the Republic of Djibouti, Ismail Omar Guelle, to be held on 15 May 2021. During the visit, the Chairman will hold bilateral meetings with the President and Prime Minister of the Republic of Djibouti. Sadiq Sanjrani is also expected to have meetings with various officials.

Holiday Notice

The offices of daily Islamabad POST shall remain closed on Saturday on account of weekly off therefore there will be no newspaper on Sunday. - Editor

Over 7 kg uranium seized in India's Maharashtra state

2 local residents arrested for 'illegally possessing' highly radioactive substance, police say

NEWS DESK

NEW DELHI: Indian police seized over seven kilograms (15.4 pounds) of natural uranium and arrested two men in the western Maharashtra state for "illegally possessing" the highly radioactive substance, an authority said. According to the anti-terrorism squad in Maharashtra, the confiscated material is worth Indian Rupees 21.30 crores (around \$2.9 million) and an investigation into the case is underway. "We had received information that one person identified as Jigar Pandya was going to illegally sell pieces of Uranium substance, a trap was laid and he was arrested," the Maharashtra police said. "Investigation into the case revealed that another person identified as Abu Tahir gave him these pieces of Uranium." The police said a huge quantity of substance was recovered when Tahir was apprehended. The case was registered on Wednesday after a report from the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre in Mumbai confirmed the seized material is highly radioactive. "A report was received that the substance

is natural uranium. It's highly radioactive and dangerous to human life," the police said. A police official told Anadolu Agency on the condition of anonymity that the accused are being questioned to know the source of the seized material and where it would be sent.

According to local news agency Press Trust of India, the two accused appeared before a local court on Wednesday which remanded them in the custody of the anti-terrorism squad till May 12. It is the second time in India that such a highly radioactive substance has been seized by police in recent years. In 2016, police seized almost 9 kg (19.8 lbs) of depleted uranium in the Thane area of Maharashtra. Uranium is used in several areas, including nuclear explosives and medical techniques. The depleted uranium was brought from abroad and was to be sold in India, police said. Anti-chain snatching squad of Thane Crime Branch laid a trap near a hotel on Ghodbunder Road on receiving specific information that two persons were coming there to sell the radioactive element. Uranium is used in several areas, including nuclear explosives and medical techniques.

Rocket debris unlikely to cause any harm: China

NEWS DESK



BEIJING: Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said on Friday most of the debris from a large Chinese rocket expected to plunge back through the atmosphere this weekend will be burned up on reentry and is highly unlikely to cause any harm. The US military said on Wednesday what it called an uncontrolled re-entry was being tracked by US Space Command. The Long March 5B rocket blasted off from China's Hainan island on April 29, carrying the unmanned Tianhe module, which contains what will become living quarters on a permanent Chinese space station.

Czech ambassador meets air chief



STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Czech Republic, Tomas Smetanka, called on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force. The visiting dignitary congratulated the Air Chief on assuming command of the PAF. The Air Chief acknowledged the efforts of Tomas Smetanka for enhancing the bilateral relations between the two

countries. Various matters of mutual interests were also discussed in the meeting. The government had been appointed Air Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu as the new chief of the air staff, a statement from the Directorate General Public Relations (DGPR) for the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) said. Air Marshal Sidhu took over the command from March 19 upon the completion of Air Marshal Mujahid Anwar Khan's tenure.

Army receives 2nd batch of vaccine

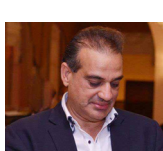
SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistani military received a second batch of COVID-19 vaccines from the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA), China Military Online reported Friday. Pakistan Army received the first batch of the vaccine from the Chinese PLA on February 8, becoming the first foreign military to get the COVID-19 vaccine from the Chinese military. The vaccine was provided with the approval of the Central Military Commission, and at the request of the Pakistani military, according to China Military Online. Meanwhile, the first batch of China's CanSino COVID-19 vaccines that the Pakistani government purchased in bulk also reached Pakistan a few days ago, CanSino Biologics told the Chinese media.

PM's remarks irk Pakistani envoys abroad

COMMENT

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI



The Prime Minister, Imran Khan on May 04, 2021, while interacting virtually with the ambassadors and high commissioners of Pakistan based in various countries, chose to chide them for what he termed their 'sluggish' approach especially towards the Pakistani Diaspora. He was particularly critical of the Pakistani mission head in Saudi Arabia Raja Ijaz, who according to the prime minister, miserably failed in addressing the woes of Pakistanis living in the Kingdom. Prime Minister's remarks seem to have hurt the officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs because some of them even deemed it necessary to talk to media as well, albeit without identifying themselves. But the former officials such as Tehmina Janjua and Salman Bashir the two former

foreign secretaries, spoke openly against what they termed 'irresponsible' statement of the prime minister. According to them the statement had greatly demoralized the diplomats and spread disenchantment among them. These foreign affairs gurus believe the prime minister could have conveyed his sentiments rather discreetly. According to them the PM should have called a meeting of the senior officers of the Ministry and discussed these matters with them. An amicable way out must have been found, they opined.

All said and done, what the prime minister said cannot be ruled out altogether. We all know that all is not well at most of our missions abroad. Pakistan's ambassador to Bulgaria has recently been convicted for mega corruption. Similarly, such cases have been reported in certain other missions as well. Then, there has been a consistent view held by the intellectual class in Pakistan that our missions abroad do not perform their duties religiously due to which the country has to suffer. During past

"All Pakistani missions have been rather bound to use social media tools such as facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc; this is a revolutionary step of Ministry of Foreign Affairs that needs to be acknowledged"

years, we have seen Pakistan facing seriously image problem abroad, especially during the time of operation against the terrorists and extremists. At that time Pakistan was perceived as a country filled with terrorists. I remember, in 2005 at a European airport, a security official asked my identity and upon knowing that I was from Pakistan, he whispered to his colleague standing nearby "terrorist". It was a common perception about Pakistan and unfortunately nobody at that time had done anything to counter the false propaganda against Pakistan. And look at the recently adopted

resolution by the European Parliament in which it called for reviewing the GSP plus status for Pakistan. Ostensibly, the resolution was not drafted and discussed overnight. Our missions in European states should have pursued the case proactively and with a view to preventing any untoward situation. But regrettably they failed and hence Pakistan stands in the dock now. Since, I travel frequently so I have personally witnessed and come across lukewarm attitude of our missions abroad. The moment they would come to know that any Pakistani delegation is around,

they would either go in the hibernation or cut off communication so that nobody could reach them. If you have some personal friendship, acquaintances or references then that is a different story. Recently, I along with a media delegation comprising senior media persons, dared to visit the Pakistani embassy in a Central Asian State. Despite having an appointment with the ambassador, we were made to wait for an hour in a shabby waiting room. Some of us suggested leaving the place sans meeting the ambassador. We were in the middle of our discussions that the ambassador finally arrived. We left the place after a while after having haphazard and half-hearted discussions. There is no denying the fact that our missions abroad avoid meeting either Diaspora or delegations from Pakistan. But of course there are foreign missions that have been taking care of Diaspora; extending hospitality to Pakistani delegations and trying to project true image of Pakistan. One step which the sitting government of the sitting foreign minister has taken to im-

prove and enhance relevance and efficiency of the foreign missions appears to be equipping them with latest communication tools. This is for the first time ever since the advent of social media almost all Pakistani missions have been rather bound to use social media tools such as facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc. From media's point of view, this imitative turns out to be quite handy for all relevant materials about activities of these missions can now be accessed without any hassle. So, indeed this is a revolutionary step of Ministry of Foreign Affairs that needs to be acknowledged. Summing up, if our diplomats and especially ambassadors do not live up to the expectations, the government is equally responsible since all such selections are made by the government and in some cases prime minister himself. It is therefore advised to make good choices in order to avoid any embarrassment. It always takes two make a clap. Government and the Ministry have to work hand in hand in order to settle this issue once and for all.

Inside...

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Briefs

UNICEF imparts professional training

SHAHEEN HANIF

ISLAMABAD: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has imparted professional training among some 2,306 social workforce including 882 female and 1,424 males during 2021, says a report. According to the report, the workforce has been provided psychosocial support and stigma prevention in all provinces through UNICEF package. According to details, 80 professionals had been trained in Punjab; 1,939 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; 75 Sindh; 140 Baluchistan and 19 imparted training in Gilgit-Baltistan. A total of 69,491 parents, caregivers, children and individuals like 12,679 girls; 11,769 boys; 23,497 women and 21,546 men were provided Psychosocial Support and Services (PSS) by trained social workforce professionals. A total of 64,102 workforce of Punjab was provided PSS. Similarly 3,408 trainees hailed from KP; 866 Sindh; 800 Baluchistan and 316 belong to GB. Some 43,861 individuals including 7,381 girls, 7,481 boys, 14,922 women and 14,077 men received specialized counseling sessions in Sindh, Punjab, KP and Baluchistan. A total of 656 children (200 girls, 456 boys) received child protection services support by UNICEF in Sindh, Punjab and Baluchistan in response to violence against children. In the first two months of the year, stigma and violence against children messages reached 202,315 people through various platforms.

PHP signs MoU with hospital, lab

DNA

FAISALABAD: The Punjab Highway Patrolling police Faisalabad region has inked two Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) for provision of medical facilities to staff. According to PHP spokesperson Rizwan Bhatti the MoUs had been signed with Al-Shifa International Hospital Faisalabad and Meezan Laboratories. SSP Patrolling Faisalabad region Mirza anjum Kamal and administrator Al-Shifa International Hospital and CEO Meezan Laboratories Najaf Imtiaz Gill signed MoUs. Under the agreements, lab and medical facilities will be available to patrolling policestaff and their families on special packages of low rates. It may be noted that patrolling police Faisalabad region had already signed MoUs with Al-Rehman Lab, Kips College, Carrier IT Institute, Chughtai lab and Ripha lab.

Six gamblers arrested

MAHBOOB AHIR

SARGODHA: Police on Friday arrested six gamblers and recovered motorcycles, mobiles and stake money from their possession. Police said that Wah Bachrah police team conducted raid at Goornawala village and arrested six gamblers who were busy in playing cards and recovered five motorbikes, six mobile phones and Rs. 14,700 bet money from them. They were identified as-Mujahid Ahmed, Rehmatullah, Sher Afghan, Muhammad Akbar, Sanaulah and Azizullah. Separate cases were registered against them under gambling-act. **Bootlegger held with liquor** Police on Friday arrested a bootlegger and recovered liquor from his possession. A team of Sahiwal police station headed by SHO Sahib Khan conducted a raid and arrested notorious bootlegger Zafar Hayyat and recovered 90 litres liquor from him. Police registered a case against the accused and started investigation.

Punjab govt providing relief to masses in Ramazan

He directed the duty officers that the supply mechanism of essential items should strictly be followed for ensuring availability of each and every item for the facility of consumers

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Punjab Minister for Sports Rai Taimur Khan Bhatti on Friday said the Punjab government was providing maximum relief to the masses during the holy month of Ramazan. He was inspecting Ramazan Bazaars set up at Riaz Shahid Chowk, Faizan-e-Madina Chowk Susan road and

other areas of the city. He took a round of the stalls of the vegetables, fruits and other grocery items and inspected the quality of these food items. He directed the duty officers that the supply mechanism of essential items should strictly be followed for ensuring availability of each and every item for the facility of consumers. He also interacted with the consumers and told that food items would be provided

to the people on concessional rates under Ramazan Package. He also checked the other arrangements for the comfort of the consumers and said that regular cleanliness be ensured for providing the consumers pleasant environment during the shopping. He expressed his satisfaction over the Ramazan Bazaars arrangements and asked the staff to perform their

duty with devotion for public service during the holy month of Ramazan. He said the government was committed to provide the economic relief to the public during Ramazan and more than 300 Ramazan bazaars had been setup in the province for providing the essential items to the consumers on comparatively less prices. He said that the profiteers and hoarders were being dealt

with iron hand and Price Control Magistrates had been mobilized to check the trend of price hike in the general market. He said that Chief Minister Punjab Sardar Usman Buzdar, Provincial Ministers, Secretaries, Parliamentarians remained active for monitoring of Ramazan Bazaars. Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ali informed the minister that 19 Ramazan

bazaars had been established in the district. He said that comprehensive arrangements had been made in Ramazan bazaars and a control room had also been set up in DC office for coordinating and monitoring the arrangements of Ramazan bazaars. ADCR, ACs Umar Maqbool, Syed Ayub Bukhari, other officers also accompanied the minister during the visits of Ramazan bazaars.

New LHC additional judges take oath

LAHORE: Newly-appointed additional judges of the Lahore High Court took oath of their office here on Friday. Newly appointed additional judges included Justice Sohail Nasir, Justice Shakil Ahmad, Justice Saifur Salim Shahid, Justice Ahmad Nadeem Arshad, Justice Muhammad Tariq Nadim, Justice Muhammad Amjad Rafiq, Justice Abid Hussain Chatha, Justice Anwaar Hussain, Justice Ali Zia Bajwa, Justice Sultan Tamvir Ahmad, Justice Muhammad Raza Qureshi, Justice Muhammad Shan Gul and Justice Mohammad Raheel Kamran Sheikh. LHC CJ Qasim Khan administered oath to 13 newly-appointed judges in a simple but impressive ceremony held at the LHC main lawn. — DNA



KARACHI: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari met diplomats of US, Afghanistan, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE and Italy at Bilawal House. — DNA

PTI govt utilizing resources for country's progress

MAHBOOB AHIR

SARGODHA: Provincial Minister for Excise and Taxation Hafiz Muhammad Mumtaz on Friday said the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government was utilizing all available resources for progress and prosperity of the country. He expressed these views while addressing a meeting of administrative officers at the Deputy Commissioner's Office here on Friday. In the meeting, the provincial minister was given a detailed briefing on price control, Ramazan bazaars, wheat procurement campaign and revenue collection issues.

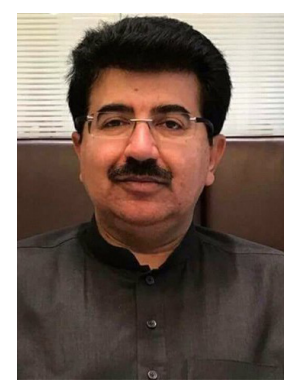
The minister said Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar believed in the construction and development of backward areas, adding that funds were being allocated in the provincial budget for the next financial year which would provide better facilities to people of Sargodha. It was informed the meeting that a target of 80,000 metric tonnes of wheat had been set for procurement in the district this year and 92% target had been achieved so far. The meeting was further informed that during Ramazan, 37 magistrates inspected a total of 21,689 shops and visited 1,315 vegetable and fruit markets.

Sanjrani congrats on 70 Years of Pakistan-China friendship

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Senate Chairman Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani has congratulated the people of Pakistan and China on the completion of 70 years of Pakistan-China friendship. In a special message released on Friday, chairman said that the relations between the two countries have been even strong with each passing day during the last seven decades. He said that relations with China are important in our foreign policy and that is why all political parties are united on bilateral cooperation and friendship with China.

Mentioning friendship and trust, he said that the two countries have stood by each other in every difficult time and last year Pakistan's upper house was the first parliament in the world to pass a resolution praising China. He further said that Pakistan has also passed two resolutions expressing solidarity with China and supporting Pakistan. It is very encouraging that under the leadership of Xi Jinping, China has made remarkable progress during his tenure, relations between Pakistan and China have grown significantly. He said that CPEC, (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor), a new era has begun



associated with. On development projects, he said that new employment opportunities were being created to improve connectivity with CPEC road projects and now it was moving beyond energy and road infrastructure to agriculture, economic zones, tourism and other areas. He said that CPEC is a guarantee of a bright future for various countries in the region and it is one of the best economic projects in the world. The Chairman Senate termed CPEC as not only a game changer but also a fat changer for Pakistan and said that it would benefit not only regional traders and investors but also the general public.

in the relations between the two countries and it is gratifying that the first phase of CPEC has been completed. Highlighting the importance of CPEC, he said it is a guarantee of a bright future not only for Pakistan but also for all the countries

Power supply to be ensured during Eid days: FESCO

DNA

FAISALABAD: Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO) finalized its plan to supply uninterrupted electricity to its consumers during Eid holidays. This was stated by Chief Executive Officer (CEO) FESCO Engineer Arshad Muneer here on Friday. He said that special teams were constituted to remove electricity-related complaints without any delay while in this regard a Monitoring Desk was established at FESCO Headquarter. He directed the Chief Engineer (Operation) Nasir Ayyaz Khan, Chief Engineer (P&D) Mazhar Naveed, Chief Engineer (Technical Services) Bashir Ahmad, Chief Commercial Officer Allah Yar Khan, Chief Engineer (Development) PMU Shahid Haidar and Project Director (GSC) Muhammad Ashiq to monitor load management, LT/HT breakdown and customer's complaints process and take prompt action to resolve electricity related issues without any delay so that uninterrupted power supply could be ensured to the consumers.

He said that sufficient staff was deployed for duties during Eid holidays whereas necessary gadgets and trolley-mounted transformers were provided to them so that they could replace the same in case of any emergency with defective ones. He said that monitoring desk will work round the clock during Eid holidays and the people can contact it through telephone numbers 041-9220290, 041-9220618, toll free number 0800-66554 and helpline 118 in case of any emergent situation.

The people can also get their electricity-related complaints lodged through email: fesco118@gmail.com and through WhatsApp on 0345-1500413, he added.

26 criminals held, drugs, weapons seized

DNA

FAISALABAD: Police claimed on Friday to have arrested 26 criminals and recovered drugs and illegal weapons from their possession in the district during last 24 hours. According to police, raiding teams nabbed 8 drug pushers and recovered 0.46 kg hashish and 87 liters liquor from their possession. The police also held 9 gamblers with stake money of Rs. 5,950. In a crackdown against illegal weapons, police arrested 6 persons and recovered 5 pistols, one rifle and a number of bullets from them. Meanwhile, the police held 3 kite sellers and recovered kites and string rolls from them and further investigation was underway.

7 dead, 965 injured in 899 road accidents

DNA

LAHORE: At least seven persons were killed and 965 others injured in 899 road accidents in Punjab during the last 24 hours. As many as 573 seriously injured people were shifted to different hospitals while 379 with minor injuries were treated on-the-spot by the rescue medical teams. The analysis showed that 379 drivers, 26 underage drivers, 141 pedestrians and 445 passengers were among the victims of the road crashes. The statistics showed that 221 accidents were reported in Lahore, which affected 220 persons, placing the provincial capital at top of the list, followed by 69 in Faisalabad with 73 victims and at third Gujranwala with 54 accidents and 50 victims. According to the data, 603 motorbikes, 106 auto-rickshaws, 86 motorcars, 34 vans, 11 passenger buses, 23 trucks and 104 other types of vehicles and slow-moving carts were involved in these road accidents.



ISLAMABAD: Chinese ambassador to Pakistan Nong Rong calls on Federal Minister for Planning and development Asad Umer. — DNA

EU Parliament Chief urged to withdraw resolution

In his letter, Senator Malik writes that the people of Pakistan are concerned as to where was the EU Parliament when EU DisinfoLab based in EU had uncovered Indian propaganda of the highest intensity against Pakistan

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Institute of Research and Reforms (IRR) Senator A. Rehman Malik has urged President European Parliament to withdraw its resolution against Pakistan and bring a resolution of economic sanctions against India also for misusing EU soil against for malicious, fake, and fabricated propaganda against Pakistan. In a letter to President European Parliament David Maria Sassoli, he said the people of Pakistan are highly disturbed and shocked by the resolution adopted by the European Parliament on April 29 calling for a review of trade relations with Pakistan and ending

its eligibility for the Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) status. Making the letter public at a press conference, Rehman Malik said that interviews and public research conducted by IRR shows that the people of Pakistan have taken the EU Parliament resolution as interference in the sovereignty of Pakistan. He said that they considered it highly discriminatory, interference in Pakistan's internal affairs, and against international interfaith harmony. Rehman Malik said the people of Pakistan have great respect for all religions including Christianity and there is no religious discrimination in Pakistan as people of all faiths have the freedom in



teaching, practicing, worshipping, and celebrating their faiths and festivals without any fear. He in his letter stressed that making legislation and its implementa-

tion is the sole sovereign right of any sovereign country and all Pakistani laws are made to satisfy its own national social justice system. He added the people of all faiths living in Pakistan and their rights are well protected in the Constitution of Pakistan. "I would like to express that the European Union (EU) Parliament should have afforded a hearing to representatives from Pakistan or had at least heard the Pakistan ambassador in Belgium prior to bringing this resolution before Parliament", his letter reads. In his letter, Senator Malik writes that the people of Pakistan are concerned as to where was the EU Parliament when EU DisinfoLab based in EU had

uncovered Indian propaganda of the highest intensity against Pakistan adding it is no more a secret that India had been using the soil of the EU against a sovereign state of Pakistan unchecked by EU which is against international laws. He urged the President EU Parliament that the people of Pakistan expect a resolution from EU Parliament against India condemning the misuse of its soil for malicious propaganda against Pakistan and appeal EU to impose economic sanctions on India for this illegal act of breaching EU trust and have compromised the position of EU by using its soil to damage the interest of a fellow sovereign state.

Briefs

DIG MP inquires health of NHA official

DNA

ISLAMABAD: DIG Motorway Police Ashfaq Ahmed on Friday visited Lady Reading Hospital Peshawar to inquire about the health of medical helper of National Highway Authority (NHA) Adeel Ali Shah who was severely injured by a suspected speeding car rider at Peshawar toll plaza on Peshawar-Islamabad Motorway (M-1).

The condition of Adeel Ali Shah is still serious due to severe head injuries. The accused car rider Junaid s/o Ateeq was arrested during his attempt to escape and was handed over to PS Chamkani for further legal action.

On this occasion, DIG Ashfaq Ahmed paid rich tributes to those who have rendered eminent sacrifices while performing duties. He said that the personnel of Motorway Police were praying for the early recovery of under treatment Adeel.

Juma-tul-Wida prayer offered at Faisal Masjid

ISLAMABAD: Faithful hailing from twin cities offered 'Juma-tul-Wida' prayers with great religious solemnity and fervour here at Faisal Masjid. According to the details, special arrangements in the line of COVID-19 SOPs were made by Dawah Academy of International Islamic University (IIU).

Disinfectant showering gates were installed and soaps and hand sanitizers were ensured for the faithful. On the occasion, Qari Dr. Muhammad Ilyas, Director General, Dawah Academy delivered Jumma sermon and led Juma tul Wida Prayer at Faisal Masjid, Islamabad.

In the sermon, Dr. Qari Muhammad Ilyas, D.G. Dawah Academy highlighted the importance and sanctity of the Ramzan ul Mubarak. He emphasised on the importance of the study of Quran stating that the Holy Month is the best source to get close to the sacred book.

He said that this month is a blessing and a gift for Muslims to get back to the track which has been identified by the Almighty.

He stressed to observe fast with full spirit while saying that it teaches about tolerance in the life. Dr. Ilyas called for unity of Muslims and urged that education must be top priority to deal with the challenges of hour.

He said that Islam is the religion of peace and moderation and Muslims must disseminate true message of Islam. - APP

Secretary IT reviews progress on projects

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Secretary Ministry of IT and Telecommunication Shoaib Ahmad Siddiqui here on Friday chaired a meeting regarding Progress Review of PSDP FY 2020-21.

The representatives of National Information Technology Board (NITB), Pakistan Software Export Board (PSEB), Special Communications Organization (SCO), Virtual University and Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) presented details of the utilization of fund for their respective projects, said a news release. The chair expressed satisfaction upon the working on the IT projects and gave direction for smooth running of the projects.

The meeting was also attended by senior officers of Ministry of IT & Telecom.

Portuguese Parliament forms Pak-Portugal friendship group

Kanwal Shuzab meets Portugal ambassador, says that once the pandemic subsides, both the countries can enhance tourism sector which has great potential

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: Paulo Neves Pocinho, the Ambassador of Portugal called on Parliamentary Secretary, M/o PD&SI, Convener PAKISTAN-Portugal Parliamentary Friendship Group Ms. Kanwal Shuzab in her office.

It is to be noted that Pak-Portugal Friendship group has been created in the Portuguese parliament for developing avenues of cooperation. The Parliamentary Secretary said that a letter of acknowledgement would be sent to Portuguese government on the formulation of Pak-Portugal Friendship group which has been constituted with the objectives of strengthening the bond between the parliamentarians.

She said the conflicts always have their ruthless repercussion, the forums of cooperation bring forth the opportunities to exchange programs and learn from each other's experiences.

It was conversed that once the pandemic subsides, both the countries can enhance tourism sector which has great potential.

Later the parliamentary Secretary presented a souvenir to the Ambassador of Portugal.



ISLAMABAD: Kanwal Shuzab Parliamentary Secretary Planning and Chairman Pakistan-Portugal Parliamentary Friendship Group presenting a souvenir to Ambassador of Portugal. - DNA

Govt projects attracting local, foreign investors: Tariq Sadiq



KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Lt. Gen. (ret) Anwar Ali Hyder, Chairman Naya Pakistan Housing and Development Authority (NAPHDA) on Friday said the business community is the backbone

of the economy and their problems would be resolved on a preferential basis.

The government is paying special attention to boost economic activities for which cooperation of the business community is of paramount importance, he said. The private sector should fully

participate in the Naya Pakistan Housing Programme for low-cost housing projects which will generate economic activity and provide jobs amid the pandemic, he said. Lt. Gen. (ret) Anwar Ali Hyder said this while talking to a delegation of the Islamabad Industrial Association (IIA) led by its President Tariq Sadiq.

Deputy Chairman of NAPHDA Maj. Gen. (ret) Amer Aslam Khan, Omais Khatkhat, SVP, IIA, Muhammad Ahmed and Mohsin Khalid former Presidents ICCI, Malik Sohail Hussain, former SVP ICCI, and others were also present at the occasion. The delegation apprised Chairman and Deputy Chairman NAPHDA about their problems including the issue of lease renewal of industrial plots and the CDA has referred the matter to NAPHDA. They added that due to expired lease, many industrialists were not able to get bank loans or initiate new investments on which the Chairman assured renewal of leases and resolution of the outstanding problems being faced by the industrialists.

Court slams FIA's notices to journalists

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Friday served notices to attorney general of Pakistan and other senior lawyers for assistance in case regarding powers of Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) under anti-cybercrime Act. The court questioned that whether section 20 of cyber-crime act was contradicting the Articles 14, 19 and 19A of the Constitution. Justice Athar Minallah conducted hearing on a petition filed by a journalist Asad Toor who challenged FIA's notice to him. The chief justice observed, FIA's notices are the worst example of censorship. If the actions were started on criticism then it would not stop anywhere, he said. The chief justice further observed that the FIA had been taking partial actions, adding that the court had never seen the FIA appeared before the court preparing a case against one from treasury benches. The court asked the FIA to inform the bench after investigation that how many countries in the world had admitted the criticism acts as criminal cases. Whenever the legislatures in several countries of the world tried to declare the criticism as crime the courts turned dismissed it. The chief justice observed that no one would speak in the country if the FIA starts serving such notices. The job of Journalists and anchors is to criticize, he said, adding that such notices would also stop everything. Justice Minallah remarked that this court was criticized several times but FIA never made a case on it. The court sought response from FIA and amicus curiae and adjourned the court till after the Eid ul Fitr. It may be mentioned here that the court had also appointed senior lawyers Himid Khan, Abid Hassan Manto and vice chairman Pakistan bar council as amicus curiae in the case. - DNA

Huawei, NUST join hands to develop Ai-Enabled Talent

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Huawei Pakistan and the National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) have signed a memorandum of understanding to join hands in the development of talent within Pakistan's artificial intelligence (AI) sector. The memorandum reaffirms an existing five-year healthy relationship between both entities. The signing ceremony was attended by the Rector of NUST, Lt Gen (R) Engr. Javed Mahmood Bukhari, HI (M), Pro-Rector for Research, Innovation & Commercialization, Air Vice Marshal Dr. Rizwan Riaz SI(M), Huawei Middle East Vice President, Mr. Space Lee, Huawei Pakistan Deputy CEO, Mr. Wuhan, Vice President of Huawei EBG Service, Mr. Kyle Zhang, along with other respective members from both organizations. The program is yet another enterprise-academic collaboration that explores the possibilities to integrate Huawei's AI HCIA/HCIIP course contents into AI-related courses offered by the university, and consequently, boost ICT talent in Pakistan. NUST, being the leading engineering university in the country, is recognized worldwide for the quality of education and research it offers.



ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Poverty Alleviation and social safety, Dr. Sania Nishtar receives 49 tons of dry ration, a gift for Ehsaas from the Government of UAE. - DNA

Experts warn of US patrolling in India's EEZ

India being a US strategic partner has taken this action with a pinch of salt as the message has been conveyed to the former that even the strategic partnership cannot stop the USA from carrying out such activities

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: The US Navy's navigation operations in India's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) is an attempt to assert its dominating role in the Indian Ocean Region and carries a message for the coastal states in the region, especially the major maritime powers, India and China. This was the crux of a webinar titled 'Freedom of Navigation Operations Patrol (FONOP) - Issues and Legalities', which was organized by Institute of Policy Studies, Islamabad. Chaired by IPS' Vice Chairman Ambassador (r) Syed Abrar Husain, the session was addressed by Commodore (r) Syed Mohammad Obaidullah SI(M), former executive director, Pakistan National Shipping Corporation (PNSC) and

founding director of National Centre for Maritime Policy Research (NCMPR), and Commodore (r) Baber Bilal SI(M), director, National Institute of Maritime Affairs (NIMA), Islamabad.

The session was also partaken by other maritime scholars and experts including IPS' Non-Resident Fellow Dr. Malika Zeba Khan, assistant professor, National University of Modern Languages (NUML), Naufil Shahrukh, GM Operations IPS and Secretary General, Maritime Study Forum, a Pakistan Maritime Security Agency (PMSA) panel led by Deputy Director Operations Lt Cmdr. Hafiz Faisal Javed, Dr. Faisal Javid, assistant professor, Federal Urdu University Karachi, Samina Qureshi, assistant professor, Karachi University, and Attorney Muslim Bin Aqeel, maritime law-

yer and research associate at Maritime Study Forum (MSF).

Cmdr. (r) Obaidullah, the keynote speaker of the session, was of the view that the recent US Navy's maneuvers in the Indian Ocean challenged India's aspirations to become a global maritime power and claim Indian Ocean as 'India's ocean'. He further added, 'India being a US strategic partner has taken this action with a pinch of salt as the message has been conveyed to the former that even the strategic partnership cannot stop the USA from carrying out such activities. Besides, this also conveys a message to other regional actors including China that similar operations could be conducted in their respective maritime zones, he warned.

Commenting on the US navy sailing through India's EEZ without prior intimation on April 7, 2021,

the former commodore said the US being a non-signatory of UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea) conducts FONOPs on regular basis to challenge excessive maritime claims of other countries. With regards to the concerns shown by the Indian government over the incident, he mentioned that it is rather a matter of interpretation as the USA believes articles 19 and 24 of UNCLOS give it right to pass through sans permission of coastal states. Explaining legalities of the matter, Cadre (r) Bilal said the sovereignty of coastal states extend to 12 nautical miles, whereas surface and subsurface in the EEZ are considered global commons and hence, coastal states cannot bar other countries from sailing through it. He also added that India's aspirations for establishing its hegemony in the Indian

Ocean Region (IOR) are thwarted by the US action. Other discussants opined that such kind of operations do not have direct implications for Pakistan, but keeping in mind the US-Sino rivalry, the US can conduct a FONOP in the Western Indian Ocean region to check China's influence, command and control over navigation in this region as a global right. They also raised questions over the mild protest of the Indian government on the US action which, they doubt, was carried out in connivance with the latter. Concluding the session, former ambassador Syed Abrar Husain opined that the US move is significant, yet not uncommon, and at prima facie is aimed at countering the influence of China in the region. Though it is too late to put a check on China's ever-expanding prowess, he observed.

CDA staff's Eid holidays cancelled

SHAHEEN HANIF

ISLAMABAD: The Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) on special instructions has issued to the officers and staff to remain on duty by canceling the holidays of the concerned departments for providing best facilities to the city during Eid-ul-Fitr holidays and lockdown. Meanwhile, a control room has also been set up to deal with emergencies.

According to the details, the management of the Capital Development Authority (CDA) has directed its concerned departments Sanitation, Sewerage, Road Maintenance to provide best services to the citizens during the lockdown and Eid holidays across the city due to increasing cases of Corona virus.

Holidays for street lights, MPOs, markets, water supply, tanker services, environment and others have been canceled. Instructions have also been issued to the staff and officers of the said departments to be ready at all times to serve the people of the city. For redressal of your grievances related to citizen related departments 0519253015, 051 9253016 You can call 0519252962. While the concerned staff will perform their duties in different shifts to solve the problem of citizens

MoJ notifies special courts for trials of rape cases

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Law & Justice, Dr. Barrister Muhammad Farogh Naseem, the Ministry of Law and Justice on Friday notified special courts for trials of rape cases. Barrister Maleeka Bokhari, Parliamentary Secretary Law and Justice and Chairperson of the Special Committee has supervised worked diligently with support from members of Special Committee and Ministry of Law and Justice to achieve the first step towards setting up special courts under the Anti-Rape Ordinance 2020.

This important development was stepping stone towards provision of speedy and expeditious dispensation of justice for victims of rape and sexual offenses in a more humane and gender sensitized manner.

The Special Court would include State of the art infrastructure and inclusion of special measures including but not limited to, audio and video recording and video link facilities. A dedicated and gender sensitized court room environment for trial of rape and sexual assault cases was now becoming a reality for women and children across Pakistan.

RWMC, Albayrak disseminate message

RAWALPINDI: As part of ongoing cleanliness awareness drive during the Holy month of Ramadan, the communications team of Albayrak and Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) here on Friday visited mosques of Pindora UC-18 during Jumma tul Wida and interacted with Imam-e-Masjid on the matter of personal and environmental hygiene.

The team also briefed the clerics about various cleanliness services that the Company is providing for the benefit of public like mechanical sweeping and washing, debris lifting and drains desilting. They were asked to cooperate with Albayrak to upgrade the cleanliness condition of the streets, markets and mohallahs. As the Holy month of Ramadan has begun so Imams were requested to emphasize more on the matter of cleanliness before and after prayers sermons and Tarawih prayers as many people visit mosques during the Holy month of Ramadan so it is a good way to communicate the message of cleanliness to maximum populace. - APP

Briefs

Syed Hasan appointed DC IR

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal board of Revenue (FBR) has appointed Syed Hasan Sardar, an officer of Inland Revenue (IR) Services as Deputy Commissioner-IR (BS-19 on regular basis), Large Taxpayers Office, Islamabad. According to FBR notification issued here Friday, he has relinquished the charge of the post Deputy Commissioner-IR (BS-18), Regional Tax Office, Islamabad. He has assumed the charge of the post. FBR also notified that Mohammad Farooq Azam Memon, a BS-20 officer of IR Service has appointed as Additional Commissioner-IR (BS-19 on regular basis), Regional Tax Office, Lahore. FBR appointed Abid Hussain Gulshan an officer of IR Service as Deputy Commissioner-IR (BS-19 on regular basis), Large Taxpayers Office, Multan. FBR also notified that Mohammad Hayat Khan, an officer of IR Service has appointed as Deputy Commissioner-IR (BS-19 on regular basis), Corporate Tax Office, Islamabad.

35 suspects held during search operation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Police on Friday conducted search operation in the jurisdiction of Mera abadi, a sub-urban area adjacent to G-11 sector, and arrested 35 suspects. During the operation some 500 persons were checked while 50 houses searched for criminals. Around 45 motorbikes without document were shifted to police station for interrogation, a news release said. SSP (Operations) Dr. Syed Mustafa Tanveer said that the purpose of these search operations was to heighten the security of Federal capital and to curb the crime. He further directed all police officials for high vigilance and monitoring against those involved in anti-social activities. The SSP emphasized that it is collective responsibility of every person of the society to remain alert against those involved in criminal activities in their surroundings and inform police for action against them. "Safety of life and property of the citizens is our prime responsibility and no stone would be left unturned in this regard" the SSP added.

24,637 confirmed Covid cases reported

DNA

RAWALPINDI: As many as 128 more COVID-19 positive cases were reported during the last 24 hours, lifting the toll of confirmed cases to 24,637 in the district. The total infected cases included 22,743 from Rawalpindi and 1894 from other districts so far. District Health Authority informed that among the new cases, 42 reported from Rawal Town, 25 from Potohar town, 35 from Rawalpindi Cantt, 7 from Taxila, 3 from Kotli Sattian, 4 Islamabad, 4 Chakwal, 2 Attock and one each from Kohat, Gujjar Khan and Murree. "Presently 159 coronavirus patients were admitted to various city facilities, counting 30 in Holy Family Hospital, 26 in Benazir Bhutto Hospital, 75 in Institute of Urology, 17 in Fauji Foundation Hospital, 8 in Hearts International Hospital and three in Akhtar Rukhsana Memorial hospital," the health authority report said. District Health Authority informed that so far 22,270 patients were discharged after recovery and 3037 were quarantined including 1736 at home and 1301 in isolation while two have died during the last 24 hours.

Youth leaders see CPEC promoting Pak-China people to people ties

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: In commemoration of 70 years of Pakistan-China diplomatic relations, the Pakistan-China Institute organized a webinar titled "Future leaders in shaping Pakistan-China relations". The conference was arranged under Friends of Silk Road initiative. The webinar was arranged to understand and facilitate bilateral youth exchanges under the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as it enters its second phase. This was the first-of-its-kind bilateral dialogue aimed at engaging youth of both countries. An illustrious panel of eight speakers, including young parliamentary leaders, Senator Qurratul Ain Marri and Senator Dr. Ananullah Khan, participated in the Webinar. The keynote speakers were divided into two sessions, which was moderated by Qianli Liu, while opening remarks were given by Mustafa Hyder Sayed, Executive Director Pakistan China Institute. The conference was divided into two sessions with different themes. The theme of Session one was "Pakistan-China Future Coopera-



tion: A Perspective of Young Leaders" whereas, Session two was themed as "People to People Connectivity: Role of media and culture". The event was moderated by Qianli Liu, Editor of Guanacha, who highlighted 70 successful years of Pakistan-China relationship in shaping future of the region. While talking about youth exchanges, she said that youth development doesn't distinguish on race, ethnicity, and

religion, and so must be taken forward. Mustafa Hyder Sayed, Executive Director of Pakistan-China Institute, in his opening remarks talked about how since Friends of Silk Road's establishment in February 2019, the platform has brought prominent members of political parties, business groups, students, civil society, members of academia and media together to enhance connectivity

among people. He highlighted that these exchanges are a fundamental pillar of Pakistan-China relations, as the bond between two countries is rooted in its peoples. Moreover, he highlighted the need for the youth to expand and enhance this beautiful, inherited bilateral strategic relationship for the next 70 years. While talking about CPEC, Mr. Sayed said that this mammoth project will engineer social equity

revolution in the country. Dr. Afnan Ullah Khan spoke on Big Data and Artificial Intelligence: How Pakistan can learn from China He quoted President Xi Jinping who had emphasized the need to promote the deepened integration of internet, big data, and artificial intelligence with the real economy, and added that Pakistan needs to learn from the Chinese model to harness big data for making better-informed

decisions, such as enhancing GDP growth. Bayazeed Kasi, Advisor to PTI on CPC Affairs spoke on Role of youth in building a community of shared future. Recounting his interactions with youth in Balochistan, Kasi highlighted that Pakistan's youth is more than eager to contribute to Pak-China iron brotherhood. However, he highlighted that as 65% of Pakistan's population consists of youth,

more opportunities need to be provided to them so they can contribute towards strengthening Pakistan-China relations. He highlighted that the academia needs to train and provide a platform to the youth so they are motivated to work for the welfare of people. He concluded by saying, "An untrained worker can never make a building and so we need to train our youth on the lines of contributing towards Pakistan-China." Dr. Lou Chunhao, Deputy Director and Associate Research Professor of the Institute of South Asian Studies at the China Institutes of Contemporary Relations, spoke on Pakistan-China Cooperation: Challenges & Opportunities. After congratulating the panel on 70 years of Pakistan-China relations, he highlighted four areas of opportunities for Pakistan and China. These were i) political commitment, which is a prerequisite; ii) economic cooperation, a solid foundation for Pak-China relations; iii) Strategic convergence, shared convergent ideas, and iv) Covid 19, against which he thinks Pakistan and China have put up a strong front.

Rupee extends gains against dollar

SHAHEEN HANIF

ISLAMABAD: The exchange rate of Pakistan rupee strengthened by 32 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading on Friday and closed at Rs152.27 as compared to the previous day's closing of Rs152.59. According to Forex Association of Pakistan, the buying and selling rates of dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs152.5 and Rs153.5 respectively. Similarly, the price of euro was appreciated by 47 paise and closed at Rs183.94 against the last day's trading of Rs183.47, the State Bank of Pakistan reported. The Japanese Yen remained unchanged to close at Rs1.39, whereas a decrease of 28 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of British Pound, which was traded at Rs212.02 as compared to its last closing of Rs212.30.



ISLAMABAD: Mr. Rashid Abdul Rehman Alzamar, Second Secretary of UAE Embassy in Islamabad, supervises distribution of food baskets provided by the UAE Red Crescent. — DNA

PARC inaugurates Business Incubation Centre

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: PATCO is working on its mandate to promote the Research based products of the agriculture scientists and to commercialize these technologies with the support of private sector on the public private partnership. In connection with this vision, the PARC has setup

"Business incubation Centre (BIC)" at Bard yard NARC. The Worthy Chairman PARC Dr. Muhammad Azeem Khan inaugurated the Aqua PARC plant & PARC Bakery processing Plant in the new established PARC-Business Incubation Centre (BIC). The Inauguration ceremony was attended by the high officials of the PARC, including Chairman

PARC, Member (Natural Resources) Dr. Sarfraz Ahmad, DG, NARC, Engr. Shamu ul Sibtain Shah and CEO PATCO Dr. Muhammad Ajjad, Secretary PATCO Dr. Tariq Sultan and other officials of the PARC and the Private sector Partners Mr. Waseem Abbas Aulakh. While addressing the audience the Chairman PARC emphasized that Agriculture

production should also be backed by the value addition of the various produce including the dehydration of the vegetables and fruits for the export purpose in the high end markets. Under the Umbrella of this Business Incubation Center several research based interventions would be launched. Recently, two research based initiatives have been started at the Business Incubation Centre (BIC).

The PARC Aqua Plant which is equipped with the Automatic water filtration and packaging plant, is installed in the Business Incubation Centre. This activity will provide high quality drinking water to the community and would be jointly run on the public private partnerships model. Similarly, for the production of quality bakery products, the PARC Food processing plant (PARC Bakery) has also been setup in the same Centre and this will run on the commercial basis in collaboration with the S&S solutions.



CDA to renovate Melody Food Park

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Capital Development Authority (CDA), in its drive 'Light up Islamabad', will renovate the Melody Food Park, located at sector G-6—the heart of Federal Capital. The food park will be transformed into a charming place by carrying out beautification work, a senior officer of the Capital Development Authority said while confirming the development on Friday. He said the civic agency's engineering wing would conduct a survey after Eid ul Fitr to ascertain the cost required for carrying out the civic and beautification work in the market. To a query, he said maintenance work was being done at the moment. The officer regretted that the food park's had not been renovated for the last ten years. Set up in 2002 in the G-6 Markaz, the park had remained a go-to destination for the food enthusiasts of the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, but it had lost its charm in the last couple of years due to unhygienic conditions, broken benches, overflowing sewers and damaged manholes. The market had remained in the charge of Metropolitan Corporation of Islamabad for the last several years as it was looking after major civic work of the city under its Mayor's watch. Recently, major civic departments had been brought under the Capital Development Authority's control so as to ensure better management of the city and welfare of its citizens.

IHC issues notices to PMC

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Friday served notices to Pakistan Medical Commission (PMC) another identical petition challenging the process of re-admissions of students in private medical colleges. The court also stopped the PMC to take any action against the current admitted medical students till next date and however, allowed it to continue its admission process. Justice Aamir Farooq of IHC heard the case filed by the medical students of a private medical college of Lahore challenging the re-admission process by the PMC.

It may be mentioned here that PMC had restarted a process of admissions in private medical colleges after irregularities were found in previous inductions. The PMC had sought applications again from the students across the country. The students of medical colleges had challenged the PMC decision before IHC.

3 members of robbery gang held

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Khanna Police has arrested three members of criminals involved in robbery and recovered snatched cash, mobile phone, motorbike and weapons from their possession. According to Police spokesman, SSP (Operations) Dr. Syed Mustafa Tanveer directed all police officials to ensure effective policing measures in the city and trace those involved in dacoity cases.

Following their directions, SP (Rural-Zone) Rana Abdul Wahab constituted a team under the supervision of ASP Usman Munair included Station House Officer Khanna Police Station. Sub-Inspector Kamal Khan along with other officials which successfully busted three members' dacoit gang involved in snatching valuables at gun point. They have been identified as Abdul Rehman, Muhammad Asif and Rehat Ali. Police team also recovered snatched cash, mobile phones, motorbike and illegal weapons from their possession. During the preliminary Investigation, they confessed their involvement in incidents of looting people in various areas of city. Separate cases have been registered in police stations against the nabbed persons and further investigation was underway from them. DIG (Operations) Afzal Ahmed Kausar and SSP (Operations) Dr. Syed Mustafa Tanveer has appreciated this overall performance and directed all police officials to ensure effective policing measures in their respective areas. — APP

PRCS celebrates World RCRC Day

Abrar ul Haq says commitment of PRCS staff and volunteers to help vulnerable communities amid Covid-19 pandemic is 'unstoppable'

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) is celebrating the World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day on Saturday to pay tribute to its staff and volunteers for their services towards communities amid highly challenging situations due to the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic. The World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day is celebrated on May 8 every year, and is dedicated to the staff and volunteers of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement who are always on the frontline to help vulnerable communities in the wake of any humanitarian crises. The Movement is comprised of

192 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies with 160,000 local branches and around 14 million volunteers worldwide, the ICRC, and the IFRC. It's estimated that one in every 636 people in the world is a Red Cross or Red Crescent volunteer. This year, the theme for World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day is #Unstoppable, referring to the 'unstoppable' commitment of the RCRC Movement towards communities.

"Since past year, Covid-19 has brought fear and disruption into the lives of people across Pakistan. This has changed the lives of people who were already affected by challenges like poverty, lack of health, education and civic facilities, etc. But one thing has not

changed: the support provided by the PRCS volunteers, who have been in communities every single day helping them with provision of first aid, timely supply of blood, food, safe drinking water, and awareness on critical healthcare issues amid Covid-19 pandemic.



Their commitment has been 'unstoppable' even in such a difficult times," PRCS Chairman Abrar ul Haq said in a statement on the occasion. Abrar ul Haq paid tributes to the volunteers and staff of the PRCS who, he said, have done a remarkable job, especially during the pandemic. He said the PRCS has taken plenty of initiatives to contain coronavirus as well as educate the masses about how to avoid contracting the infection since the outbreak early last year. He said among some larger-than-life initiatives taken by the PRCS are the launch of Corona Muhafiz Response Campaign, Agahi Helpline and the establishment of Red Crescent Corona Care Hospital in Rawalpindi, COVID19 Mass Vacci-

nation Center. "All this was made possible only due to dedication and commitment of the PRCS staff and volunteers," he said, and also paid tribute to the healthcare workers and personnel of law enforcement agencies who have been working day and night to serve the humanity across country. "PRCS volunteers and staff know that the power to change the world lies within people and communities. They work every day to make sure that communities have the knowledge and means to protect themselves, reduce their risks and live safely and with dignity," he further said. "Our commitment to make the world a safer and more peaceful place is unstoppable," he added.

Voting matters

PAKISTAN badly needs a system that can ensure transparency for balloting, and change the perception frequently encountered among voters and political parties that the ballot is manipulated or changed in any fashion. The government has put out a package for this purpose and hopes to present it before parliament. The opposition has however shown extreme reluctance to even talk to the government on the matter, saying that it lacks the trust required to engage in such dialogue. This makes the process extremely difficult and far more controversial than it ever should be. The chief component of the electoral package is electronic voting machines or EVMs.

In an interview on Geo, President ArifAlvi has explained the situation in far more detail than before. DrAlvi was one of the persons on a committee set up by the PTI in 2014 along with other parties, including the PML-N and JUI-F, to look into the possibility of electronic voting in Pakistan. The president has explained that the voting system proposed in Pakistan will in no way be linked to the internet, will require only a biometric test to ensure that the voter's identity is not in doubt, and along with the electronic counting of ballots through the press of a button, a paper receipt will also be issued which will automatically fall into a ballot box or be placed in it by the voter. Pakistan does badly need voting reforms. There is no doubt about this given the accusations and counter-accusations we have seen in Daska, Karachi and other places. However, it is also true that voting machines have run into problems in other countries. While in Brazil and some other nations they appear to operate smoothly, in India where they have been used since 1985, there has lately been some concern over accuracy and the ability to properly ensure the correct vote is counted and there is no unfair play. The government has to introduce some confidence-building measures with the opposition which is sceptical of the government's intentions, keeping in mind its recent track record. The beauty of democracy lies in its potential to resolve problems by discussion and debate. If all major political parties keep rejecting each other's proposals, democracy will be further emaciated. This withering away of already diminished democratic principles will not benefit any political party be it in the government or in the opposition.

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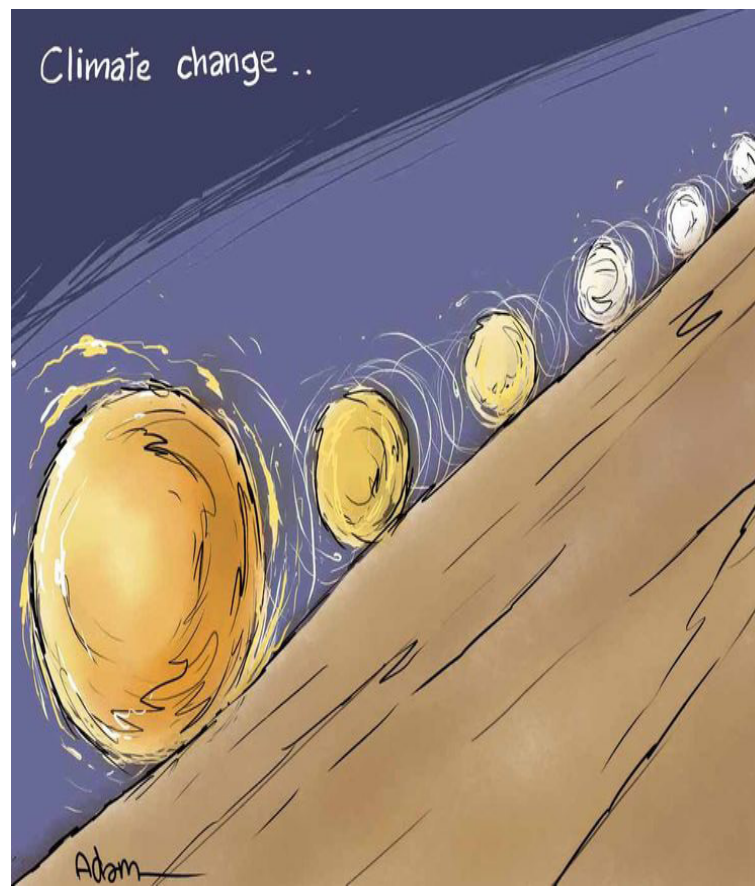
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The bare minimum

AT last, the efforts of the developing countries to waive the rules of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property (TRIPS) agreement have proved fruitful. In a major shift from its earlier stance, the Biden administration has come out in favour of waiving intellectual property protections for coronavirus vaccines. The decision of the Biden administration is both extraordinary and at the same time, the obvious decision to make in the midst of a pandemic. It can have a decisive impact on reducing the devastation caused by the virus.

This move allows for poor nations to manufacture the vaccine to protect their populations from the complications caused by the virus without having to wait in the long lines for big pharma companies to disburse whatever is left behind from sales to developed states. But even with the crisis humanity faces, the Biden Administration's change of tack is novel, as it sets a precedent for suspending the WTO's protections in times of global emergency. However, securing the support of the United States (US) is not the end of the battle. US support is not a guarantee that a waiver will be adopted. The European Union (EU) has to be taken on board to make changes to international intellectual property rules. Only a unanimous agreement, which is quite difficult but not impossible to reach, will allow the developing nations to start producing vaccines against the virus on their own.

The pharmaceutical industry will also resist any change to the TRIPS agreement. According to some of the leaders of the pharma industry, the US move will discourage the manufacturers from risk-taking and innovation. Such fears are misplaced. The US government has already clarified its stance that it is supporting the waiver only in the present situation that is extraordinary. In any case, an open-source vaccine allows for improvement through future variants and trials. The virus is quickly evolving, and so far we have been behind the curve. A global effort could lead to improved results.

It is time for the US and developing states such as Pakistan to pool their diplomatic resources and persuade other developed countries to join the call for suspension of intellectual property protections. At the same time, if developing countries are to innovate in the pharmaceutical industry, they must also respond to the criticisms of the international pharmaceutical industry. They must put stringent quality control and assurance measures in place. This is a long-term fight, and no tangible outcome will be seen at least in the next few months, but the sooner the mechanisms are put in place, the better.

Israel is trying hard to erase Jerusalem's Palestinians

Jalal Abukhater



In Jerusalem's Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, 500 Palestinians from 28 families are facing eviction from homes that have belonged to them for generations. In February, a court ruled that six Palestinian houses where 27 people live are to be handed over to Jewish settlers. Earlier this week, the court gave the Palestinian families four days to "reach an agreement" with the Jewish settlers, in which they would renounce that they own their homes in exchange for a delay of their eviction

FOR us Jerusalemites, it is frankly nauseating to hear commentators throw around clichés of "cycle of violence", call for a "return to calm", and generally engage in bothsidesism, whenever violence erupts. And in the past few weeks, we have heard them yet again. There are no two equal sides in Jerusalem. The problem with these statements is that they whitewash the fact that Jerusalem is a city under violent occupation and its occupier, Israel, has made its intent to slowly uproot the native population quite public.

In this sense, violence is a permanent feature of the lives of Jerusalem residents, even when outside observers perceive the streets to be "quiet". And it is not a matter of "both sides" de-escalating.

This past year had been particularly violent for Palestinian Jerusalemites. The impact of COVID-19 on our community is dwarfed by the effects of relentless harassment, arrests, home demolition and displacement by the Israeli authorities, ultimately aimed at the ethnic cleansing of the city. No one should be surprised at the amount of anger Palestinians hold towards the Israeli occupation authorities in the city. Their encroachments on the rights of our community are endless and are directly responsible for any uptick in violence.

Such is the case with this latest violent episode which began in the first days of the holy month of Ramadan.

Ramadan is a special time for Muslims all around the world, but in Jerusalem, the festive atmosphere is simply magical. It is a time when Jerusalemites - young and old - come together with friends and family, stroll through the streets of the city, buy sweets, drink coffee, and enjoy the light displays, impromptu music shows and street performances. You would not see Jerusalem come alive late at night during any other time of the year. It is a special experience that reflects the strong communal bonds among Palestinian Jerusalemites. And it is, of course, a favourite occasion for the Israeli authorities to harass Palestinians and spoil their festivities. This year was no different.

On April 12, a day before the start of Ramadan, I walked down the steps of Damascus Gate into the Old City to have my last hummus and falafel breakfast meal at Abu Shukri, before beginning the month-long fast. On my way, I noticed the first signs that the Israeli authorities were planning something. The space, benches and steps around the Damascus Gate plaza were blocked by metal barricades. Damascus Gate, with its three police garrisons erected in recent years, looked like a militarised encampment.

There was no reason to set up these barriers at a popular Ramadan hangout spot other than to upset the Palestinians. The decision to bar West Bank Palestinians from visiting Jerusalem to pray at Al-Aqsa, citing a lack of vaccinations as an excuse, further riled Jerusalemites.

The reaction was immediate: on the first day of Ramadan, April 13, a large number of young people gathered at the Damascus Gate to protest against the arbitrary actions of

the Israeli occupier. Over the following days, the protests grew, as Israeli provocations continued. On April 22, hundreds of extremist Jews marched on the old city under the protection of the Israeli police, chanting "Death to Arabs!" Palestinian youth were relentless in their resistance.

Thirteen days into Ramadan, on April 25, the barricades fell. I arrived a little after 9pm that night, around the time when people were beginning to gather after Taraweeh prayers. Large crowds of Palestinians marched, determined to take back the occupied Damascus Gate. The Israeli police withdrew and the youth then forced the removal of all barricades and poured into the space. Chanting, singing and dancing, we reasserted our presence on our land.

The "victory" was bittersweet, however. For almost two weeks, Palestinian youth were subjected to brutal suppression, getting beaten up, attacked with stun grenades and foul-smelling "skunk" water cannon, and detained. And while foreign media paid attention to these dramatic images, it ignored completely Israel's other sustained campaigns of brutality against Jerusalemites.

While Palestinian youth were resisting encroachment on their public spaces, some Jerusalemites were facing brutal dispossession of their homes.

In Jerusalem's Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, 500 Palestinians from 28 families are facing eviction from homes that have belonged to them for generations. In February, a court ruled that six Palestinian houses where 27 people live are to be handed over to Jewish settlers. Earlier this week, the court gave the Palestinian families four days to "reach an agreement" with the Jewish settlers, in which they would renounce that they own their homes in exchange for a delay of their eviction.

The appalling absurdity of the court decision is a prime example of Israel's brutal occupation and ethnic cleansing policies. In Israeli apartheid courts, there is no justice for Palestinians. More than 200 families in East Jerusalem are at risk of eviction due to similar court cases filed against them. The Palestinian families have vowed to resist. In one video that went viral prior to the court hearing, Sheikh Jarrah resident Muna al-Kurd is seen confronting a settler about stealing Palestinian homes, in which he replies with a heavy American accent "If I don't steal it, someone else will." Half of al-Kurd's home had been taken over by Jewish settlers in 2009.

Home demolitions are another brutal Israeli practice to have continued over the past year, even amid the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since March 2020, more than 163 homes and structures were demolished in East Jerusalem, displacing 359 Palestinians, including 167 children.

In February, the Jerusalem Municipality requested the activation of demolition orders against some 70 Palestinian homes in the al-Bustan area of Silwanneighbourhood, adjacent to the Old City of Jerusalem. The Israeli occupied city plans to build an archaeological park there. If carried out, the demolitions would uproot some 1,500 Palestinians.

Jabal al-Mukaber, a neighbourhood of Jerusalem most affected by demolitions over the past three years, has seen homes demolished and families displaced to make way for a planned ring road that is supposed to connect Israeli settlements in the southern West Bank to Jerusalem. In June 2020 alone, 23 buildings belonging to Palestinians were demolished, resulting in the displacement of 57 people, including 34 children.

In al-Walaja, seven buildings were destroyed and families displaced without warning to make space for the establishment of an Israeli national park. Homes were also demolished in the Sur Bahir area because the buildings were in a "buffer zone", arbitrarily determined by Israeli authorities. Israeli violence does not stop at evictions and home demolitions. It also extends into the political sphere, where the Israeli authorities continue to deny the Jerusalemitic Palestinians their political rights. They regularly attack and arrest Palestinians engaged in political activities or attempting to represent political parties; even Palestinian Authority (PA) officials are harassed.

In recent days, the Israeli government unequivocally indicated that it would not allow the Palestinian legislative elections, originally scheduled for May 22, to be also held in East Jerusalem, where nearly 400,000 Palestinians live. Israeli police regularly raided events that promoted the Palestinian elections and arrested Palestinian parliamentary candidates. As a result, PA President Mahmoud Abbas officially postponed the planned elections, citing Israel's outright refusal for the election process to be held in East Jerusalem.

By contrast, Israelis living in Jerusalem have been free to vote four times in the past two years, many of them casting a ballot for the same Jewish extremists who recently were chanting "Death to Arabs!" in our streets.

Jerusalem may have disappeared from the news for now, but the occupiers have not left us alone. The colonial violence has not gone away. On Thursday, Palestinian families in Sheikh Jarrah expect to be evicted from their homes by force, to be immediately replaced by Jewish settlers.

Over the weekend is Laylat al-Qadr, the one night of Ramadan where Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa mosque is the busiest, which also coincides with what Israelis call "Jerusalem Day", the day Israel occupied East Jerusalem. Israelis mark that day by marching through our streets and raiding Al-Aqsa, fully protected by the Israeli police, who put us under strict lockdown. But we will not passively watch on.

Israel does its best to make life for Jerusalem's Palestinians a misery and a constant struggle. It does everything to make us disappear. But we will not. Every day, we face police brutality, arrests, home evictions and demolitions, impoverishment and a denial of basic human rights. The occupier's violence is a permanent feature of our lives.

But we are determined to fight for our city and remain, no matter what Israel does in its tireless effort to erase us.

- Courtesy: Al Jazeera

Myanmar military outmaneuvers ASEAN neighbors

Dr. Azeem Ibrahim



ASEAN has had, since its inception, a policy of noninterference in the domestic affairs of its member countries. It has historically gone to great lengths to uphold this policy. Until, that is, the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar over the past decade forced ASEAN members, both outside of the official structures of the bloc's bureaucracy

THE Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is trying to play peacemaker in the ongoing dispute between the people of Myanmar and their democratically elected representatives on the one side, and the Myanmar military, the Tatmadaw, which took power in a coup on Feb. 1, on the other. Their efforts so far have been a stark failure.

ASEAN has had, since its inception, a policy of noninterference in the domestic affairs of its member countries. It has historically gone to great lengths to uphold this policy. Until, that is, the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar over the past decade forced ASEAN members, both outside of the official structures of the bloc's bureaucracy and also within it, to increasingly pressure Myanmar on the issue. This is not least because most ASEAN member countries were affected by the waves of refugees fleeing Myanmar as the country cracked down ever more intensely on this long-marginalized group of people.

Since the February coup, ASEAN members will have rightly feared fresh violence and instability in the country, including a ratcheting up of long-simmering ethnic conflicts that could create fresh refugee outflows from the country. Self-interest, as much as humanitarian concern, forced them to try to bring the Tatmadaw to the negotiation table with the pro-democracy protesters and the previously elected representatives of the people of Myanmar.

At first, there was some hope that pressure from ASEAN might move the dial on the internal dynamics of the growing conflict over the coup in Myanmar. The leaders of the Tatmadaw dutifully attended last month's peace conference organized by ASEAN and played the part of a responsible party to the discussions. But then, as soon as he got back to Myanmar, junta chief Min Aung Hlaing said that the proposal that came out of those discussions would only be "positively considered" after the country's "stability" is secured.

In other words, the stance of the Tatmadaw has not changed at all and it will not budge on any issue until the protesters give up and go home. And, in the unlikely scenario that the protesters would be naive enough to do so, the Tatmadaw has not in fact committed to taking any action beyond "considering" the peace proposals.

On the other hand, ASEAN met with Aung Hlaing as the leader and representative of Myanmar, which is to say that the junta can claim that the summit legitimized its position, at least implicitly. It is difficult to see how much weight such a claim would carry, and who might be swayed by it, but it nevertheless looks like the ASEAN countries have been played. The Tatmadaw did not attend the summit to engage with the peace process proposed by the hosts. It did so to perform the part of a legitimate government of a member state in an internationally recognized forum.

But perhaps the other ASEAN countries can learn from this slap in the face.

They are not dealing with honest actors, acting in good faith. And when words fail, action is the only recourse left. Given their historical commitment to noninterference, it is unlikely that the ASEAN club will move swiftly and forcefully in retaliation. But as instability persists in Myanmar, and as the likelihood of an all-out civil war in the country grows, ASEAN members will increasingly feel the pressure to act.

As to what they can do: They can sanction the junta as illegitimate and refuse any further diplomatic contact with it; they can boot Myanmar out of the ASEAN club altogether; they can impose trade embargoes; and they can offer various degrees of support to the protesters and the recently announced Government of National Unity, from diplomatic to financial and even pledging to back it in any military confrontation should things come to that.

Such a clear statement of intent from the ASEAN countries would be most helpful in steering the military away from the path of certain confrontation.

But, alas, given the default diplomatic stance of these countries, this is very unlikely to happen. Things will thus likely get worse in Myanmar before they get better.

- Courtesy: Arab News

Briefs

Cutting CH4
key to slowing
global
warming

DNA

NEW YORK: A new U.N. report shows that human-caused emissions of the powerful greenhouse gas methane can be reduced by up to 45 per cent this decade and that would avoid almost 0.3°C of global warming by 2045.

That would put the Paris climate agreement's goal of limiting temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius within reach, according to the report. The Global Methane Assessment outlines the benefits of mitigating methane, a key ingredient in smog, which include preventing some 260,000 premature deaths and 775,000 asthma-related hospital visits annually, as well as 25 million tonnes in crop losses. The study is the work of the Climate and Clean Air Coalition (CCAC), a global partnership of governments and non-State partners, and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP).

"Cutting methane is the strongest lever we have to slow climate change over the next 25 years and complements necessary efforts to reduce carbon dioxide. The benefits to society, economics, and the environment are numerous and far outweigh the cost", Inger Andersen, the UNEP Executive Director, said in a statement.

Opposition
forces leave
Somali capital

MOGADISHU: Opposition fighters withdrew from the Somali capital on Friday, ending a tense standoff with pro-government troops after a dispute over delayed elections triggered the country's worst political violence in years. Hundreds of heavily-armed gunmen pulled out of strongholds in Mogadishu they had occupied since late April, when a long-running political crisis turned deadly with clashes erupting between rival factions of the security forces. Under a deal reached by the warring sides this week, opposition troops began leaving their positions in the capital, and key roads sealed off with sandbags and machine guns were opened once more. "We are sending our forces back to the frontline position to defend the country and its people," said Mahad Salad, an opposition lawmaker, at a camp outside Mogadishu where troops assembled after pulling out of the city. Mogadishu had been on edge since February, when President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed's term ended before elections were held, and protesters took to the streets against his rule.

But a resolution in April to extend his mandate by two years split the country's fragile security forces along all-important clan lines. Soldiers loyal to influential opposition leaders began pouring into the capital, where clashes broke out with pro-government troops, killing three. - APP

Pfizer,
BioNTech
seek full US
approval

NEW YORK: Pfizer and BioNTech said Friday they were launching an application requesting full US regulatory approval for their game-changing Covid-19 vaccine for individuals 16 years and older.

The two pharma companies plan to submit data in support of the application "on a rolling basis over the coming weeks" to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), they said in a press release. The FDA approved the vaccine in December for emergency use, a designation permitted during public health emergencies. Since then, more than 170 million doses of the vaccine have been delivered in the United States. The companies are now seeking a "Biologics License Application" for permanent regulatory approval, which "requires longer-term follow-up data for acceptance and approval," the companies said. The information will include data on the vaccine efficacy and safety profile up to six months after the second dose in a phase-three clinical trial. - APP

France, Canada must urge
Armenia to observe its duties

Abdullayeva stressed that four Azerbaijani servicemen were killed and a civilian wounded in a terror attack committed by those Armenian servicemen

DNA

BAKU: Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Leyla Abdullayeva has called on France and Canada to urge Armenia to observe its international obligations and refrain from acts undermining regional peace, the ministry reported on May 7. Abdullayeva made the remarks in response to statements from the Canadian and French foreign ministries welcoming the release of three Armenian detainees and calling for other detainees' release.

"If France and Canada want to demonstrate not a one-sided, but objective approach to the issue, then they will call Armenia for observing its obligations under international humanitarian law and refraining from activities and actions

that impede lasting peace in the region. Otherwise, this will seriously damage confidence in both countries in Azerbaijani society," she said. Abdullayeva said that Armenia still continues not to fulfill its obligations under international humanitarian law and the Karabakh peace deal.

"We bring to the attention of both countries' foreign ministries that Armenia still does not fulfill its obligations under international humanitarian law, as well as its obligations under tripartite statements [signed in November 2020 and January 2021]. Probably, both countries have information that Armenia has not yet provided information on about 4,000 Azerbaijanis who went missing during the 1991-94 war and refused to provide maps of landmines buried in the liberated



areas," Abdullayeva said. The spokesperson reminded that the release of the aforesaid detainees is not

the first humane step by Azerbaijan and stressed that the country handed over Armenian prisoners

even during the hostilities in autumn 2020.

"After the cessation of hostilities, more than 70 Armenian prisoners were returned to the opposite side. In exchange for this, Armenia struck a blow to the fragile peace achieved with great difficulty and sent its troops into Azerbaijan almost 20 days after the cessation of operations," she said.

Abdullayeva stressed that four Azerbaijani servicemen were killed and a civilian wounded in a terror attack committed by those Armenian servicemen.

It should be noted that earlier US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken made a similar welcoming statement on his official Twitter account, calling on "both parties to fully and expeditiously complete the exchange process for all prisoners, detainees, and remains, and to respect

their obligations to ensure the humane treatment of detainees".

The hostilities between Azerbaijan and Armenia resumed after that latter started firing at Azerbaijani civilians and military positions starting September 27, 2020. The war ended on November 10 with the signing of a trilateral peace deal by the Azerbaijani, Russian and Armenian leaders.

The peace agreement stipulated the return of Azerbaijan's Armenian-occupied Kalbajar, Aghdam and Lachin regions. Before the signing of the deal, the Azerbaijani Army had liberated around 300 villages, settlements, city centres and historic Shusha city. The signed agreement obliged Armenia to withdraw its troops from the Azerbaijani lands that it has occupied since the early 1990s.



TOKYO: Ambassador Imtiaz Ahmad receives 130,000 rapid testing kits for Covid-19 from a Japanese healthcare company Fujirebio, after NCOC's approval at Embassy of Pakistan in Tokyo. - DNA

PSL 6 remaining
matches likely in UAE

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has decided to shift the remaining matches of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) season six from Karachi to United Arab Emirates (UAE). The decision was finalized in the meeting between PCB and franchises. PCB has also approached Emirates Cricket Board (ECB) and has sent a letter in this regard. PCB has requested the availability of stadiums and hotels on the proposed dates for the league. Stadiums in Abu Dhabi and Dubai were brought under consideration in the meeting for PSL 6 reminder.

France
warns
Lebanon's
leaders

FOREIGN DESK

PARIS: France's top diplomat has threatened Lebanon with more sanctions to prevent what he described as a "collective suicide" organised by members of the country's ruling political class. Lebanon's leaders had promised reform in the

aftermath of a deadly explosion at Beirut port last year but, nine months on, they have yet to form a government. French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, whose country has spearheaded international efforts to assist Lebanon's moribund economy, said on Friday that there was no sign of a breakthrough. "It is indeed urgent to find a way out of the political deadlock," he told reporters just before wrapping up a two-day visit to Beirut. "To this day, my observation is that the political players have not lived up to their responsibilities."

KGC urges WHO, UN to ask India to
release Kashmiri political prisoners

DNA

NEW YORK: Kashmir Global Council (KGC), a US based Kashmiri political advocacy group has urged upon the WHO and UN to ask Indian government to release Kashmiri political prisoners from overcrowded Indian jails to prevent the spread of Covid-19, stop the Amarnath religious pilgrimage in the Indian occupied Jammu & Kashmir, and comply with all best practices recommended by the WHO.

In a letter added to the UN Secretary General António

Guterres and Mr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, President, Kashmir Global Council Ferooz Siddiqi urged both of them to intervene and pay close attention to the region of Jammu & Kashmir as the situation of the global COVID-19 pandemic deteriorates drastically throughout India. Indian government must act seriously and without expediency asked immediately to comply with the duties that it has under international law to protect the people of Jammu & Kashmir", Siddiqi said. He continued in his letter addressed to the UN Secretary General as saying "

as the world is watching with sadness and horror the new wave of Covid-19 unfold across India, your offices must ask the Indian government to urgently take all measures to protect the vulnerable people of Jammu & Kashmir who are living in one of the most militarized zones in the world. The central government in India has been directly ruling Jammu & Kashmir since 2018 when it dismissed the local government. Subsequently in 2019, India took away the region's statehood and imposed Indian laws. In our letter to your offices last year (dated 20 March

2020), we made you aware of the severe restrictions on mobile internet communications that India had imposed during the peak of the pandemic contrary to WHO guidelines (from 17 March 2020 WHO Situation Report) recommending all countries to allow its citizens to be informed so that they can take appropriate measures to protect themselves. Since 2019, India has detained hundreds of Kashmiri political prisoners under its draconian laws that allow arbitrary detention. Many Kashmiri political activists are still languishing in jails throughout India.

Japan extends state of emergency

TOKYO: Japan on Friday extended a state of emergency in four prefectures while declaring it in two more prefectures in a bid to stem the spread of COVID-19. The state of emergency was set to end on Tuesday. However, Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga declared that the COVID-19 emergency had been extended until May 31, Kyodo News reported. On April 25, Japan declared the COVID-19 emergency in the capital Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto, and Hyogo prefectures. Suga said that the emergency would be expanded to Aichi and Fukuoka prefectures. Japan has declared the emergency for the third time since the beginning of the pandemic. The state of emergency empowers the regional governments to impose stricter restrictions on the movement of people and limit working hours at public places. The extension of emergency comes as Japan readies to host the world's biggest games, the Tokyo Olympics, from mid-July. The games were scheduled for 2020 but delayed due to a raging virus. The situation also forced International Olympic Committee (IOC) officials to rethink their visit to Japan. Seiko Hashimoto, head of the Japanese organizing body of the Tokyo Olympics, told a news conference on Friday that it is "very difficult" for the IOC Chief Thomas Bach to visit Japan in mid-May. "The situation is not favorable for him to visit Japan given that Tokyo has been under a state of emergency since late last month and the measure is set to be extended later Friday to May 31," Hashimoto said. - DNA



Israel 'not a country, but a terrorist base'

Khamenei also blasted Israel's normalisation of ties with "some weak Arab governments" during the past year as attempts to undermine the Israeli "nightmare of Muslim unity". The UAE, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan have all normalised ties with Israel in recent months under US-brokered deals

TEHRAN: Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Friday called Israel "not a country, but a terrorist base" during a speech on Al-Quds Day, an annual show of solidarity with the Palestinians. Tensions have been running high between the two arch-enemies following a series of maritime attacks, an explosion at an Iranian nuclear facility and the assassination of a top nuclear scientist that Tehran blamed on Israel. The Islamic republic does not recognise the Jewish state, and supporting the Palestinian cause, as well as armed groups such as Hamas and Lebanon's Hezbollah, has been a pillar of Iran's foreign policy since its 1979 revolution.

"Israel is not a country, but a terrorist base against the nation of Palestine and other Muslim nations," Khamenei said in live televised remarks. "Fighting this despot regime is fighting oppression and terrorism, and (doing so) is everyone's duty," he added. Khamenei also blasted Israel's normalisation of ties with "some weak Arab governments" during the past year as attempts to undermine the Israeli "nightmare of Muslim unity". The United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan have all normalised ties with Israel in recent months under US-brokered deals. "I say this decisively; these attempts will reach nowhere," he said, calling on



Palestinians to continue their resistance and for Muslim governments to support them. "The decline of the enemy Zionist regime has begun and will not stop." Al-Quds Day has been held annually on the last Friday of the Muslim holy fasting month of Ramadan since

the early days of Iran's Islamic revolution. This year state-sponsored nationwide rallies were absent due to Covid-19 restrictions. But state TV showed the usual burning of flags by small groups of demonstrators who it said had come out "spontaneously" for

the occasion, while an AFP journalist said protesters also rallied on motorbikes in the capital Tehran. Khamenei's comments came amid an uptick in violence in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and as tensions have soared in annexed east Jerusalem over an eviction threat hanging over four Palestinian families. Israeli security forces killed two Palestinians and critically wounded a third after they opened fire on a West Bank base on Friday. Police and protesters have also clashed in recent days in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of east Jerusalem, fuelled by a years-long land dispute between Palestinian refugees and Jewish settlers. The latest violence came as

Palestinian Muslims flocked to the Al-Aqsa mosque compound in east Jerusalem for the last Friday prayers of Ramadan. The United Nations called on Israel to end any forced evictions in Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem, warning that its actions could amount to "war crimes". In 2018, Khamenei reiterated Tehran's position that Israel is a "malignant cancerous tumour" that must "be removed and eradicated", and Iranian generals have repeatedly threatened to destroy Tel Aviv and Haifa if Israel were to attack the Islamic republic. But the official stance has been that Israel will cease to exist over its own "arrogance" rather than a direct attack by Iran. - APP

Rita Sherpa
claims 25th
Everest
ascent

KATHMANDU: Nepali climber Kami Rita Sherpa on Friday reached the summit of Mount Everest for the 25th time, breaking his own record for the most summits of the highest mountain in the world.

Sherpa was part of a 12-member team fixing the ropes to the summit, the first of hundreds of climbers expected to reach the top of Everest in coming weeks. "Kami Rita has made a new record with his 25th summit," Mingma Sherpa of Seven Summit Treks, an expedition organiser, told AFP. A guide for more than two decades, Sherpa first summited the 8,848-metre (29,029-foot) peak in 1994 when working for a commercial expedition.

Since then, he has climbed Everest almost every year. "It isn't about breaking records... My aim was to celebrate my silver jubilee by climbing 25 times in 2020 at the age of 50, but Covid didn't let that happen. So this year I will make my dream come true," Sherpa told AFP at the base camp before heading up. The accomplished climber has also conquered other challenging 8,000-metre peaks including the world's second-highest mountain, K2 in Pakistan. - APP

UK 'open'
to hosting
Champions
League final

LONDON: Britain on Friday said it was willing to step in to host the Champions League football final, after the government placed Turkey on a coronavirus travel red list. Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said the UK was "very open to hosting the final round" of the competition, which is due to take place between English clubs Manchester City and Chelsea in Istanbul on May 29.

The English Football Association were in talks with European football's governing body UEFA already, he said, but added the choice of venue for the final was a decision for UEFA. Shapps said Chelsea and City supporters should not travel to Istanbul, telling a Downing Street press conference: "I'm afraid we are having to put Turkey on the red list and this will have a number of ramifications. - APP

'CL final not
in my hand'

LONDON: Pep Guardiola says Manchester City's Premier League clash with Chelsea on Saturday will not have any bearing on the Champions League final between the two sides later this month.

City host Thomas Tuchel's Blues in the English top-flight knowing that victory will secure their third Premier League title in four years. The two teams, who also met in the FA Cup semi-finals last month, when Chelsea prevailed, will meet again in European club football's showpiece match in Istanbul on May 29.

But Guardiola said the fixtures were not connected. "If we play the final in one week, six days, it could be but after tomorrow we have 21-22 days, so many things can happen," he said. "We just focus. Of course it is the opponent we are going to face in the final but the Premier League is so important for itself, not thinking in any other competition. "There is not one thought about the final of the Champions League because we don't have the Premier League in our hands. I'm so cautious. I think if you don't have it, you don't talk about it.

Nadal
stunned
by Zverev

MADRID: Rafael Nadal lost 6-4, 6-4 to Germany's Alexander Zverev in the Madrid Open quarter-finals on Friday, casting doubts over the Spaniard's form ahead of this month's French Open. Nadal has now fallen early in two clay-court Masters tournaments ahead of the Grand Slam in Paris, after going out in the Monte Carlo quarter-finals last month before winning in Barcelona. World number two Nadal will be bidding for a 14th Roland Garros title and record-setting 21st major in the French capital. - APP

Briefs

EMA studying new virus treatment

WEB DESK

BRUSSELS: The European Medicines Agency says it has begun an accelerated authorisation process for an experimental coronavirus treatment made by GlaxoSmithKline and Vir Bio-Technology.

In a statement on Friday, the EU drug regulator said it had started a rolling review of sotrovimab, based on early results from an ongoing study into whether the treatment can prevent hospitalisation or death in people who don't yet have severe Covid-19. But EMA said it had not yet received the complete data and cautioned that "it is too early to draw any conclusions about the benefit-risk balance of the medication." Although the EMA has given the green light to four vaccines, there are few licensed treatments for the coronavirus, especially any that might prevent people with mild Covid-19 from progressing to severe disease.

Doctors in Nepal warn of major crisis

DNA

KATMANDU: Across the border from a devastating surge in India, doctors in Nepal have warned of a major crisis as daily coronavirus cases hit a record and hospitals were running out of beds and oxygen.

Nepal reported 9,070 new confirmed cases on Thursday, compared to 298 a month ago.

The number of fatalities also reached its highest with 58 on Wednesday and 54 on Thursday, for a total of 3,529. "Right now there are no beds available today in any hospital that is treating Covid patients," said Dr. Jyotindra Sharma, chief of Hospital for Advanced Medicine & Surgery in Kathmandu. "Even if any beds were made available, there is a huge scarcity of oxygen and we are not at the peak of this crisis."

Johnson's party sweeps to victory

FOREIGN DESK

LONDON: Britain's ruling Conservative Party won a new seat in parliament on Friday, sweeping aside the incumbent Labour Party with a victory in the northern English town of Hartlepool that tightens its grip on traditional Labour-voting areas. Conservative candidate Jill Mortimer beat the Labour candidate by 15,529 votes to 8,589, securing what less than a decade ago would have been seen as an impossible feat of dislodging the main opposition Labour Party from one of its heartland seats. The overwhelming victory, which gives Prime Minister Boris Johnson an even larger majority in parliament, increases pressure on Labour leader Keir Starmer, who has faced criticism for not fulfilling his pledge to revive the party's fortunes after a 2019 election disaster.

"There's no hiding from the fact this is a shattering result for Labour, absolutely shattering," Labour lawmaker Steve Reed, a member of Starmer's top team, told the BBC. "It tells us that the pace of change in the Labour Party has not been fast enough.

We need to quicken it up." The Conservatives described it as an historic day. The so-called by-election, which takes place outside the normal parliamentary election cycle, was triggered by the resignation of a Labour lawmaker in March, and is one of dozens of votes which took place on Thursday. Election analysts said it was the biggest swing of votes to the governing party at a by-election since World War Two. "It's quite a spectacular turnaround in a seat that Labour should really have saved and defended," politics professor Michael Thrasher told Sky News.

Azerbaijan, Pakistan mull trade, investment ties

DNA

BAKU: Azerbaijan's Center for Analysis of Economic Reforms and Communication and Pakistani Ambassador have discussed trade and investment relations between the two countries. During the meeting, the center's Executive Director Vusal Gasimli briefed Ambassador Bilal Hayee on the reforms carried out in the country, the application of strategic management, and monitoring and evaluating activities carried out by the Center.

He also provided information on the Center's projects like Azexport.az, EnterpriseAzerbaijan.com, Digital Trade Hub, Azranking.az, and Export Support Center "Single Window". Gasimli stressed that as a result of the carried re-



forms, Azerbaijan retained its position as a reformer country with high results in the World Bank's Doing Business report. In turn, the ambassador

expressed satisfaction with the level of the relations and growing strategic cooperation between the two brotherly countries. He stressed the importance of

expanding economic ties, especially trade relations. He noted that further expansion of trade and investment cooperation between Azerbaijan and Pakistan

will make a positive contribution to the economic development of the two countries. Additionally, the parties discussed establishing cooper-

ation between the Center and relevant Pakistani institutions to conduct joint research.

It should be noted that Azerbaijan is among the top ten most reformer countries in the world, according to the World Bank Doing Business report. As a result of an independent study conducted by the World Bank Internal Audit, Azerbaijan's position in the Doing Business 2020 report improved by 6 steps, thus the country secured its place among the top ten reformer countries in the world.

The trade turnover between Azerbaijan and Pakistan amounted to \$13.2 million in 2020, with export amounting to \$1.6 million and import to \$11.6 million. In addition, the trade turnover between the two countries amounted to \$3.1 million in the first quarter of 2021.

Maldives ex-President Nasheed 'critical' after bomb blast

FOREIGN DESK

MALE: Mohamed Nasheed, the former Maldives president and current speaker of parliament who was wounded in a bomb attack, was in "critical condition" after undergoing multiple surgeries, doctors said.

The 53-year-old had just left his house in the capital, Male, and was about to get into his car late on Thursday when a bomb attached to a motorbike exploded. Residents said the blast was heard across the city.

Nasheed sustained several wounds in the blast and was taken to ADK Hospital where he underwent multiple "successful" surgeries. On Friday afternoon, the hospital said Nasheed had undergone "a successful final, critical, life-saving procedure".

"Over the course of past 16 hours he had life-saving surgery on injuries to his head, chest, abdomen and limbs. He remains in a critical condition in intensive care," it wrote on Twitter. President Nasheed underwent a successful final, critical, life-saving procedure this afternoon. Over the



course of past 16 hours he had life-saving surgery on injuries to his head, chest, abdomen and limbs. He remains in a critical condition in intensive care. Nasheed's brother, Nazim Sattar, had tweeted earlier on Friday: "They have finished the surgery and now it's the long road to recovery." According to the hospital, Nasheed was treated by a multi-specialty medical team after he was brought in around 8:30pm on Friday. The need for further surgeries was identified during an assessment of his wounds, it added. Three of Nasheed's military

bodyguards along with two bystanders - a 41-year-old Maldivian man and 70-year-old British man - also sustained minor injuries, according to police, which called the bomb blast a "deliberate act of terror". Police commissioner Mohamed Hameed said there have been no arrests, but authorities are trying to identify "four persons of interest" who were "noticed due to suspicious behaviour at the crime scene". President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih on Thursday went to the hospital where Nasheed, a close ally, was being treated and called an emergency meeting follow-

ing the attack. Solih said on Friday the explosion was "an attack on democracy" and the Maldives' tourism-dependent economy, and announced that Australian federal police investigators will arrive on Saturday to assist an investigation.

Meanwhile, many Maldivian officials and citizens took to social media to condemn the attack and wish Nasheed a speedy recovery.

Neighbouring India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar also expressed deep concern at the attack and said Nasheed "will never be intimidated". "This is very significant, not just in terms of scale but also in terms of target," Michael Kugelman, deputy director of the Asia Program and senior associate for South Asia at the Wilson Center, told Al Jazeera.

"The fact that you have a former president who is still a very prominent political figure and a very prominent democratic leader in a region that is now marked by strongmen and hardline nationalists ... is quite a big deal," Kugelman said.

Pentagon deploys extra warplanes amid pullout

FOREIGN DESK

WASHINGTON: The US military is sending additional warplanes to Afghanistan to protect American and NATO coalition forces, the US Department of Defense said Thursday.

President Joe Biden has announced the departure of all American troops from Afghanistan by September 11, with NATO allies also beginning withdrawal operations from the Central Asian nation.

Pentagon Joint Chiefs Chairman Mark Milley said during a press conference that six B-52 bombers and 12 F-18 fighters have been ordered to provide air support for departing troops. Milley said "there have been no attacks against US and coalition forces" but noted that Taliban insurgents carry out 80 to 120 attacks every day against Afghan government troops. Milley characterized Afghan security forces as "cohesive" and said the US is looking at options to help Afghan troops maintain security in the country. "They're fighting for their

own country now, so it's not a foregone conclusion, in my professional military estimate that the Taliban automatically wins and Kabul falls, or any of those kinds of dire protections," Milley said of Afghan forces. "That's not a foregone conclusion. There's a significant military capability in the Afghan government. We have to see how this plays out."

Milley said the US military may train Afghan troops in another country. He also said the Pentagon is looking at additional support for the Afghan air force, which is dependent on foreign technicians and contractors who are now leaving the country. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, who was also present at the conference, said the current US drawdown is "going according to plan." At the same time, he said it "will be a challenge" for the Afghan forces to hold off Taliban insurgents after US forces leave. There are about 2,500 US troops in Afghanistan, but this figure rises to 3,300 if special operation forces are included, the Pentagon said.

Lukashenko slams 'dumb' Germany torture trial

FOREIGN DESK

BELARUS: Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko has hit back at a criminal complaint filed against him in a German court.

Lukashenko said Friday that the "heirs of fascism" were in no position to judge him, in reference to Germany's Nazi past. "I do not reproach them. But they are the heirs of the generations who unleashed that war," Lukashenko said, referring to World War II. "It's a dumb move." The official Belta news agency quoted Belarus' president two days before the country commemorates the Soviet Union's victory over Nazi Germany. Four German lawyers submitted a complaint against Lukashenko and the security apparatus on behalf

of 10 Belarusian plaintiffs on Wednesday. The lawyers sent the complaint to Germany's Federal Public Prosecutor's Office in the southwestern city of Karlsruhe, home to the country's top courts. The lawyers alleged that their clients were victims of crimes against humanity, including torture.

This was alleged to have taken place amid the Belarusian government's crackdown on nationwide anti-government protests in 2020. The plaintiffs suffered physical abuse, deprivation of food and sleep, humiliation and degradation, according to the lawyers. The allegations corroborate with reports from the United Nations Human Rights Council. It said it received numerous accounts of torture, abductions, arbitrary expulsions and disappearances in Belarus during the protests.



KABUL: Pakistan ambassador to Afghanistan Mansoor Ahmad Khan hosts farewell dinner to ongoing Turkish Ambassador to Afghanistan Oguzhan Ertugrul. - DNA

Bill against China's imports stirs debate in Australia

Senator Rex Patrick tabled a bill seeking to amend the Australian Customs Act to bar the import of goods from Xinjiang and other regions of China where the products are prepared by alleged forced labour

DNA

WASHINGTON: With a move of tabling a bill by an independent Senator seeking a ban on imports from China, a debate has been started whether the Morrison administration would follow the Western countries or it will still be willing to work with Chinese Government to ease diplomatic dilemma.

Last week, Senator Rex Patrick tabled a bill seeking to amend the Australian Customs Act to bar the import of goods from Xinjiang and other regions of China where the products are prepared by alleged forced labour. To stop the human rights violations and other atrocities

committed by the Chinese government, the senator demanded of the Australian government to pass the bill that specifically targets the supply chains of Chinese cotton production lines.

Western countries and mainly the United States believe that the forced labour in Uyghur Muslims majority populated Xinjiang region has full support of the government, a claim that China continuously negates. The Chinese government has denied the claims of forced labour and human rights abuses in Xinjiang. China has reportedly established scores of forced labour camps along with indoctrination centres in the Xinjiang region, which some Uyghurs in the region call East Turkistan.

China is currently facing sanctions and importation of Xinjiang cotton and tomatoes is banned in US while many Western lawmakers demanding to boycott the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics.

In March this year, Chinese foreign affairs spokesman Zhao Lijian blatantly denied the claims of forced labour and concentration camps for Muslims saying that there was not a grain of truth in the "absurd allegation". He added that such an allegation was made to hold back the development of the relevant Chinese side and Chinese companies. "Some anti-China forces ignore facts and truth and wantonly fabricate all kinds of Xinjiang-related lies. People of

all ethnic groups in Xinjiang, including Xinjiang women, live and work in peace and contentment," he said. Mr. SM Hali, who is an expert in China's relations with the world, said that Australian authorities led by Morrison have adopted a policy of confronting the mainland of China on several issues. These issues, according to him, includes the Xinjiang issue, the Hong Kong issue, the South China Sea issue and the Taiwan issue, which has triggered a strong reaction from Chinese mainland. Morrison's government is under enormous economic pressure from the worst Sino Australian relations in history, he says. "However, it is questionable

whether Australia's policy of following the United States will bring maximum benefits to Australia. After all, although Biden authorities still show a strong attitude towards China, they also send Kerry to Shanghai to explore the possibility of cooperation with China," says Mr. Hali. Other veteran analysts believe that Australia is still like a "dutiful" down, helping Uncle Sam (US) to blame China, regardless of the fact that Uncle Sam has contacted with the Chinese dragon. "In response to Japan's recent decision to discharge nuclear waste water into the Pacific Ocean, Australia, as a stakeholder, seems to have deliberately ignored this major international event and

kept silent on it." "Morrison's authorities completely ignored the prospect of Australian Fisheries and gave up an excellent opportunity to seek reconciliation with the Chinese government, because the Chinese authorities have expressed concern about Japan's practice." "In terms of distance, Australia is closer to Asia than United States, not to mention that Australia's main geopolitical interests lie in Asia. It is time for the Morrison administration to consider how Australia's foreign policy as an independent country serves its national interests, and then make the right diplomatic choice," concludes Mr. Hali.

Germany allows AZ vaccine for adults

FOREIGN DESK

BERLIN: AstraZeneca jabs will no longer be limited to people aged 60 and older, German federal and state officials agreed.

The move comes as Germany moves to quickly vaccinate its population following a sluggish vaccine rollout that has picked up pace in recent weeks. People will also no longer have to wait 12 weeks to receive their second dose of the AstraZeneca jab, Health Minister Jens Spahn announced. The second dose can be delivered as soon as four weeks after the first. "This means that when it comes to vaccinations in doctors' surgeries, it is the doctors who decide who is to be vaccinated and when," Spahn said. It is now a matter of being able to "exercise more pragmatic flexibility."

The news news came as a bill to loosen restrictions for vaccinated people passed the lower house of Germany's parliament.

The nationwide scheme still requires final approval. Once passed, it will provide unified rules on the AstraZeneca vaccine that have varied slightly from state to state.

Germany started immunizing the elderly first, then extended the program to medical workers and chronically ill. Workers whose job requires a lot of contact with other individuals (like bus drivers, supermarket cashiers) are next in line.

But from next week one million doses of AstraZeneca will be administered by doctors as they see fit.

According to the federal government, this prioritization will probably be lifted in June.

On very rare occasions, the AstraZeneca vaccine is believed to trigger serious blood clots in younger people. Dozens of countries paused the use of the vaccine for younger people, but several have since resumed its use after health regulators said the benefits of the shot outweigh any risks.

Tunisia announces one-week lockdown

FOREIGN DESK

TUNIS: Tunisia will impose a lockdown for one week from Sunday, Prime Minister Hichem Mechichi said, ahead of next week's Eid al Fitr holiday when families and friends traditionally gather. Speaking at a news conference, Mechichi said measures were being taken in case "the health system will collapse, and this is a real danger".

As cases have mounted and intensive care wards filled, Tunisia had already suspended school classes, imposed mandatory quarantine and extended a nightly curfew.

ADB proposes ending financing for coal plants

DNA

MANILA: The Asian Development Bank will stop financing new coal power plants under a draft energy policy released Friday that was cautiously welcomed by environmental groups. The ADB, which provides loans and grants for projects in the poorest countries in the Asia Pacific region, said its current policy was "no longer adequately aligned with the global consensus on climate change".

"Coal and other fossil fuels have played a large part in ensuring access to energy for the region's economic development, but they have not solved the energy access challenge, and their use harms the environment and accelerates climate change," the Manila-based bank said in the document. The lender will also no longer fund "any coal mining, oil and natural gas field exploration, drilling or extraction activities", it said. However, under certain conditions, it would provide funds for natural gas projects and "hybrid electricity solutions" involving fossil fuels as backup systems, according to the draft.

Briefs

PIA starts direct flights to Bahrain

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) resumed on Friday direct flights to Bahrain.

The national flag carrier's first flight (PK-189) with 156 passengers on board took off from the Allama Iqbal International Airport Lahore for Bahrain today.

PIA will operate direct flights to Bahrain twice a week from Lahore and Islamabad, according to the airline. The direct flights will facilitate passengers by reducing their travel time, it said.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the airline Arshad Malik said restoration of flight operations on profit-making routes is a key part of the Pakistan International Airlines revival plan, vowing to start direct flights to more international destinations in the foreseeable future.

Earlier, Pakistan International Airlines in a statement said: "We are pleased to announce that Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) is going to start services in Bahrain from 07 May 2021. PIA shall operate two weekly flights from Bahrain to Lahore and Islamabad, respectively."

IMF ready to support Pakistan: Gerry Rice

DNA

ISLAMABAD: IMF is ready to support Pakistan to navigate difficult situation that it's facing with COVID crisis.

International Monetary Fund (IMF) Communication Department Director Gerry Rice has said that IMF is ready further assistance to Pakistan during third wave of coronavirus epidemic.

Addressing a virtual press briefing, Gerry Rice said that the IMF wants to help Pakistan in the wake of the COVID-19 shock to Pakistan's economy. Gerry Rice said that a month ago IMF had completed the pending reviews of the financing arrangement we have with Pakistan and the decision by our Board at that time allowed for an immediate disbursement of about \$500 million, which brought total disbursements to Pakistan of about \$2 billion.

"We stand ready to support Pakistan, to navigate the difficult situation that it is facing with the COVID crisis, while helping to ensure the objective of debt sustainability with strong and sustainable growth," Gerry Rice said.

Govt places Ahsan Iqbal's name on ECL

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has placed Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) MNA Ahsan Iqbal on the Exit Control List (ECL).

Sources having knowledge of the matter said the Ministry of Interior placed his name on the no-fly list. His name was added to the ECL after approval of the federal cabinet, they said.

Iqbal is facing the Narowal Sports City reference filed by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB). Last year in November, the national graft buster filed the reference against the former federal minister. As per the NAB, the sports city project conceived on the instruction of Ahsan Iqbal without any feasibility in 1999 was initially approved at a cost of Rs34.74 million by the Central Development Working Party (CDWP), which Iqbal headed.

Iqbal illegally directed the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) and NESPAK to increase the project's scope, enhancing the cost to Rs97.52 million, the NAB added.

Heydar Aliyev - Liberator of the Azerbaijani statehood

The day after the bloody tragedy committed by the Soviet troops in Baku on the night of 19-20 January 1990, Heydar Aliyev made a statement at Azerbaijan's Representative Office in Moscow demanding to punish the organizers of the crime against the people of Azerbaijan

DNA

BAKU: May 10 is the 98th birthday anniversary of the founder of modern Azerbaijan, national leader Heydar Aliyev.

The national leader has done unparalleled work for his nation during his time in power in the Soviet period and as president of an independent Azerbaijan.

The day after the bloody tragedy committed by the Soviet troops in Baku on the night of 19-20 January 1990, Heydar Aliyev made a statement at Azerbaijan's Representative Office in Moscow demanding to punish the organizers and executors of the crime against the people of Azerbaijan. As a sign of protest against the hypocritical policy of the USSR leadership towards the conflict



in Nagorno-Karabakh, he left the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in July 1991.

In 1991, Heydar Aliyev was elected as chairman of the

Supreme Assembly of the Autonomous Republic of Nakhchivan, and in accordance with the legislation as deputy chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the

public of Azerbaijan. In May-June 1993, when Azerbaijan was at the verge of civil war and loss of independence, the people of Azerbaijan demanded to

bring Heydar Aliyev to power. The leadership of Azerbaijan was forced to invite Heydar Aliyev to Baku.

On October 3, 1993, as a result of the nationwide vote, Heydar Aliyev was elected president of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

By strengthening Azerbaijan's independence Heydar Aliyev ensured and preserved national unity and tirelessly worked to erect strong democratic institutions, while promoting economic growth.

A well-balanced and far-sighted foreign policy conducted under his leadership enabled to strengthen Azerbaijan's independence and sovereignty and establish strategic partnerships with regional states and global powers.

The conclusion of the multi-billion-dollar "Contract of the Century", which was a tri-

umph of the policy based on the oil strategy pursued by national leader Heydar Aliyev, paving the way for bolstering the country's geopolitical standing and economic integration.

The construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline was also among the grand achievements of Heydar Aliyev's oil strategy.

Heydar Aliyev always had a special attention to Pakistan and called relations between Pakistan and Azerbaijan brotherly and strategic. In his own words, "Azerbaijan has always, and in all the necessary levels, defended, and is defending today, the just position of Pakistan on Kashmir issue".

Heydar Aliyev, a man of vision, his ideas and legacy will forever live in the memory of Azerbaijan.

Sindh to keep markets open today

DNA

LAHORE: The Sindh government has decided to keep markets open on Friday and Saturday - May 7 and 8 - while complete lockdown will be imposed across the province from Sunday. Public transport will run in Punjab on May 8, 9, 15 and 16 with fifty percent capacity. Grocery stores, sweets and bakers, meat shops, atta chakkis, fruit and vegetable shops will remain open from 09:00 AM to 06:00 PM.

Standard operating procedures (SOPs) for Eid and Chand Raat have been prepared in Punjab. Markets will remain closed on Chand Raat and only takeaways at restaurants will be allowed. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has also allowed public transport on Saturdays and Sundays during lockdown while all tourist spots will remain closed. Cargo traffic and business deliveries will continue.

In Balochistan, bazaars will remain closed on Chand Raat while inter-provincial and intra-city transport will be discontinued.

India sets new global record of daily cases

DNA

NEW DELHI: It marked the second consecutive day the country registered over 400,000 cases after reporting 412,262 infections Thursday.

Health Ministry figures show there were 414,188 cases in the last 24 hours, taking the country's total to 21.49 million. With 3,915 new fatalities, virus-linked deaths rose to 234,083.

India has been battling a second deadly wave of the pandemic which has severely strained the country's health system. Hospitals in the country are overwhelmed with patients, leading to an acute shortage of beds.

As the country continues to see an exponential rise in cases, many courts are now intervening. The Delhi High Court on Thursday ordered authorities to provide medical care to all people suffering from the coronavirus in the capital.

The country has also received international donations of COVID-19 relief medical supplies and equipment since April 27. The government, however, is facing tough questions as many needy hospitals say the aid has not reached them.

The Health Ministry said in a statement late Thursday, however, that "all items received up to 5th May 2021 have been effectively allocated and promptly dispatched to the states/institutions. This is an ongoing exercise."

A top Indian scientist this week warned that a third wave is "inevitable" in the country.

Pak calls for Post-COVID development framework

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Poverty Alleviation and Social Protection, Dr Sania Nishtar has called for creation of a new framework for post-COVID-19 development.

She was speaking virtually at the 7th biennial high-level Development Cooperation Forum convened by Pakistan's Ambassador to the United Nations, Munir Akram in his capacity as the President of United Nations' Economic and Social Council.

Dr Nishtar said it is a moral imperative for the international system to prioritize the creation of a new post-COVID-19 framework for development that could bring together stakeholders to forge the responses needed to better mitigate risks and recover from shocks.

She said we now have a one in a generation chance to work in solidarity and to build a fairer, healthier, and a more resilient world that ends poverty, inequality and the climate crisis. - APP

US, Pakistan launch pilot project to boost regional trade

The shipment between Pakistan and Uzbekistan is the first in Pakistan using the United Nations' multilateral transit system, "Transports Internationaux Routiers"

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The United States Government, along with the Government of Pakistan, launched the first international shipment from Pakistan that is compliant with the United Nations' "Transports Internationaux Routiers" (TIR) Convention, an international customs transit system that facilitates trade by expediting border checks between countries. The United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) Pakistan

Regional Economic Integration Activity (PREIA) provided technical and financial support for the pilot project.

Utilizing the international transport company TCS, this week's pilot shipment was the first in a series of five planned trial runs between Pakistan and Central Asia. These pilot shipments will test the viability of various routes for international transit to Central Asia and beyond under the "Transports Internationaux Routiers" Convention, and they will document the associated



operational and logistical challenges during the journey.

The trial shipment to Tashkent, Uzbekistan via Afghanistan departed Ka-

rachi on April 28 and arrived in Tashkent on May 3 via the Karachi-Kabul-Termez trade route.

"The success of the first pilot shipment to Tash-

kent will build confidence among traders and transport operators on both sides to use TIR for cross-border trade and transit, which will boost regional trade," said US-AID Mission Director Julie Koenen.

"We are proud to partner with the Government of Pakistan to make trade with Central Asia as fast and seamless as possible, which will help all of the countries in the region improve their economies."

TCS is Pakistan's leading courier and logistics services platform. It is the

first company licensed to utilize TIR by the Pakistan National Committee of the International Chamber of Commerce under the International Road Transport Union's (IRU) authorization.

The TIR Convention was signed in 1975 under the auspices of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

Pakistan acceded to the "Transports Internationaux Routiers" Convention on July 24, 2015 and was declared as a "TIR operational country" by the IRU on April 19, 2018.

Turkish envoy lauds professionalism of PAF

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Turkish Ambassador H.E. Ihsan Mustafa Yurdakul called on Air Chief Marshal Zaeher Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force in his office. The honorable ambassador extended his felicitations to the Air Chief on assuming command of the PAF.

During the meeting, both the dignitaries discussed various matters of mutual interest.

H.E. Ihsan Mustafa Yurdakul commended the professionalism of PAF and said that people of both countries were entwined in long lasting bond of brotherhood, complimented by common religion, culture and history.

Acknowledging the ever-available support of Turkey, the Air Chief said that Turkey was one of the few countries that had always



unequivocally supported Pakistan. The Air Chief

also added that Air Forces of both the countries would

continue mutual cooperation in every field.

EU envoys oppose forceful govt in Afghanistan

They affirmed their commitment to UNSC resolution 2513 (2020) and emphasized that they oppose the establishment in Afghanistan of any government by force which would constitute a threat to regional stability

DNA

KABUL: Special envoys and special representatives of the European Union, France, Germany, Italy, NATO, Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States in a statement emphasized the need for continued international support to Afghan National Defense and Security Forces and said it will be necessary to ensure Afghanistan can defend itself against internal and external threats.

The envoys acknowledged the widespread and sincere demand of the Afghan people for an end to the war and a fair and lasting peace and confirmed that such a peace can only be achieved through an inclusive, negotiated political settlement among Af-

ghans, according to the statement that was published by Germany's Foreign Office on Friday.

They affirmed their commitment to UNSC resolution 2513 (2020) and emphasized that they oppose the establishment in Afghanistan of any government by force which would constitute a threat to regional stability.

The envoys highlighted the need to accelerate the pace of the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace negotiations and committed to work with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Taliban, and other Afghan political and civil society leaders to reach a comprehensive and sustainable peace agreement and political compromise that ends the war for the benefit of all Afghans and that

contributes to regional stability and global security.

They underlined their support for the continuation of discussions between the parties' negotiating teams in Doha and urged the immediate resumption, without preconditions, of substantive negotiations on the future of Afghanistan with the aim to develop and negotiate realistic compromise positions on power-sharing that can lead to an inclusive and legitimate government and a just and durable settlement. The envoys welcomed an expanded role for the United Nations in contributing to the Afghanistan peace and reconciliation process, including by leveraging its considerable experience and expertise in supporting other peace processes. They strongly condemned the con-

tinued violence in Afghanistan for which the Taliban are largely responsible and demanded all parties to take immediate and necessary steps to reduce violence and in particular, to avoid civilian casualties in order to create an environment conducive to reaching a political settlement.

The participants called upon the Taliban to stop their undeclared spring offensive, to refrain from attacks against civilians, and to stop immediately all attacks in the vicinity of hospitals, schools, universities, mosques and other civilian areas. The envoys, in particular, demanded an immediate end to the campaign of targeted assassinations against civil society leaders, the clergy, journalists and other media workers, human rights defenders,

healthcare personnel, judicial employees and other civilians.

The envoys said that the process of the troop withdrawal must not serve as an excuse for the Taliban to suspend the peace process and that good-faith political negotiations must proceed in earnest.

They also agreed that substantial international development assistance will be needed for Afghanistan's stability during peace negotiations and reaffirmed their commitment to mobilize international support for reconstruction following a peace agreement, based on the conditions as laid out in the outcome documents of the 2020 Geneva Conference, including the preservation and respect for the rights of all Afghans, including women and minorities.