



Islamabad POST

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Palestinian envoy grateful for support of Pakistan people

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China urges US to play role in Gaza unrest stoppage

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Bill Gates had a relationship with employee

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Briefs

Won't spare those who looted country

ABID RAZA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Monday said that the government doesn't have enmity with anyone but cannot spare those who looted the country. The prime minister presided over a meeting in Islamabad and took the party and government members and spokespersons in confidence regarding Saudi Arabia visit. Federal ministers, special assistants, advisers and other officials attended the meeting.

Govt failed to control inflation

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Chairman of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Monday said that government has failed to control inflation in the country and no relief was provided to masses even at Eid. Bilawal Bhutto, in his statement lashed out at Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government and said that Prime Minister Imran Khan spent Eid at Nathia Gali despite ban on tourism, while common was left at mercy of inflation. PPP Chairman said that masses, who are forced to buy milk at Rs150/liter and dry fruits at 50 percent inflated prices, are disheartened from PTI government.

Shehbaz files petition in LHC

STAFF REPORT

LAHORE: President of the Pakistan Muslim League-N Shehbaz Sharif submitted a contempt of court petition in the Lahore High Court on Monday, after he was prevented from leaving the country despite court orders. In his petition, Sharif states that the LHC order which allowed him to leave the country one-time was announced on May 7 in front of the deputy attorney general and two Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) officials.

NA condemns Israeli attacks in Palestine

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) on Monday has tabled a resolution in National Assembly (NA) against the brutalities of Israel in Palestine. The resolution demanded emergency meeting of Security Council to take action against the attacks of Israeli forces on innocent Palestinians. It also urged the international community and Muslim countries to adopt effective strategies against Israel. Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi said Monday the PTI-led government would never step back from the country's stance on Palestine and Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. FM Qureshi, speaking on the floor of the National Assembly, said he would leave for Turkey tonight and meet his Turkish, Palestinian, and Sudanese counterparts there. He said Pakistan, Turkey, Sudan, and Palestine's foreign ministers would visit New York and raise their voices against Israel's aggression in the Gaza Strip at the UN General Assembly. "I will represent the voices of 22 million Pakistanis in New York," he said. Permanent Observer Mission of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation to the United Nations will contact the president of UNGA and ask him to summon a session on the issue immediately, he said. FM Qureshi said the war-like situation in Palestine should come to an end as innocent Palestinians are being martyred every day. "Even the people in Western countries

"The resolution urged the international community and Muslim countries to adopt effective strategies against Israel"

aren't quiet about it," he said. "Tomorrow, the Foreign Union has called its meeting of foreign ministers to deliberate over the matter of Palestine - given that they have 65 million Muslims residing there, so they won't let them down." The foreign minister said Pakistan had adopted a clear stance during a session of the OIC yesterday, where it demanded Israel's crimes against humanity should not escape accountability. Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly Shahbaz Sharif addressed the floor of the Lower House and spoke in detail about the ongoing situation in Palestine. The PML-N president said he would not shed light on the government's tactics against the Opposition as the lawmakers had gathered today to voice their concerns against Israel's attacks on Palestine.

Continued on Page 06

Terminated officials of PTV being restored?

Federal Minister for Information has denied that any such move is on the cards; MD PTV wants to get the terminated officials back

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: In blatant disregard of the directions of the Prime Minister, Managing Director PTV is all set to illegally restore through back channel, seven contractual officials drawing high salary packages whose services had been terminated by the PTV Board of Directors.

It may recalled that the PTV BoD in its 243rd meeting held on December, 7th, 2020 had decided to cap the salary packages of contractual employees at Rs. 350,000/-. The board further resolved to terminate the services of seven contractual employees that had been employed on posts specially created for these individuals without advertising the position or obtaining concurrence from the Ministry of Finance which is in gross violation of rules and judgments of

the superior courts. According to well placed sources, the Managing Director PTV dissented the decision of the board. He raised the matter of their re-instatement during a meeting with the Prime Minister in February, 2021, wherein the Prime Minister



did not accede to the request and directed that as the appointment of these individuals was irregular and on heavy packages, on no count should they be restored. Seven of these individuals, namely Khawar Azhar, Asim Baig, Nasir Naqvi, Nadeem Niazi, Tahir Mushtaq, Qatrina Hosain and Khurram Mushtaq filed a writ against

their termination before the Islamabad High Court which was dismissed in limini, which was not challenged and has attained finality.

With the cabinet reshuffle in March, 2021, Managing Director PTV is once again making concerted efforts to illegally reinstate these individual which is in gross violation to the specific orders of the Prime Minister. While the Federal Minister for Information has denied that any such move is on the cards, offices have been allocated to these individuals and reinstatement letters are likely to be issued today by Pakistan Television. Sources privy to the facts have expressed amazement and dismay at the move by Managing Director PTV and fear that it is likely to become the source of another major scandal at the national broadcaster and embarrassment to the office of the Prime Minister.



RAWALPINDI: Androulla Kaminara, Ambassador of European Union called on General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) at GHQ. - DNA

POL prices remain unchanged

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In order to provide relief to the common man, the Prime Minister has decided to maintain the prices of petroleum products as they were on May 1, 2021 and a fortnight before that. The government has to adjust the Petroleum levy and sales tax as well on SKO and LDO to maintain the same prices. The government will bear a revenue loss of Rs 2.77 billion for maintaining the same prices. The prices from May 18 onwards will be as follows:

Ms petrol Rs.108.56 / liter
HSD. Rs.110.76/liter
SKO. Rs. 80.00/liter
LDO. Rs.77.65/liter

UNGA to hold plenary meeting on Thursday

NEW YORK: The UN General Assembly will hold an urgent meeting later this week to discuss the "grave deterioration" of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, a spokesman of the 193-member body's president announced Monday. Spokesman Brenden Varma said that the session on Thursday, May 20, is in response to a request from the chairmen of the OIC Group and the Arab Group at the UN made in a joint letter to the Assembly president, Volkan Bozkir of Turkey. The letter was signed by Niger's Ambassador Abdou Abary, who is chairman of the OIC Group, and Algeria's Ambassador Sofiane Mimouni, who heads the Arab Group. Responding to questions, the spokesman said the plenary meeting will debate the situation in the Middle East, but so far no resolution has been submitted. - Agencies

EU envoy lauds Pak peace efforts

NEHAL MIRAJ

RAWALPINDI: The Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa said on Monday that Pakistan "earnestly" looks forward to enhancing "mutually beneficial multi-domain relations based on common interests" with the European Union. According to a statement released by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the army chief made Pakistan's intentions clear regarding the EU in a meeting with

"COAS says Pakistan values it's ties with the European Union"

the bloc's ambassador to Pakistan Androulla Kaminara at the GHQ. During the meeting, the officials discussed matters of mutual interest and regional security situation, including recent developments in the Afghan peace process, the statement said. "Pakistan values its relations with EU and we earnestly look forward to enhance[ing] mutually beneficial multi-domain relations based on common interests," said the COAS. The military's media wing said that the EU envoy lauded Pakistan for its "sincere efforts for bringing peace and stability in the region, especially the Afghan Peace Process".

Ring road issue: Zulfi steps down



STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Sayed Zulfiqar Bukhari has resigned from his post over allegations made against him in Rawalpindi Ring Road inquiry. The SAPM, who is known as Zulfi Bukhari, made the announcement on Twitter. Bukhari said that he resigned from the post as PM Imran Khan has always maintained that a person named in an inquiry should resign from public office till, he or she are

cleared of charges. "My prime minister has always said that if a person has been named rightly or wrongly in any inquiry he should cease to hold any public office till his name has been cleared of charges. Owing to the allegations in ongoing Ring Road inquiry I want to set this example by resigning from office until my name is cleared up of any allegations and media's obnoxious lies," said Bukhari. The SAPM, who is a close confidante of PM Imran Khan, reiterated that he has nothing to do with Rawalpindi Ring Road or any ongoing Real Estate project of the country. However, he urged that the "inquiry should be done by capable personnel" and backed the idea of "judicial inquiry" of the project. "I'm here to stay in Pakistan and stand united with the prime minister and his vision. I sacrificed my life overseas to come and serve my country. I am ready to face any inquiry," said the SAPM.

Virus infects 3,232 more people

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The national tally of total active COVID-19 cases on Monday recorded 68,223 with 3,232 new cases during the last 24 hours. According to the latest update issued by the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOCC), 3,754 virus patients recovered and 74 died. Sixty-three (63) were under treatment in the hospital, 36 of them were on ventilators and 11 out of the hospital in their respective quarantines or homes.

Fawad slams Maryam's attitude



STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hussain Monday said it was unfortunate that the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Maryam Nawaz was following the same irresponsible attitude adopted by the Indian politicians during the Uttar Pradesh election campaign that caused COVID-19 (coronavirus) crisis in India. "If today, people in India are lying helpless on roads because there is no space in its hospitals that run out of the oxygen beds. The main reason of reaching this stage was the irresponsible attitude of politicians there, where in Uttar Pradesh election campaign the Coronavirus SOPs were massively violated. Now here [in Pakistan], Maryam has the same attitude," he tweeted.

Qureshi, Palestine envoy slam Israeli aggression

Says Pakistan supports wholeheartedly to the brother and sisters of Palestine; Ambassador of Palestine thanks minister for unwavering support

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi has strongly condemned violence by the Israeli forces against innocent worshippers at Al-Aqsa Mosque during the holy month of Ramadan. The Foreign Minister expressed these views during a meeting with Ambassador of Palestine Ahmed Rabei who called on the minister at his office. While conveying his deepest sorrow and condolences for the innocent victims of lethal attacks by Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) in Gaza and the West Bank, he categorically condemned IDF's continuous and indiscriminate attacks that had resulted in martyrdom of more than 182 Palestinians, including 39 children and



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Palestine Ahmed Rabei in a meeting with Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi.-DNA

22 women, and injured more than 1000. Reassuring Ambassador Rabei of Pakistan's ongoing efforts, Foreign Minister Qureshi briefed him about his outreach to Foreign Ministers of important regional

partners. Ambassador Rabei expressed his gratitude for Pakistan's unwavering support and steadfast policy on Palestine. He appreciated Pakistan's continuous efforts to en-

gage the international community for protecting Palestine. The Palestinian Ambassador apprised the Foreign Minister about the latest situation on ground, which was already dreadful due

to COVID-19, and the ensuing humanitarian suffering. It may be mentioned here that the leadership of Pakistan had already condemned Israeli aggression. The Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan on Sunday issued a strong-worded statement condemning the Israeli atrocities. The Prime Minister had also called upon the world leaders to jointly work for liberation of the occupied territories. President Dr. Arif Alvi too came up with similar remarks. He categorically stated that the world must rise to the occasion before it gets too late. The civil society of Pakistan has also slated Israeli barbaric behaviors. Members of the civil society marched to the Palestine embassy in Islamabad to show solidarity with the brother and sisters of Palestine.

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Briefs

Days of India, Israel are numbered: AJK PM

MIRPUR (AJK): Azad Jammu & Kashmir Prime Minister Raja Muhammad Farooq Haider Khan said on Monday that the day of judgment of India and Israel were approaching fast due to systemic genocide and killings of innocent civilians in both the countries.

In a statement issued here on Monday he said that Israel has intensified the reign of terror on Palestine and this state of affairs is leading to the logical elimination of Israel while on the other side India has been utilizing all its resources to crush the Kashmiri people's legitimate struggle of self-determination. The Prime Minister expressed the hope that the long night of terror and repressions would soon end and the dawn of freedom would rise soon.

He urged upon the Muslim Ummah in general and OIC in particular to play their leading role and formulate and compressive and solid strategy to extend support to the oppressed people of Palestine and Kashmir.

Meanwhile the Prime Minister held a meeting with the Speaker of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir legislative Assembly Shah Ghulam Qadir on Monday and discussed the matters regarding the government and the party affairs. Both the leaders discussed the launching of an election campaign and the situation arising out of the corona pandemic. The Prime Minister said that the government has achieved all the set targets in administrative, financial and developmental sectors and restored the merit which enabled the government to provide jobs to the eligible persons on merit. - APP

44 more die of Covid-19 in Punjab

DNA

LAHORE: Punjab reported 44 more deaths from the novel coronavirus (Covid-19) over the last 24 hours, taking the provincial tally to 9,411.

According to the Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department, 1,700 fresh infections were detected during the same period, raising the number of confirmed cases to 327,362. A total of 15,543 samples were tested, out of which 1,700 were declared positive.

Lahore saw 23 more deaths from Covid-19 taking the provincial city's death toll to 3,865. Of the 1,700 new cases, Lahore reported 713, Sargodha 124, Bahawalpur 115, Faisalabad 98, and Rawalpindi 63. The coronavirus claimed 74 more lives across Pakistan during the past 24 hours, raising the death toll to 19,617.

According to the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC), 3,232 new COVID-19 infections were reported during the said period. It said that overall 880,362 cases of COVID-19 have been reported in the country. The positivity ratio was recorded at 8.80 percent in the last 24 hours.

14 held for doing wheelie, gambling

FAISALABAD: Police arrested 14 people for doing wheelie and gambling from various parts of the city during the last 24 hours. A team of D-Type colony police arrested Saim, Umar, Abdul Basit, Jone-Maseih, Suhail, Zeeshan, Hafiz Fateh, Rabeel Ali and Awaish while doing wheelie on various city roads. Mureedwala police nabbed 5 gamblers from a den in Chak No 207-GB. Cases have been registered against the accused. - APP

Five held for selling kites

Police arrested five people for making/selling kites and recovered huge quantity of kites from their possession. Police said on Monday that a team of Ghulam Muhammad Abad police arrested 5 people from various parts of its jurisdiction and recovered over 10,000 kites and dozens of twin spoons from them. Cases have been registered against the accused. - APP

Fawad urges world to ease situation in Palestine

The minister said the Pakistani government was undertaking all possible steps to contain the pandemic through timely decisions and effective preventive measures. He said the NCOC was spearheading the drive against the Covid-19 pandemic

SHUJAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hussain Monday while expressing Pakistan's deep concern and anguish over the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza, stressed that the international community had an obligation to help normalize the situation and facilitate a just solution. He was talking to European Union Ambassador Androulla Kaminara during a meeting, a press release said. The information minister said Pakistan had declared Friday as a day for expressing solidarity with the people of Palestine, who were suffering from continuous violence at the hands of Israeli forces. The EU ambassador said Vice President Borell had called a meeting of the foreign ministers of EU member states on May 18 to discuss the situation. The meeting was convened to coordinate and discuss how the EU could best contribute to end the current violence, she added. During the meeting, both sides also exchanged views on the Covid-19 pandemic situation in the country. The minister said the Pakistani



ISLAMABAD: Chaudhry Fawad Hussain, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting in a meeting with EU Ambassador Androulla Kaminara. - DNA

government was undertaking all possible steps to contain the pandemic through timely decisions and effective preventive measures. He said the National Command and Operation Center (NCOC) was spearheading the drive against the Covid-19 pan-

demic. He said when Covid-19 surfaced in Pakistan early last year, the country was not producing any protective gear against the viral pandemic, but, within a period of four to six months, it not only started manufacturing protective masks, kits and quality ventilators

but also exported them. Androulla Kaminara appreciated the steps taken by the Government of Pakistan to protect its people from the pandemic. She also appreciated the rise in Pakistan's exports despite pandemic. The information minister also

apprised the ambassador about the approval of two long awaited bills for protection of journalists and media professionals and the forced disappearance (Criminal Law Amendment Bill). He reiterated the government's resolve to continue to facilitate the growth of free and responsible media in Pakistan.

He said the media enjoyed unprecedented independence in Pakistan as the government firmly believed in fundamental, democratic and constitutional right of freedom of expression. Talking about peace and development in the region, Fawad said Pakistan desired good relations with all its neighbours and was willing to reciprocate any peace overture.

"One cannot move ahead if the other side is not ready to act responsibly", he said, adding they could not move forward by ignoring the situation in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). The EU ambassador also showed keen interest in Pakistan's initiatives including climate change, Ten Billion Tree Tsunami and the drive for Clean and Green Pakistan. The minister also welcomed the EU's interest in these initiatives.

5 profiteers held

MEHBOOB AHIR

SARGODHA: The price control magistrate arrested five shopkeepers for profiteering and overcharging in various parts of city on Monday. According to official sources, the magistrates inspected various points including Muhammadi-market, Muqama-e-Hayyat and water supply road and found five shopkeepers-Yamin, Hamza, Muhammad Asif, Abdul Waheed and Sajid overcharging. The team imposed fine on them. Cases were registered against the accused.

Motorcyclist hit to death
A motorcyclist was killed in a road accident, in the limits of Khushab police station here on Monday.

Police said that Muhammad Sher, resident of Ganjial village was going home when a recklessly driven tractor-trolley hit his motorcycle near Sakesar Pull. He died on the spot. A case has been registered against the tractor driver who sped away. - APP

Cyclone Tauktae poses no threat to Pakistani

DNA

KARACHI: Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) on Monday issued new advisory and stated that none of the Pakistani coastal area is under threat from cyclone Tauktae, however under its influence, dust/thunderstorm-rain are likely to occur in some parts of Sindh.

Giving update on the cyclone, PMD stated that the very severe cyclonic storm has gained more strength and moved North/northwestward at a speed of 18 Kmph during last 12 hours and is at a distance of about 730 km south of Thatta and 800 km south-southeast of Karachi. Maximum sustained winds around the system centre are 190-210 Kmph gusting 230 Kmph. The system is likely to move further northward and cross Indian Gujarat by 17 May night/ 18 May morning, it added.

The PMD has said that none of the Pakistani coastal areas are under threat, however under its influence, dust/thunderstorm-rain with moderate to heavy falls and gusty winds of 40-60 Kmph are likely to occur in Tharparker, Umerkot & Sanghar districts and at isolated places of Badin district during 17-19 May 2021.

Mirpurkhas and TandoAl-lahyar districts may receive moderate rainfall accompanied with gusty winds of 25-30 kmph, meanwhile very hot and dry weather with occasional gusty winds likely to continue in Karachi, Hyderabad, Shaeed-Ban-zirabad, Badin & Thatta districts till tomorrow. However, the department has warned that the gusty winds may affect the fruit orchard of above stated areas and sea conditions will remain rough to very rough. It has also advised fishermen of Sindh to suspend their activities till 19 May 2021.

FCCI, SMEDA to organize webinar

FAISALABAD: Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) in collaboration with Small & Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) will organize a zoom based webinar on "How to manage businesses amid COVID-19". Engineer Hafiz Ihtasham-Javed, President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) said that this training session will be held from 2 P.M. to 4 P.M. on Thursday (May 20, 2021) under National Business Development Program for SMEs. He has requested FCCI members to contact Shabban Cheema Regional Business Consultant SME-DA Faisalabad for free registration. - APP

Drug peddler held with narcotics

SARGODHA: Police on Monday claimed to have arrested a drug peddler and recovered 4.5 kg hashish from his possession. On a tip-off, a team of KotMomin police station conducted a raid within its jurisdiction and arrested notorious drug peddler Nazir Gull and recovered 4.5 kg hashish from him. - APP

Judiciary to ensure rule of law in the country: CJP

Justice Gulzar Ahmed said that the basic requirement was to maintain rule of law, supremacy of constitution

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Mr. Justice Gulzar Ahmed on Monday said that all efforts were being made to ensure rule of law, supremacy of constitution and independence of judiciary in the country. He said, "Rule of Law is most important." He stated this while addressing to the groundbreaking ceremony of Supreme Court Registry -Karachi on the premises of Pakistan Secretariat here. CJP said that they did not need huge buildings or any such things for dispensing justice as it could be done in anyway but because of the modern requirements everything had to be placed in proper space and for that purpose buildings become mandatory. He said that rule of law was the purpose behind all these buildings. CJP Mr. Justice Gulzar Ahmed said that the basic requirement was to maintain rule of law, supremacy of constitution and independence of judiciary that was most vital. He said that judges, lawyers etc were trying to establish rule of law, which the country required. CJP hoped that the new Supreme Court Registry -Karachi building was going to be one of the most classical buildings in Karachi. He said that the building would have six court rooms, ample space for bar and Advocate General's office etc. Earlier, CJP unveiled the plaque to perform groundbreaking of the Supreme Court Registry -Karachi. Besides others Judges and lawyers were also attended the ceremony.

Anti-polio drive: Covid-19 SOPs to be followed

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: The next Anti Polio Campaign in Faisalabad district would continue from June 7th to 11 in the district and 1,326,937 children up to the age of five years would be administered polio drops for which 3549 teams would perform duty and all necessary arrangements had been making finalized in this regard. This was informed by Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ali during the meeting of District Polio Eradication Committee. ADCG Khuram Pervaiz, CEO DHA Dr. Mushtaq Sipra, DHO Dr. Bilal Ahmad and other officers of various departments were also present. Deputy Commissioner directed that before the campaign, all necessary arrangements should be completed keeping in view of micro-plan so that the weaknesses and



shortcomings could be rectified. He clarified that every round of polio was important therefore the training of relevant staff should be completed before time besides for awareness of parents all out resources should utilize. He said that all arrangements should be made finalize in tehsil level also and no negligence would be tolerated in this regard. He also cleared that corona SOPs should be implemented as per guidelines. DHO briefed the house on arrangements of next Po-

lio campaign. **28 shopping malls sealed**
As many as 28 more shopping malls were sealed yesterday while 9 persons were arrested from public places and fined Rs 46,000 for not wearing face masks. In the last 63 days, 2119 shopping malls, Plazas, restaurants, wedding halls, private schools, offices and bus stands were sealed and fined Rs. 33.28 million in addition to sealing shops and closing 123 passenger vehicles, 945 people roamed the streets and public places without masks.

Action against profiteers
Assistant Commissioner City Syed Ayub Bukhari took action against butchers and chicken sellers for overcharging of mutton, beef and chicken and registered case against 9 shopkeepers besides imposed heavy fine to the butchers. He checked butcher and chicken shops throughout the city areas on public complaints and arrested the profiteers for violating. He said the overcharging of essential items and meat would not tolerated and violators will be behind the bars. Assistant Commissioner City also sealed swimming pool for violating corona SOPs at Narwala road near jawadclub. The Cool Grand Swimming Pool was open and many people were present there for bathing which were causing the spread of corona there fore pool sealed and FIRs were registered against owner and other staff of pool.

No politics in Ring Road project

SHAHEEN HANIF

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Aviation Ghulam Sarwar Khan Monday clarified that there was no political involvement in finalizing the alignment of Rawalpindi-Islamabad Ring Road project. "If there is any change in the road alignment, it is purely due to technical reasons that can be explained by relevant experts," he said while addressing a news conference. The minister viewed that the inquiry report about the project should be revisited as some members of the investigation committee had attached their separate dissenting notes with it. He regretted that although there was no mention of his or any of his family members' name in the inquiry report, yet some elements were attempting to involve him in the scandal. He asked such elements to prove his involvement with documentary evidence, or otherwise get ready to face legal action. Sarwar said an alignment of the Ring Road from Rawat to Thalian Interchange connecting it with the motorway, was discussed in 2017, but it was not approved. "Onward it was directionless," he added. He said there were some reservations of the National Highway Authority (NHA) that it would not be able to control the traffic on Ring Road, which was calculated at 33,000 vehicles per day at that time.



KARACHI: Chief Justice of Pakistan, Justice Gulzar Ahmed planting a tree during the groundbreaking ceremony of new registry building in Pakistan secretariat premises Karachi. - DNA

Int'l co-op on digital technology essential

"We need to collaborate and multiply our efforts to connect everyone to the global digital economy, and that for those connected, more must be done to ensure that connected life is safe and trustworthy with inclusion of technology" he said

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Syed Amin ulHaque on Monday said that international co-operation on digital technology is essential to help defeat COVID-19 and achieve the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development (SD). In his statement on World Telecommunication and Information Society Day, the minister said "Today the World is different because of the pandemic, evolving technology, the times have changed. We are in an information society where information is the most significant aspect of society." He said that digital and Informa-

tion communication technology is a beacon of hope, progress, enabling billions of people around the world to connect and interact. He said the main objective of World Telecommunication and Information Society Day is to raise global awareness of social changes brought about by the internet and new technologies he said added, "It also aims to help reduce the digital divide". Syed Amin ulHaque said, the day reflects on the ICT advances for transition to smart and sustainable development. It focuses on specific ICT-enabled solutions and emerging trends for fostering economic, environmental, and social sustainability, innovation, partnership and acceleration Digital

transformation in the challenging times. He said that during the COVID-19 pandemic, connectivity became the foundation of all sustainable development pillars and the use of Telecommunication and Internet came as a utility. Under current ongoing pandemic connectivity with loved ones, with schools and colleges, with workplaces, with healthcare professionals and essential supplies- are more important than ever. Amin ulHaque said that the International Telecommunication Union continues to work with the information and communication technology community and UN agencies to help manage and end this crisis, and recover better. Pointing on current scenario, the

Minister said that Telecommunication technologies, from real time broadband connectivity and big data to cloud computing and artificial intelligence, are powerful tools and means to tackle the world's most pressing challenges, including the pandemic diagnostic, monitoring and standard operating procedures. "We need to collaborate and multiply our efforts to connect everyone to the global digital economy, and that for those connected, more must be done to ensure that connected life is safe and trustworthy with inclusion of technology" he said. On this Day and for this new decade, let's harness information and communication technology to accelerate social, economic and en-

vironmentally sustainable growth and inclusive development for everyone, everywhere during the challenging times of pandemic.

IT Minister while highlighting the efforts said Pakistan, specifically with the focus of the SDG's and with the focus on un-served and underserved areas has contributed approx Rs. 30 billion to ensure connectivity and broadband services with the aim of Internet for all as utility in collaboration of Universal Service fund that will serve millions of underserved citizens in the remote and rural areas of Pakistan in ongoing program of Ministry of IT & Telecommunication under vision of Prime Minister citizen centric vision of Digital Pakistan.

Briefs

Speaker announces Panel of presiding officers

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly Speaker Asad Qasir Monday announced the names of six members as panel of presiding officers for 33rd session. In pursuance of sub-rule one of rule 13 of Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the National Assembly 2007, the Speaker announced the names of MNAs Amjad Ali Khan, Malik Muhammad Ehsan Ullah Tiwana, Sajida Begum, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah and Shahida Akhtar Ali. These members shall chair the House proceedings in order of precedence, in absence of the Speaker and Deputy Speaker. - APP

AIOU adopting key measures for online access

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) is adopting key measures to provide relevant and necessary information online to enable students to access it easily and efficiently within the backdrop of the 3rd wave of COVID-19. Upon the special directives of Prof Dr Zia Ul-Qayyum, university has activated and strengthened its helpline service and all key information related to examinations, workshop and tutorial schedules, results, assignments and coursebooks has been uploaded on the university website (www.aiou.edu.pk). Moreover, the students may call the helpline 468-112-111-051 for any further information. The students and tutors are advised to visit AIOU regional centers in case of a dire need only while strictly observing COVID-19 SOPs. They may contact the regional offices via telephone calls. Telephone numbers of all regional offices are also available online on the university website. - APP

Rupee sheds 32 paisas against dollar

ISLAMABAD: The exchange rate of Pakistani rupee lost 32 paisas against US dollar in the interbank trading on Monday to close at Rs 152.60 as compared to the last closing of Rs 152.28. According to Forex Association of Pakistan, the buying and selling rates of dollar in open market were recorded at Rs 152.7 and Rs 153.8 respectively. The State Bank of Pakistan reported that in interbank, the price of euro appreciated by Rs 0.52 to close at Rs 185.30 against the last day's trading of Rs 183.94. The Japanese Yen remained stable at Rs 1.39, whereas an increase of Rs 3.15 was witnessed in the exchange rate of British Pound which was traded at Rs 215.18 as compared to its last closing of Rs 212.03. The exchange rates of Saudi Riyal and Emirates Dirham decreased by 09 paisas each to close at Rs 41.54 and Rs 40.68 respectively.

IHC seeks report on forced labour

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday sought detailed report from the district administration regarding actions against forced labour at bricks kilns in the Federal Capital. Chief Justice Athar Minalah heard the case relating to the forced labour at brick kilns. The state counsel informed the court about the measures taken by the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) district administration against the forced labour. He said first information reports (FIRs) had been registered against owners of several brick kilns for paying advance to the workers.



ISLAMABAD: Members of Gujrat Chamber of Commerce & Industry Visited Palestine embassy to show our solidarity with people of Palestine. Ahmad Rabaia Ambassador of Palestine to Islamic Republic of Pakistan welcomed them and thanked for the continuous support. - DNA

4 SEZs to create 1.47m jobs, boost industrialist growth

The 1000 acre Rashkai Economic Zone has attracted at more than 2,000 domestic and foreign investments in different sectors of economy, hence promote rapid industrialization

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: The four Special Economic Zones (SEZs), work on which is continuing at full swing, would create as many as 1.47 million jobs besides playing an important role in promoting local industry to lead the country towards sustainable economic growth. "The four SEZs including Rashakai M-1 Nowshera; Dhabeji Thatta; Allama Iqbal Industrial City Faisalabad and Bostan Balochistan would create around 475,000 direct and 1,000,000 indirect jobs all across the country," senior official of Board of Investment (BoI) told APP here Monday. Talking to media, the official said these SEZ, which are part of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) would promote overall industrial growth in the country, adding that development of these four zones was top priority of the government.

He was of the view that Pak-China industrial cooperation would make Pakistan a manufacturing hub in the region while the establishment of industrial zones would create vast investment opportunities for local industrialists. The 1000 acre Rashkai Economic Zone has attracted at more than 2,000 domestic and foreign investments in different sectors of economy, hence promote rapid industrialization. He said that the zone would be developed in three phases and as per the plan 247 acres of land would be developed in the first phase, 355 acres in the second phase and

399 acres in the third phase. Likewise, the federal government would provide 210 MW electricity to the zone in three phases while it had also earmarked Rs 1203 million for gas for this zone. The zone will provide employment to 80% locals, he said adding that Rashakai has the potential to become a hub of economic activity. He said Rashakai Special Economic Zone is connected to all the provinces of Pakistan through airports, dry ports, railway stations, motorways and highways. The zone is located at the confluence of the five major districts of KPK, Nowshera, Mardan and Swabi, Charsadda and Peshawar. He said that there is fertile land in the adjoining districts, which is suitable for growing a variety of cash crops and vegetables. The

SEZ would cover more than 400 industries, including garments and textile products, home appliances, general commercial goods, electronics and electrical appliances, automobiles and mechanical equipment. Meanwhile, talking to APP the Adviser to Commerce and Investment, Abdul Razak Dawood said the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) was a milestone for economic and industrial development in Pakistan. The Special Economic Zone would pave the way for foreign investment, setting a milestone in industrial modernization and diversification in the country, the Adviser said. He said that the Rashakai Special Economic Zone (SEZ) would set a new direction for modern industrialization in Pakistan and bring huge

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the country. Replying to a question on shift of industries from China to Pakistan, he said that "We are looking to welcome the Chinese industries in our SEZs to Joint Venture (JVs) with local investors and also share the mutual experience for benefiting the local industries. He said the government was prioritizing development of special economic zones (SEZs) for attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) and transfer of technology into the country. "The SEZs are primarily focused on industrialization that result in export promotion, import substitution, transfer of technologies and employment generation, which are the primary targets of our government as well," he said.

Training for OIC states to achieve self-reliance in vaccine

ISLAMABAD: COMSTEC is organizing a day long training to promote "Collaboration among OIC member countries for Promotion of Research Culture in Medicine and Vaccine Development through Strengthening and Upgrading the Clinical Trials" on 3rd June 2021 at COMSTEC Secretariat, Islamabad. This is a hybrid event with limited in-person participation of local experts and large scale virtual participation from OIC member states i.e. Iran, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Cameroon, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Pakistan and Jordan. The objective of this training is to provide a valuable platform to deliberate upon, and develop a joint mechanism for research and development, specifically clinical trials, as a step towards self-reliance of OIC member states in medicine and vaccine development. This training is being organized in continuation of COMSTEC efforts to bolster self-reliance of OIC member states medicine and vaccine development as adopted in Jakarta Declaration and OIC Action Plan 2019-2021. Speakers of training will illuminate mechanism of conducting clinical trials by the member countries besides developing a framework for capacity building, knowledge sharing, and technology transfer mechanism. This training will provide an opportunity where technically advanced OIC member states would upgrade the capacity of the other member countries focusing on the conduction of multi-center and multi-country clinical trials. - DNA



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Science and Technology, Shibli Faraz in a group photo during his visit to Comsats University Islamabad. - DNA

President asks PRC to offer humanitarian aid to Palestinians

ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi on Monday asked the Pakistan Red Crescent to help the victims of Palestine massacre through medical teams and first-aid supplies. "Have urged Pakistan Red Crescent to help victims of massacre that is taking place in Palestine. Offer medical teams, volunteers, supplies and tents," the president said in a tweet. He also called upon the member countries of Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to come forward by extending humanitarian assistance to the Palestinians, besides highlighting the issue at international forums. President Alvi, earlier in a letter addressed to his Palestinian counterpart Mahmoud Abbas, had strongly condemned Israel's violence and assured of Pakistan's efforts in mobilizing the international community for the Palestinian cause. He had also reaffirmed Pakistan's abiding support for a just settlement of the Palestine issue in accordance with the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions and for the establishment of an independent, viable and contiguous Palestinian state, with pre-1967 borders and Al-Quds-Al-Sharif as its capital. - DNA

PTA for quality digital services during pandemic: Amir Azeem

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) Major General (R) Amir Azeem Bajwa Monday said that PTA was making utmost efforts along with other stakeholders and the telecom industry to increase availability of quality digital services across the sectors during the pandemic. In his message in his message on WTIS Day he said, that the theme for this year - "Accelerating Digital Transformation in challenging times" holds special significance for the world and Pakistan. Digital transformation is opening the doors of opportunities to increase economic growth, reduce inequality and promote financial inclusion." The chairman said that PTA is continuously pursuing the government's goal of uplifting all segments of the society through modern day Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). - DNA

"Crypto Currency As An Economy Booster For Pakistan"

QURAT-UL-AIN FASIH

DIGITAL money is an advanced resource that is made and moved with the assistance of cryptographic strategies for the most part dependent on block chain. Coins are delivered in advanced structure as per certain numerical computations. Consequently, advanced monetary standards can be perceived as ones that have no actual structure however the term "cryptographic money" had been basically utilized in 2011 in the "Forbes" magazine. Headway of innovation isn't just improving the way of life of individual, yet it is likewise advancing the monetary framework. Cryptographic money is the cash arrangement of computerized time which give shared, decentralized arrangement of economy. It may not replace the fiat money, yet it will change the communication of web associated worldwide market. The obscurity given by cryptographic money is the significant obstacle looked by legitimate experts for its guideline. State Bank of Pakistan forced restriction on cryptocurrency and Federal Investigation

Agency acted against digital currency client. A computerized money framework won't just influence the monetary arrangement of a general public, however it likewise impacts the social way of life, thinking and business arrangement of a general public. By authorizing digital money in Pakistan its belongings would be extraordinary. It will change the network protection framework give computerized mindfulness and business arrangement of Pakistan. Numerous individuals in Pakistan search about different crypto currency and how they can get it. For example initially individuals search about how to purchase Bitcoin in Pakistan they look for changed computerized monetary standards wallets and above all they get some information about how they can exchange for these crypto currency in Pakistan. There is just one trade which is working in Pakistan and individuals can utilize it to purchase crypto currency like Bitcoin in Pakistan. Localbitcoins.com is the solitary stage where you can purchase and sell bitcoins in Pakistan. To exchange bitcoins utilizing localbitcoins.com you need to make a record on their site. As mindfulness spreads about bitcoin, it has

cleared its way into Pakistan too. Individuals here in Pakistan are utilizing bitcoins differently, for example, getting it online just as building mining rigs. Using crypto currency can bring lots of opportunities in Pakistan. Pakistan comes at the 3rd number when it comes to freelancing a worldwide local area of in excess of 20 million consultants. Pakistan's future in this area looks quite bright without a doubt. By utilizing bitcoins in outsourcing it would bring down the expenses and furthermore increment their pay by 2 to 5 percent. So being a high settlement market, an expected independent industry and membership to very good quality web broadband administrations, bitcoin can track down a home market in Pakistan. By authorizing crypto currency in Pakistan global exchange of cash will be significantly simpler and it won't need any administrations of outsider. It will likewise emphatically influence our picture in worldwide market that we are not hesitant to acknowledge new innovation and will make Pakistan free of any outsider assistance. As an Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Islamic guidelines and points of view have incredible significance in our approach making and way of life. A few groups should think about its acknowledgment

in the light of Islamic law. Concerning of crypto currency Islamic standards think about it as exchanging gold. All things considered "Halal" to purchase gold and sell it after some time when the cost of gold increases and get benefit. Also, the crypto currency is a resource which is purchased by an individual and saved it for some time and stands by until its cost increase and offers it to get benefit. The biggest advantage of computerized cash is that every single monetary exchange is monitored and the specialists may follow who pays cash to whom and for what reason. Government workplaces can likewise use the computerized money for making installments among various services, by the government to organizations and by the governments to nearby and region organizations and other government offices. The digital money would generally profit Pakistan regarding expanding coordination among financial and monetary approaches adding that the electronic cash would likewise assist the country with pulling in new unfamiliar ventures. The record guarantees that all exchanges between "digital wallets" can ascertain a precise equilibrium. All exchanges are checked to ensure that the coins utilized are possessed by the current

spender. This public record is additionally referred to as an "exchange block chain". Block chain innovation guarantees secure advanced exchanges through encryption that make the element practically unhackable and of misrepresentation. With security like this block chain innovation is ready to affect virtually every sector of our life. Very much like each innovation crypto currency have passed early reception stage. It is received globally and developing with time and develop enough to embrace it. Cryptographic money likewise carries different advances with itself i.e., block chain and it is a development innovation which offer different types of assistance. It gives possible answer for numerous monetary issues looked by Pakistan. In the event that it is embraced in current age than it will be difficult to refresh our framework with time however after some time, we will require help from outer sources to refresh our computerized framework. It will likewise open the gateway of advancement in field of digital system. It might likewise support the new companies and assist Pakistan with making its own Silicon Valley. - The writer is student at SZABIST ISLAMABAD

PBC condemns Israel's attacks on Palestinians

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Khush Dil Khan, Vice-Chairman, Pakistan Bar Council, has strongly condemned the Israel's "barbaric attacks" and blamed "systematic crimes" for hostilities against the innocent Palestinians at outside the Al-Aqsa Mosque during the holy month of Ramadan and thereafter airstrikes on Gaza city that resulted in deaths and injuries to Palestinian civilians, including children. He further expressed that indiscriminate use of force against defenseless Palestinians, not only causing deaths and injuries, but also increasing restrictions on the fundamental freedoms of Palestinians and violating all norms of humanity & international laws. While expressing his grave concern upon the hypocritical attitude of the Muslim Countries including Pakistan he stated that only passing of Resolution by the OIC or other forum is nothing else but futile exercise. He argued upon the Muslim Countries to be united with sincerity and backed with the innocent people of Palestine and utilized all the sources to protect the Al-Aqsa Mosque from the act of barbarism of Israeli Forces backed by the European Countries.

Court adjourns fake accounts reference

ISLAMABAD: An Accountability Court (AC) on Monday adjourned hearing on cases pertaining to fake accounts and a private company B4U. ACI Judge Muhammad Bashir heard the case lodged by National Accountability Bureau (NAB). The court adjourned hearing without further proceeding due to the absence of NAB investigation officer and prosecutor. The court heard the separate cases against asset freezing of a co-accused Naheed Manzoor and a private company B4U. The NAB had requested the court to freeze the assets of Chaudhary Adam Amin, the owner of B4U Company. He was accused of looting the public on the name of investment. Meanwhile, Accountability Court-III Judge Syed Asghar Ali adjourned hearing till June 1, against Omni Group's Abdul Ghani Majeed in reference pertaining to embezzlement in funds of sugar cane growers. - APP

Briefs

Government extending scholarship for girls

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to Prime Minister (SAPM) on Poverty Alleviation and Chairperson of Ehsaas Programme, Dr. Sania Nishtar Monday said that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government was taking all possible steps to provide opportunities to young girls by extending scholarships programme on merit. "We have started under-graduate scholarship program for females to lessen educational burden from their parents", she said this in an interview with a private television channel. Ehsaas Program was continuing unabatedly across the country, she said adding there was no discrimination with anyone in that regard. The incumbent government, she said had started a number of schemes through Benazir Income Support Program (BISP), to help mitigate the sufferings of the poor families. Replying to a question about adverse effects of coronavirus, she said the poor segment of society had badly affected by lethal wave of virus. She further stated that PTI government has supported the daily wage workers during the first wave of COVID-19. To another question about poverty graph in Pakistan, she said the government has disbursed an amount of Rs.180 billion among the labor class. She informed that a program has also been launched to provide food to poor segment of society through "LungerKhana".

Maryam put people lives at risk

DNA

RAWALPINDI: City-chapter leaders of Pakistan Tehreek Insaf (PML-N) on Monday termed Maryam Nawaz visit to Sheikhupura is a blatant violation of the COVID-19 Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and a contempt for the safety and welfare of people. Talking to APP, Vice President PTI Rawalpindi city Mian Imran Hayat said despite knowing the dangers of the deadly virus and a threat alert already issued by the National Command and Control Center (NCOC), she put the people's life into danger amid rising cases of COVID-19. He questioned why it was necessary for her to pay a visit to party member Latif's family in Sheikhupura who was arrested on charges of committing treason. District President PTI Traders wing Shahid Qayyum Mughal also criticized the PML N vice president Maryam Nawaz for gathering people at the residence of PML MNA Javed Latif amid the worsening COVID-19 situation in the county, adding PML N was dramatizing the spectacle in the country. He asked the opposition parties to avoid risking people's lives by holding public gathering during a pandemic and resolve issues through dialogue.

NPC observes black day for attack on media houses

ISLAMABAD: The National Press Club (NPC) Islamabad on Monday observed black day to condemn the Israeli missile attack on Al-Jazeera TV and other media houses in Palestine, including the international news agency AP and the destruction of building housing them in Gaza. The NPC flag flew half-mast with black flags and the Palestinian national flags on the Club's building to express solidarity with the oppressed Palestinians. The members of various journalist bodies of the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi, representatives of civil society and the general public attended the event held on the occasion. The speakers strongly condemned the brutal acts by Israeli forces against media houses and innocent Muslim population in Palestine, and said that such kind of unethical and inhuman acts were the open challenges to the civilized world. - APP

ICCI calls for lifting all restrictions on businesses

Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan said that Pakistan was estimated to have suffered an economic loss of Rs.2.5 trillion due to coronavirus restrictions in 2020

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) has called upon the government to lift all restrictions on businesses after May 19, 2021 as business community has already suffered huge financial losses due to lockdown during peak business season of Eid ul Fitr and could no longer afford any further lockdowns and restrictions. Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry said that the Eid spending in 2018 had touched the highest level of over Rs.1 trillion in Pakistan, but due to lockdowns, it was projected at Rs.560 billion in 2020 showing a decline of 44 percent. He said that the lockdowns and restrictions on businesses in 2020 were the ma-

major factor of bringing Eid spending down by 44 percent while Eid economy in 2021 has been badly hit due to week-long lockdown just before Eid despite the fact that Ramadan and Eid were the peak business seasons in Pakistan. Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan said that Pakistan was estimated to have suffered an economic loss of Rs.2.5 trillion due to coronavirus restrictions in 2020 while according to another estimate, Pakistan will observe an economic loss of about 10% amounting to over PKR.1 trillion in 2021, which was enough to show the extent of losses incurred by the businesses and the economy. He said that the lockdowns and restrictions have reportedly impacted the livelihoods of nearly 12.3 million to 18.53 million workers due to which a rise of over 33% in poverty level was projected in the country.



These estimates could cause a severe recession in our economy, therefore, the government should realize the gravity of the situation and consider lifting all restrictions on businesses in the upcoming meeting of NCOC to save them from further collapse, he emphasized. The ICCI President said that he had carried out visits along with

the DC ICT to various markets of the federal capital before the Eid lockdown and had noted that the majority of the business community and the customers were following SOPs, due to which the trend of Covid-19 cases in Islamabad was on the decline. This situation demanded that the government should have relaxed restrictions on businesses in the federal capital during the last week of Ramadan, which unfortunately was not done. He said that the business community in collaboration with the district administration was enforcing SOPs to curtail any further spread of the coronavirus while all the trade/retail associations of Islamabad were willing to handover a signed petition to the government for ensuring complete compliance of Covid-19 SOPs. Therefore, He urged that during the next meet-

ing of NCOC, all restrictions on businesses in Islamabad should be lifted to revive the business and economic activities. He further urged that the indoor and outdoor dining should be allowed in Islamabad since restaurants all over the Middle East and most of Europe were allowing indoor dining with acrylic or glass partitions between each table. He said that the restaurant associations were willing to install the same acrylic partitions in Pakistan to maintain social distancing between each table. He further emphasized that the NCOC must take all decisions concerning the businesses in consultation with chambers of commerce and trade bodies, which were the key stakeholders of the economy and unilateral decisions entailed harmful consequences for the overall economy.

SECP to introduce Concept of SPACs

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: In light of its vision to provide viable and sustainable eco-system for capital formation, the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) is exploring the concept of special purpose acquisition company (SPACs). To introduce the SPAC, the SECP has proposed amendments to the Public Offering Regulations, 2017 to solicit public comments. The draft amendments are available at <https://www.secp.gov.pk/laws/draft-for-discussion/draft-rules-regulations/SPACs>, a new concept for Pakistan's capital market, is prevailing in many jurisdictions, including USA, Canada, Malaysia etc. Under the SPAC structure, a company comprises of group of persons/professionals raise funds from the general public and those funds are utilized for the purpose of merger or acquisition transaction within a permitted time frame. A SPAC's life begins with its initial formation (in the form of a company), followed by its IPO, its search for a target, a shareholder approval for merger/acquisition and finally, the close of an acquisition or else return of the SPAC's proceeds back to its investors.

Citizens get traffic license from today

DNA

RAWALPINDI: There is a good news for the citizens that City Traffic Police (CTP) Rawalpindi will reopen its branches from May 18, 2021 to provide license and routine work has been started after lockdown which was imposed to contain corona virus. Now, the office would start its function as per the orders of DIG Traffic, Chief Traffic Officer Rawalpindi Rai Mazhar Iqbal said, adding, it was decided to open a driving license branch to facilitate the citizens. He however, made it clear that masks and social distance will be maintained in all cases by strictly implementing government SOPs in view of the corona virus. Those who come to obtain a driving license will be allowed to enter the traffic headquarters and service centers, he added. He warned that no facility will be provided to a person without a mask. He further said that anti-corona spray is being carried out on a daily basis at the traffic headquarters to protect the citizens from corona virus. He also appealed to the citizens to follow the instructions given by the traffic police otherwise strict action would be taken against the violators.

23,359 Covid-19 patients recovered

RAWALPINDI: As many as 23,359 COVID-19 patients have been recovered while 2174 lost their lives due to the disease in the district so far. As per data released by the District Health Authority here Monday, 6 patients were on the ventilator, 35 on oxygen and 74 in a stable condition of the total 115 admitted in the corona centers of the district. The authority informed that 57 more cases were tested positive during the last 24 hours while 2193 were quarantined including 1423 at home and 770 in isolation at present. - APP

NAB orders probe into RRP irregularities

ISLAMABAD: National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Chairman Justice (Retd) Javed Iqbal has directed NAB Rawalpindi to probe alleged corruption of billions of rupees, irregularities, and illegal land acquisition in the Rawalpindi Ring Road Project. According to a NAB spokesman, Justice Javed ordered Director General NAB Rawalpindi to cover all aspects of the Rawalpindi Ring Road project in the probe so that the responsibility could be fixed and culprits could be punished in accordance with the law. - APP

Efforts underway to curb Covid-19

SHAHEEN HANIF

RAWALPINDI: Assistant Commissioner Capt. (R) Anwar Ul Haq Monday visited Corona Vaccination Centers set up at Tehsil Headquarters Hospital, KotliSatyan and inspected the facilities being provided to the people. He interacted with the people who came to get themselves jabbed at the center and inquired about the attitude of the staff. The AC directed the officials to provide maximum possible facilities to residents reaching the vaccination center as the Punjab government was committed to fight and defeat the killing disease. He urged the people to

follow standard operating procedures regarding the C virus including maintaining social distancing, use of masks and washing hands with sanitizer, adding "Government alone cannot eliminate any pandemic without the cooperation of masses". Meanwhile, the tehsil administration Murree under its ongoing drive against violation of COVID-19 sealed Pakiza hotel on the charge of hosting guests and registered an FIR against the owner and arrested the hotel manager. The Punjab government had closed all tourist destinations to control the coronavirus and all hotels were banned from accommodating tourists during Eid days.

'Providing maximum relief top priority'

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Senior Superintendent of Police (Operations) Islamabad Dr. Syed Mustafa Tanveer has said that Islamabad police is trying its best to secure the capital and ensure safety of its citizens, a police spokesman said on Monday. The SSP (Operations) said that ICT Police is accelerating its efforts to curb crime in the city. During the last 24 hours, he said, 11 criminals were arrested during a crackdown against outlaws. According to the details, SP (City-Zone) Omer Khan constituted special police

team under the supervision of ASP Haider Ali including SHO Bani Gala, ASI Ghulam Shabbir along with others arrested a wanted Proclaimed offender namely Junaid Hashim involved in check bonus cases and further investigation is underway from him. Meanwhile Industrial-Area police arrested accused Awais Abbasi and recovered 210 gram hashish from him. Karachi Company police arrested accused Dolat Khan and recovered 105 gram hashish from him. Shams Colony police arrested accused Muhammad Sarfraz and recovered one 30 bore pistol.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Railways, Muhammad Azam Swati chairing a high level meeting through video link. - DNA

CDWP approves four social sector development projects costing Rs 8.7b

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Central Development Working Party (CDWP) here on Monday approved four different social sector developmental projects worth Rs 8.7 billion and recommended 01 project valuing Rs17 billion to Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) for further consideration. The CDWP met here with Deputy Chairman Planning Commission Mohammad Jehanzeb Khan cleared four development projects with a cumulative estimated cost of Rs 8.7 billion and recommended one project worth Rs 17

billion to the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) for further approval. The generated energy of this project will be transmitted to the load centers of Ghanche district and adjacent area of Skardu by laying 5 km long, 66 kV Transmission lines. A project of physical planning and housing development of Ziarat Town worth Rs 1,200 million presented in the meeting and approved. The project focused on infrastructure development including widening and improvement existing town roads, regeneration of the old town and provision of missing tourism Infrastructure and socio-economic uplift of Ziarat Town.

Three projects related to science & technology worth Rs 7.4 billion approved in the meeting. First project presented namely "Fulbright Scholarship Support Program HEC-USAID (Phase-III)" worth Rs 4,059.195 million, second project presented Enhancement of Academic Facilities at NED University of Engineering & Technology" worth Rs 1537.345 million and the third approved project title "Establishment of Pak-Korea Nutrition Center to improve Child and community Nutrition" worth Rs 1813.563 million approved by the CDWP.

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ISLAMABAD: CDA staffers showering water on the roadside plants to keep them fresh during hot weather. - DNA

Sonia Naz first trans to open business under KJP

ISLAMABAD: The Prime Minister's KamyabJawan Programme helps foster inclusion of trans-people in the society as Sonia Naz, a Trans artist, has become the country's first transgender to open her own business in fashion designing field after getting a soft loan of Rs one million under its Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme (YES). On a mission to transform the prevailing mindset in the society that they are only born to dance or beg, the Trans artist said she wanted to change such way of thinking among the people by setting an example. Sonia Naz, in a two-minute video clip, said she swiftly applied for a concessionary loan after hearing the news that Prime Minister Imran Khan had launched the KamyabJawan Programme (KJP) to assist the youth in starting their own businesses. She said she felt optimistic after witnessing a third column [transgender] at the application form of the KJP as usually there were only two columns at a form, male and female. She appreciated Prime Minister Imran Khan and the KJP's team for including transgender community under such a "wonderful" initiative. Sonia Naz also spoke about the issues faced by the transgender at their homes and in the society. Commenting over the development, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Youth Affairs Muhammad Usman Dar said Sonia Naz became the first transgender, who had availed a soft loan under the KJP. - DNA

Afridi urges world to raise unified voice for Palestine

Afridi said Prime Minister Imran Khan was standing tall to support the Palestinians. "Demographic terrorism is being implemented by the illegal occupational regime against Palestinian people

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Parliamentary Committee on Kashmir Shehryar Khan Afridi Monday called on the Ambassador of Palestine Ahmed Amin Rabei and expressed full support of the Pakistani nation to the Palestinian nation in these difficult times. He said that Pakistan attached special connection with Palestine and all political parties were one over Palestine. "We have been closely observing developments taking place in Palestine. OIC was established immediately for protection of Palestine. The so called champions of human rights are nowhere to be seen

over the killings of Palestinians," he said. "Except for a few voices supporting the Palestinians, the prosperous world is standing with the illegal Israeli administration," he said and added that western world's public was speaking up to free Palestine while their governments were supporting Israel. He urged them to shun the double standards and speak for Palestine who were rightful owners of their lands occupied by the Israeli government. He said that pragmatic approach needs to be adopted by the Muslim Ummah and Israeli atrocities need to be stopped immediately against the people of Palestine. "Muslim Ummah needs to stand united and convey a message to the world that no more Israeli ter-



rorism against Palestinians would be tolerated," he said. Afridi said Prime Minister Imran Khan was standing tall to support the Palestinians. "Demographic terrorism is being implemented by the illegal occupational regime against Palestinian people.

It's unfortunate that Muslims today stand divided on sectarian and regional lines. Prime Minister Imran Khan has taken steps to bridge misunderstandings between the Gulf States, Pakistan stands right behind you and it would keep raising its voice for the cause of Palestine," he said. Ambassador Ahmed Amin Rabei expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Imran Khan and entire Pakistani nation for supporting Palestinians. The Ambassador said the Palestinians were very pleased with Prime Minister Imran Khan over his diplomatic overtures to support Palestine. We have strong resolve to defend our land and our people, he added. "PM Imran Khan speaks from his heart on Palestine

issue. Palestine and Pakistan have deep-rooted ties since decades," he said. He said that around 300,000 Palestinians were attending prayers in Al Aqsa mosque during Ramadan which made the occupational regime concerned. He said the occupational regime of Israel was involved in replacing Palestinians from Sheikh Jarrah area. "200 Israeli jets have destroyed around 1000 houses and 200 Palestinians martyred including women and children. They were targeting civilian people and using sophisticated weapons. Western world says occupational regime of Israel has right to defend but they don't accept the right of defense of Palestinian who are rightful owners of Palestine," he said.

Remittance report

THE findings on foreign remittances to Pakistan from its workers employed overseas, published in the World Bank's Migration and Development Brief, provides us with some excellent news. Instead of the decline in remittances widely projected in early 2020 because of apprehensions regarding the Covid-19 pandemic and the eviction of Pakistani workers from countries including several in the Middle East, remittance flow into the country increased by about 17 percent in 2020 with a current account surplus of \$945 million recorded by the State Bank in the first three quarters of the current fiscal year. The increase in remittances, also seen in other South Asian countries, has meant the central bank now holds a record foreign exchange reserve. Policies which included a tough crackdown on informal money transfers under FATF regulations, the opening of Roshan Digital Accounts which allowed Pakistanis to send money to accounts opened in banks at home and policies allowing investments in land all pushed forward this encouraging increase. It appears the pandemic in fact may have prevented use of funds for travel and other similar purposes.

The remittances also demonstrate, as was the case since they began in the 1970s, just how important money coming in from overseas Pakistanis is to the country's economy. Pakistan needs to do more to protect this flow by persuading nations to slow down or halt policies which place tough travel restrictions on Pakistanis or refuse them visas. If we can develop better ties and stronger links, the scope for Pakistanis working abroad could increase still further.

The brain drain though is highly damaging to Pakistan. The solution may be to produce more professionals, especially in sectors which need more expertise such as nursing and teaching so that our best professionals are not lured into more lucrative pasture. We must find ways to keep the remittances flowing in through documented banking channels but also keeping in view that these foreign remittances show how much talent Pakistan may have lost to other nations. Pakistan's high population growth rate and high unemployment also make it inevitable that people will seek roots out of the country. Along with encouraging remittances, the country needs to develop entrepreneurial opportunities at home so that investment inside the country can also flourish and offer both resources and jobs. The success in defeating a drastic decline in foreign remittances at the height of the Covid pandemic is encouraging.

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Pakistan at the Olympics

DESPITE all odds, it looks like the Tokyo Olympics, originally scheduled to be held in 2020 but now postponed to late July, will eventually be held. While there is still some uncertainty, with calls increasing to cancel the Olympics due to the rise of the third wave in some countries, so far the chances of the international games to be held look higher and higher as countries assemble their teams.

On that front, despite lockdowns slowing down activity, Pakistan has also successfully managed to sort out a team. Our athletes achieved the entry standards, either by qualifying time or by world ranking in several track and field events. The Pakistan Olympic Association (POA) has completed the accreditation process of the players and officials, which include Arshad Nadeem (javelin throw), Equestrian Usman Khan, shooters Gulfam Joseph and Khalil Akhtar.

This team has made certain headways for Pakistan—for the first time in history, Pakistan entered one eventing rider into the Olympic equestrian competition, by finishing in the top two, outside the group selection, of the individual FEI Olympic Rankings for Group F (Africa and Middle East). Our shooters have also achieved quota places for air pistol events by virtue of their best finishes at the ISSF World Championships and Asian Championships.

However, Pakistan's team is not complete yet—the POA still needs to place two athletes and swimmers and thus is still looking to recruit players.

While Pakistan has made progress on the Olympics, we have so far not had a memorable run at the international games, with the last time Pakistan having won a single medal being the Olympic games in 1992 Barcelona. There are a number of reasons for the poor performance—including poor policies by our sports ministries and unfortunately, it does not look like things are changing. POA recently expressed its dissatisfaction over the steps the federal sports ministry will adopt in the new national sports policy, as they fear that if implemented, all the national sports federations will be banned by their respective international bodies.

The government needs to pay heed to the POA's concerns, and ensure that all Olympics requirements, particularly regarding Covid are met strictly and on time, so that our athletes are not deprived of an international opportunity.

Reunion with KSA: Efforts off the mark

Dr M Ali Hamza



It is to be noted that Saudi Arabia and Pakistan are leading members of the OIC; however Saudi Arabia is one of the strongest supporters of India during Pakistan's wars with India, especially in the creation of Bangladesh from Pakistan's eastern wing in 1971

UNDER the Pan-Islamic ideology, Pakistan has always shouldered KSA (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia) as guardian against any external threat. Therefore, since the 1970s, Pakistani soldiers have been stationed in Saudi Arabia to protect the Kingdom. During the Iran-Iraq War in 1980's around 20,000 Pakistani soldiers were stationed in the kingdom. Fighter Pilots of the Pakistan Air Force flew aircraft of the Royal Saudi Air Force to repel an incursion from South Yemen in 1969 and Pakistan Army Corps of Engineers built Saudi fortifications along its border with Yemen. In 1979, during the siege of Mecca, Pakistani SSG commandos carried out the operation to rescue the pilgrims and captured the insurgents. Saudi Arabia is the largest importer of Pakistani arms, and has purchased small and medium conventional weaponry worth millions of US Dollars. In 2016, Pakistan Ordnance Factories (POF) has secured export order worth 81 million US\$ to Saudi Arabia. Moreover since 2017 General Raheel Sharif (Ex- Pakistan Army Chief) is the first supreme commander of Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition, also known as Muslims' NATO. There are reportedly around 70,000 Pakistani servicemen serving in the Military of Saudi Arabia. Though our bilateral relations have been historically close and friendly, even when KSA kept building business deals with India and we kept floating away from Iran. Apparently we have commercial, cultural, political, and strategic relations with KSA since the establishment of Pakistan in 1947, but our religious ties seem to be of utmost importance, therefore KSA has generously infused its finances into our Mudrasas (schools of theological teaching), and extended

gifts in form of mosques.

It is to be noted that Saudi Arabia and Pakistan are leading members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC); however Saudi Arabia is one of the strongest supporters of India during Pakistan's wars with India, especially in the creation of Bangladesh from Pakistan's eastern wing in 1971. Moreover Saudi Arabia supports India's stance on the Kashmir conflict, and opposes the Pakistan's position in the Indo-Pakistan peace process. In a recent history; August 2019, when IOK's special autonomous status was challenged and Narendra Modi passed a bill revoking Article 370 of the constitution and Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir lost its freedom to design and enact its own laws regarding foreign affairs, defense, finance, and communications: a harsh downgrade from a state to a union territory. Pakistan condemned the move and folded its relations; removing ambassador and stopping trade. Pakistan also brought the matter to the OIC which represents 57 Muslim-majority countries around the world; dominantly manipulated by Arab countries. In the same month of 2019, Pakistan categorically asked not to invite the then Indian minister of external affairs Ms Sushma Swaraj in the upcoming OIC meeting, to convey the annoyance caused by Indian action. But we witnessed her welcome. The response of OIC was lukewarm. Besides, Saudi Arabia gave Pakistan a \$3 billion loan and a \$3.2 billion oil credit facility in late 2018. After Islamabad sought Riyadh's support over alleged human rights violations by India in the disputed territory of Kashmir, Saudi Arabia has pushed Pakistan to repay the loan. Pakistan returned \$1 billion to Saudi Arabia and for a sec-

ond installment of a \$3 billion soft loan Islamabad reached out to Beijing for a commercial loan to help it offset pressure to repay another \$1 billion to Riyadh next month. With the \$1 billion flowing out, Pakistan, which has \$13.3 billion in central bank foreign reserves, could face a balance of payments issue after clearing the next Saudi installment. In such an upsetting state of affairs, who helped us? No country from OIC indeed and no Arab billionaire king, rather 'China has come to our rescue'. And if it is a Chinese debt trap; as many friends of KSA in west propagate it, then who pushed us in the trap? Our very own Prince Salman also known as MBS!

In early 2019 on his visit, MBS offered India \$100bn investment for infrastructure and agrees to help fight extremism and terrorism. In a same visit to the region MBS offered only \$20 investment to Pakistan; that has not yet been started flowing. KSA is a home to more than 2.7 million Indian expatriates; the largest community of expatriates in Saudi Arabia, that never had stress or threat to get expelled. The kingdom is India's fourth-largest trading partner, with bilateral trade worth \$28bn, supplying 20 percent of its crude oil to India. Besides all economic and social ties with India KSA was never given an access to inject financial funding for religious schools. Rather senior Indian diplomats are found blaming KSA funding religious schools and organizations that contribute to extremism in South Asia (U.S. diplomatic cable accessed by The Hindu through WikiLeaks in 2009). Point of the matter is to realize who is who by recalling the undeniable historical memory to stop efforts that have well established and proven to go off the mark.

Violence in Palestine: A wake up call for Muslims

Shujaat Hamza



It is no surprise that the US and its powerful western allies are blindfolded when it comes to crimes against Muslims. For the past three or four decades, the "human rights champions" have invaded and wreaked havoc upon a number of Muslim countries, while having time to remain silent and even supporting the oppressors and fascist regimes in occupied Kashmir and occupied Palestine

Gaza suffers from the deadliest escalation in Israeli aggression in over seven years. On Sunday, Israeli air attacks killed at least 42 Palestinians, wounded dozens more, and flattened at least three residential buildings.

The home of Gaza's Hamas chief, Yehya al-Sinwar, was also targeted, according to the media. As of Monday, at least 200 people, including 59 children and 35 women, had been killed in the Gaza Strip since the latest violence began.

According to Israeli media and officials, Israel had reported 10 dead, including two children.

The violence began with overnight clashes between Palestinian worshippers in Masjid Al Aqsa and Israeli occupation troops during the last week of Ramadan. The tensions were raising high when an Israeli court was set to announce its verdict in a case of evicting seven Palestinian Arab families from their homes in East Jerusalem.

The families have been living in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood since 1956.

Israel's Supreme Court was due to hear an appeal in the Sheikh Jarrah case on May 10. But Israel's Attorney General asked for a delay.

The legal battle over the homes in Sheikh Jarrah has reignited a decades long debate about who has claim to the city and its holy sites. In April, hundreds of Jewish extremists marched through Jerusalem at the end of April chanting anti-Muslim and provocative slogans.

The ongoing violence in Gaza and Jerusalem has also exposed the shameful double standards of so called champions of human rights and their selective justice. Those who dare question Israeli terrorism are labelled anti-Semitic. United States has been vocal about preserving the "human rights" everywhere. The US administration has been heavily critical of China's treatment of Uighurs. They even sanctioned powerful Saudi officials over alleged murder of a journalist. But when it comes to the sufferings of Palestinian people, they seem unaware of the crimes being committed there by Israeli occupation forces. On the contrary, a number of top US officials, including President Joe Biden and Secretary of State

Antony Blinken have reiterated the US' commitment to defend and help Israel against "terrorism", terming the current atrocities by Israeli occupation forces as their right to self-defense. Though the US has been opposing the proposed eviction of Palestinian families from their ancestral homes, they fail to condemn the horrible Israeli attacks on Palestinians. What United States somehow fails to understand is that the rockets Israel intercepts, are actually Palestine's right to self-defense against the brutal attacks of occupation forces.

Even at the United Nations Security Council, no progress has been made in securing a cease fire, let alone condemning Israel for the violence. The Security Council's emergency session was summoned on Sunday, but failed to make any significant progress in easing the situation. One permanent member blocked a resolution that would have condemned Israel's military action against Palestinians and sought immediate cease fire, that member being the United States of America; the self proclaimed defender of human rights and democracies.

Whereas, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) also held a foreign ministers' meeting, to discuss the situation, and the Muslim bloc issued a strong joint statement, condemning Israeli aggression and holding Israel responsible for all the havoc being wreaked upon Palestinians. The Palestinian foreign minister slammed the decision of some Muslim states to normalize relations with Israel without securing a just solution to the issue. The foreign ministers of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Iran expressed their countries' condemnation of Israeli actions in Gaza and Jerusalem, though it's a little late for condemnation, as Israel has so far shown no interest in any kind of cease fire, with the Israeli Prime Minister quoted to have said that the deadly bombing of the Gaza Strip would continue despite an international outcry and efforts to broker a ceasefire.

Meanwhile, Russia and China have raised their concerns on Israeli aggression and called for an immediate cease fire. China has even slammed

United States for its double standards and failure to hold Israel responsible for Gaza violence.

It is no surprise that the US and its powerful western allies are blindfolded when it comes to crimes against Muslims. For the past three or four decades, the "human rights champions" have invaded and wreaked havoc upon a number of Muslim countries, while having time to remain silent and even supporting the oppressors and fascist regimes in occupied Kashmir and occupied Palestine. The United States and its European allies invaded Iraq and committed war crimes there, on a piece of information that was later found to be inaccurate. There's no check on their war crimes in Syria, Libya and Afghanistan. The private US agents who were facing prison time in an American prison over the killing of civilians in Iraq, were granted a presidential pardon by President Trump earlier this year. This is the state of selective accountability and justice in the world we live in. The countries like India and Israel, who ridicule and categorically reject all UN resolutions and international pressure to let their fascist agendas succeed, enjoy special ties with the "champions of human rights and democracy".

It is high time the Muslim world must learn a lesson, and develop the alliances which benefit them in need, rather than siding with the oppressors and enemies. For decades the Muslims have been used against one another. The ongoing violence against Palestinians and the failure of the world to condemn Israel must serve as an eye opener for Muslims across the globe. Historically, Muslims have always been defeated by treachery in their own ranks, and with the help of their own brothers. The OIC's session on Israel and recent Iran-Saudi meetings in Iraq are welcome developments. The world order is rapidly changing, and the Muslim world must architect it for their own benefit. As Quran says;

"And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided. And remember the favour of Allah upon you - when you were enemies and He brought your hearts together and you became, by His favour, brothers." [3:103]

Briefs

8 killed as
Cyclone
Tauktae hits
Indian coast

NEW DELHI: At least eight people were killed in torrential rain and winds in south-western and western Indian states, while a cyclone is developing and is forecast to hit one of the country's coastal states by Monday evening.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) in a statement has issued an alert, stating that it has developed into an extremely severe cyclone Tauktae that is "very likely" to make landfall in a Gujarat state's Bhavnagar district with high intensity and wind gusts of up to 185 kilometers per hour (114.954 miles per hour) on Monday evening. Four people died in the state of Karnataka on Sunday as a result of the torrential rain and winds. Two more people died in the same state and two more in Goa on Monday, according to the official statement. — APP

12 killed in
S.Sudan

JUBA: Twelve civilians have been killed in a contested oil-rich border region claimed by Sudan and South Sudan in what local government officials said Monday was a massacre by nomadic herdsmen. The attack took place early Sunday at a village some 64 kilometres (40 miles) east of the main town in Abyei, a disputed region under UN protection since South Sudan gained independence in 2011. Kon Manyet Maticok, the deputy chief administrator of the Abyei Administrative Area, said armed Misseriya herdsmen from Sudan stormed the village of the Dunguob before dawn. "They attacked the area from three different directions, and the result was the killing of 12 people," Maticok told AFP, adding that seven others were hospitalised with serious injuries.

"Abyei Administration and the entire people of Abyei condemn in the strongest terms possible this brutal, barbaric and cowardly attack and killing of innocent people." Maticok said the same herdsmen — who have been implicated by the UN in past atrocities — were responsible for a separate incident Friday where an elderly man was killed and another injured.

AFP has sought comment from Sudanese authorities. A spokesman for the United Nations Interim Security Force in Abyei (UNISFA), which deployed to the region in 2011, put the death toll from Sunday's attack at 11 and said a formal investigation had been launched.

"Of course our troops, immediately on hearing the report, went to the scene but unfortunately the attackers already left the place," UNISFA spokesman Daniel Adekera told media. — APP

NA condemns
Israeli...

From Page 01
Innocent people were attacked in Al-Aqsa Mosque after which Israel's air force pummeled the Gaza strip and destroyed numerous homes, the Opposition leader said.

"Since 1948, the way that Israeli governments and their armed forces have attacked Palestinians is not hidden from anyone," he said. In East Jerusalem, extremists had chanted "Death to Arabs" and the entire world witnessed the attacks on innocent Palestinians after that, he said.

He said that six to seven million Palestinians have been displaced from their homes because of Israeli aggression, adding that if a Muslim country had restored to such atrocities, then war would have been started against it.

"Today, international media is silent. If another country had killed so many innocent civilians, the whole world would have imposed sanctions on it," said Shahbaz. Shahbaz further said that Islamic countries should represent people's emotions regarding the Palestine issue, adding that Muslim nations should unite and voice their concerns without wasting time.

He also suggested that Pakistan should observe "Yume-e-Quds" on Friday to show solidarity with the people of Palestine and said that Pakistan should send relief to Palestine through the Red Cross.

US blocks UN statement
for third time in a week

FOREIGN DESK

NEW YORK: A third United Nations Security Council emergency meeting in a week — amid the deadly Israeli offensive in Gaza — has again ended with no concrete outcome after the United States blocked a joint statement calling for an immediate ceasefire between Israel and Hamas.

The meeting on Sunday came after the US reportedly twice blocked over the last week resolutions that would have condemned Israel's military response and called for a ceasefire. Nearly 200 people, including 58 children, have been killed in the intense bombing of the besieged enclave of two million people.

Israel has justified its bombing campaign as a retaliation to rocket attacks by Hamas fighters. But the Gaza-based Hamas movement said its actions were a response to the Israeli policy of forced displacement of Palestinians in occupied East Jerusalem and the storming of Al-Aqsa Mosque by Israeli forces last week. Israel had missed a Hamas deadline to withdraw its forces from the mosque compound.

The latest round of inaction also comes as US President Joe Biden has given no signs of plans to step up public pressure on Israel, instead repeatedly stressing Israel's right to defend itself.

Critics, including members of Biden's party, have accused the administration of white-washing Israeli strikes, which have killed at least 198 Palestinians in Gaza and wounded more than 1,000 others.

Palestine to take Israeli assaults
to UN General Assembly

RAMALLAH: The Palestinian Authority will go to the UN General Assembly for issuing a resolution to halt the Israeli aggression, Prime Minister Mohamed Shtayeh said on Monday. "Unfortunately, the UN Security Council has failed to reach a resolution to condemn and halt the Israeli assaults," Shtayeh said during a Cabinet meeting in the West Bank city of Ramallah. "This means that we will go the UN General Assembly to adopt a resolution where no country has a veto power," he said. At least 198 Palestinians have been killed, including 58 children and 34 women, in Israel

at least 10 Israelis, including two children, have been killed by rockets launched from Gaza since Monday.

US ambassador to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, told the emergency meeting that the US was "working tirelessly through diplomatic channels" to stop the fighting. "The United States has made clear that we are prepared to lend our support and good offices should the parties seek a ceasefire," she said. Still, no joint statement emerged from the council, despite negotiations led by Norway, China and Tunisia.

The US, China, France, Russia and United Kingdom are all permanent members of the security council, giving them veto power

li attacks in the Gaza Strip since last week, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry. More than 1,235 people have also been injured and tens of buildings destroyed or damaged in the Israeli onslaught.

The UN Security Council held a meeting on Sunday on the tensions between Israel and Palestine amid the former's attacks in Gaza, but the debate ended with no concrete outcome.

The session was the third to have been held by the top UN body this week after the US's two moves to block a joint statement that would condemn Israel for the violence and call for a cease-fire. — APP

over joint statements. China had previously called out the US as being the sole dissenting voice on the issue.

On Monday, a senior Fatah official told Al Jazeera that they were disappointed with the US position.

"The positive and serious vibes in the recent Biden's call to President Abbas did not reflect themselves on the US position at the UN Security Council last Tuesday," Sabri Saidam, Fatah Central Committee member, told Al Jazeera, referencing the Saturday call between Biden and Palestinian president.

"Deeds not words is what's needed!" he added. United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres began Sunday's meeting

with an appeal for a ceasefire.

"This senseless cycle of bloodshed, terror and destruction must stop immediately," he said. "All parties must respect international humanitarian law and international human rights law."

Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki, meanwhile, accused Israel of committing "war crimes" during the week-long offensive.

Israel's Ambassador to the UN, Gilad Erdan, in turn accused Hamas of carrying out indiscriminate attacks for political gain and putting its own civilians at risk.

On Sunday, Israeli President Benjamin Netanyahu said the Israeli air raids were continuing at "full-force" and would "take time", adding he "wants to levy a heavy price" from Gaza's Hamas rulers.

US Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield warned during the meeting that the return to armed conflict would only put a negotiated two-state solution to the decades-old conflict further out of reach.

However, the US has shown little willingness to diverge from its support of Israel.

In a phone call with Netanyahu on Saturday, Biden focused on civilian deaths from Hamas rockets. A White House readout of the call made no mention of the US urging Israel to join in a ceasefire that countries in the Middle East were pushing. US Representative Adam Schiff, Democratic chairman of the House intelligence committee, urged Biden on Sunday to step up pressure on both sides to end the current fighting and revive talks to resolve Israel's conflicts and flashpoints with the Palestinians.

Abu Dhabi
likely to
host PSL 6
remaining
matches

DNA

KARACHI: Sheikh Zayed Cricket Stadium in Abu Dhabi is expected to host the remaining matches of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) season six.

According to details, the written permission from the UAE government is expected to be received by Monday.

Local players of all the teams will undergo the COVID-19 Tests on May 18 and 19 in Karachi and Lahore respectively.

On May 20, Karachi Kings and Quetta Gladiators will stay at a hotel in Karachi while teams of Peshawar Zalmi, Lahore Qalandars, Multan Sultans and Islamabad United will stay at a hotel in Lahore.

On May 22, all the teams will leave for Abu Dhabi via two chartered planes, the teams of Karachi and Quetta will depart from Karachi while the teams of Peshawar, Lahore, Multan and Islamabad will leave from Lahore.

All teams will have to quarantine for seven days. If the UAE government suggests a quarantine of 10 days, the tournament may be delayed by two days.

Summers
charged with
child sexual
offences

WEB DESK

MELBOURNE: Australian cricketer Aaron Summers has been charged with child sexual offences after a phone was recovered from him containing a number of videos containing child abuse material.

According to the reports, Summers was presented in Darwin Local Court for child sexual offences after he was arrested in Fannie Bay on Friday. A mobile phone was seized from Summers in which several videos related to child abuse were recovered.

Summers was subsequently charged with two counts of possessing child abuse material and one count of grooming a child. He has been remanded in custody.

Remember, Summer has represented Australia in different leagues around the world. Recently, he appeared in Pakistan's domestic season from Southern Punjab.

He was the first Australian cricketer to play domestic cricket in Pakistan.

Situation in
Ethiopia's
Tigray
'horrific'

GENEVA: Ethiopia's conflict-hit Tigray region is facing a horrifying situation with people dying of hunger, health services destroyed and rape "rampant", the WHO chief, himself from the region, said Monday.

"The situation in Tigray, Ethiopia, is, if I use one word, horrific. Very horrific," World Health Organization director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a press conference. Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed sent troops into Tigray in November after accusing the once-dominant regional ruling party of orchestrating attacks on federal army camps.

Nobel Peace Prize winner Abiy declared victory later that month when the army entered the regional capital Mekele. But fighting continues and the six-month conflict has sparked allegations of massacres and rape by Ethiopian forces and troops from neighbouring Eritrea. Tedros pointed out that some five million people in the region are now in need of humanitarian aid, and especially food aid.

"Many people have started dying actually because of hunger, and severe and acute malnutrition is becoming rampant," he said. In addition, hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced from their homes with over 60,000 fleeing into Sudan. At the same time, health services have been looted and destroyed, he said, adding that "the majority of them are not functioning". — APP



BUDAPEST: Trek-Segafredo's Edward Theuns of Belgium celebrates his victory of the final stage of the Tour de Hongrie bicycle race in Budapest, Hungary. — DNA

Catalan separatist
parties agree to form
new government

BARCELONA: Catalonia's two main separatist parties said Monday they had reached an agreement on forming a new coalition government, more than two months since a regional election.

The wealthy northeastern region of Spain has since 2015 been governed by a coalition made up of the leftist ERC and the more hardline "Together for Catalonia". In a joint statement, the two parties said they had reached an "agreement in principle" to form a new coalition and "avoid new elections" which will likely be headed by the ERC this time around as it got one more seat than JxC in the

February 14 polls. ERC leader Pere Aragonès, the vice president of the outgoing Catalan government, should now have enough votes to be elected the next president of the wealthy region.

The ERC won 33 seats in the February 14 polls, while JxC got 32 which together with the nine seats of hard left separatist party CUP will give Aragonès a majority in the 135-seat assembly.

The statement did not give details about the agreement, saying only that it was "being finalised". The parties have called a press conference at 1:30 pm (11:30 GMT) in Barcelona. — APP

ICC concludes investigation into
2018 'Match Fixers' broadcast

ISLAMABAD: The International Cricket Council (ICC) has concluded its investigation into the documentary programme 'Cricketer's Match Fixers' broadcast by Al Jazeera on May 27 2018 and said that no charges would be brought under the ICC Anti-Corruption Code against any of the five participants to the Code who featured in the programme due to insufficient credible and reliable evidence.

The comprehensive investigation focused on three main areas: the claims made by the programme, the suspects who were part of it and how the programme gathered evidence, said a press release issued here. The programme alleged that

two matches were fixed: India v England in Chennai in 2016 and India v Australia in Ranchi in 2017. To assess whether the passages of play highlighted in the programme were unusual in any way, the ICC engaged four independent betting and cricketing specialists to analyse the claims. All four concluded that the passages of play identified in the programme as being allegedly fixed were entirely predictable, and therefore implausible as a fix.

All five participants to the Code who featured in the programme have been interviewed by the ICC Integrity Unit and there was insufficient evidence based on the normal thresholds

applied through the Code to lay any charges.

Alex Marshall, ICC General Manager Integrity said, "We welcome the reporting of alleged corrupt activity within cricket as there is no place for such conduct in our sport, but we also need to be satisfied there is sufficient evidence to sustain charges against Participants."

In the case of the claims aired in this programme, there are fundamental weaknesses in each of the areas we have investigated that make the claims unlikely and lacking in credibility, a viewpoint that has been corroborated by four independent experts. "On the basis of the pro-

gramme, the Participants to the Code who were filmed appear to have behaved in a questionable manner, however, we have been unable to assess the full context of the conversations that took place beyond what was seen on screen versus what the Participants claim actually happened. This combined with the absence of any other credible evidence means there are insufficient grounds to bring charges under the ICC Anti-Corruption Code. "Should any new substantial evidence come to light I will re-examine the case. But at present I am comfortable with the conclusion of the investigation and the thoroughness with which it was undertaken." — APP

Protests staged in US for solidarity with Palestine

NEW YORK: Thousands of people across the United States staged protests this weekend to stand in solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza and demand an end to Israel airstrikes that have killed upwards of 192 civilians, according to media reports.

Protests extended as far as Los Angeles to New York on Saturday, the 73rd anniversary of al-Nakba, meaning "catastrophe," so named for the 1948 expulsion of more than 700,000 Palestinians from their home in East Jerusalem.

Several hundred people turned out in the Bay Ridge area of Brooklyn, New York, chanting "Free, free Palestine" and "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free."

They waved Palestinian flags and held placards that read "End Israeli Apartheid" and "Freedom for Gaza."

Many protesters wore black and white, and red and white, keffiyeh scarves, while drivers sounded car horns and motorcyclists revved their engines as the sun

beat down. They also criticized the Biden administration for its support to Israel whose military has been unleashing a barrage of attacks on Gaza, with progressive US lawmakers, Palestine advocates and rights groups urging the US president to pressure the Jewish state to end its military offensive.

The Israeli military began bombing the Gaza Strip last Monday after Israel's plan to forcibly displace Palestinian families from occupied East Jerusalem and its attacks on Palestinian worshippers at the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound spurred widespread protests in Jerusalem, the occupied West Bank and inside Israel.

Israeli air raids on Gaza have killed scores, destroyed roads, and flattened buildings, including a tower that housed the offices of Al Jazeera and The Associated Press. In a call with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Saturday, Biden "reaffirmed his strong support for Israel's right to defend itself against rocket attacks from

Hamas and other terrorist groups in Gaza", the White House said in a statement. "He condemned these indiscriminate attacks against towns and cities across Israel," the read-out also stated.

But the Israeli prime minister on Sunday remained adamant, saying the offensive was "continuing in full force" and "will take time", the Reuters news agency reported. A day earlier, Netanyahu thanked Biden for his "unequivocal support of Israel's right to defend itself."

In Louisville, Kentucky, a student organizer from the university there told The Courier-Journal that this year's commemoration is especially important.

"This is not just a Palestinian issue; it's a human rights issue," said the student, who did not want to be named out of concern for her Palestinian family's safety. "This is a humanitarian thing, and as Americans, we do have a duty to speak up about this because our own tax dollars are funding the

Israeli military." Further west, a rally in Phoenix saw hundreds gather at the Capitol to stand in solidarity with Palestinians.

Jamil Naser with the Arizona Palestine Solidarity Alliance said at the rally that protesters gathered to "reaffirm our commitment to the Palestinian people's struggle, for justice, return and liberation."

"On this day, we need to understand that Palestinians are not in a conflict, they are in a struggle for liberation," Naser said. "A big reason why that struggle seems insurmountable is because the outside support Israel receives from all corners of the world, but at the end of the day, there's no bigger culprit than the government of the United States."

Naser, echoed by other speakers, said the US aids and helps Israel's militarily "while looking the other way and offering cover for Israel while they commit countless human rights violations against Palestinian people."

Amid warnings of a 'full scale war,' Biden administration dispatches envoy to Middle East.

On Sunday, a massive rally of 4,000 in the streets of Paterson, New Jersey, marched and shouted chants of "Free Palestine" and "Occupation has to go." Organizers in one of the largest Arab and Palestinian communities in the United States asked people to call their elected officials to demand that they speak out for Palestinian rights and end unconditional aid to Israel.

US officials should recognize that the cause of unrest "is inhumane, unjust and oppressive" policies toward Palestinians, said Sayel Kayed, chairman of the New Jersey chapter of American Muslims for Palestine. In Memphis, Tennessee, chants of "Occupation is a crime from Memphis to Palestine" and "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free" rang through the air as a big group of marched to the National Civil Rights Museum. — APP

Briefs

Erdogan, Francis discuss Israeli attacks

FOREIGN DESK

ANKARA: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Pope Francis spoke over the phone on Monday and discussed Israel's ongoing attacks on Palestinian territories. During their conversation, according to a Turkish Communications Directorate statement, Erdogan said an atrocity is being committed in Palestine, adding Israel's attacks are not only against Palestinians, but all Muslims, Christians and humanity. Apart from blocking access to the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, restricting the freedom of worship, killing innocent civilians in the Palestinian lands, violating the human dignity, Erdogan said the occupying Israel is also endangering regional security.

Erdogan said all humanity should unite against Israel's illegal and inhuman practices that also violate the status of Jerusalem. Stressing that the international community should give Israel a deterrent response and lesson it deserves and take concrete steps in this direction, Erdogan said the Palestinians will continue to be massacred as long as the international community does not punish Israel, which has committed a crime against humanity. He noted that Turkey has carried out intense diplomacy at all relevant international platforms, especially at the UN, but the UN Security Council could not display the necessary sense of responsibility.

Azerbaijan to start Sputnik V vaccination

DNA

BAKU: Azerbaijan will start the use of Russia's Sputnik V coronavirus vaccine starting from May 18 in the nationwide vaccination process. The vaccine will be administered to people aged over 18. Baku Medical Center will be first to offer Sputnik V vaccines.

Earlier, Azerbaijan's State Agency for Compulsory Health Insurance and the Russian HUMAN VACCINE LLC signed an agreement on the import of 300,000 doses of 'Sputnik V' vaccines to the country. The first batch of the R Sputnik V vaccine, with 40,000 doses, was delivered to Azerbaijan on April 2.

It should be noted that the Sputnik V vaccine has already been recognized by 65 countries. Azerbaijan started vaccinating citizens using China's vaccine on January 18 and on May 3, it started the use of Vaxzevria vaccine produced by AstraZeneca. In addition, the country started offering COVID-19 vaccination to citizens aged over 18 from May 10.

The nationwide vaccination is free and on a voluntary basis and is in line with the "Strategy of vaccination against COVID-19 in Azerbaijan for 2021-2022".

Zubair, Zafar Bakhtawari elected President, SG UBG

Core committee also reposed unwavering and unflinching confidence in the leadership of SM Muneer and Iftikhar Ali Malik for rendering selflessly matchless and remarkable services for the welfare of business community

STAFF REPORT

LAHORE: The high level core committee of United Business Group in the federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry unanimously with overwhelming majority votes elected veteran trade leaders Zubair Tufail from Karachi and Zafar Bakhtawari from Islamabad as President and Secretary General respectively.

Unfolding the details of core committee decisions taken last night under the joint chairmanship of Iftikhar Ali Malik and SM Muneer, the newly elected Secretary Information Dr Mirza Ikhtiar Baig told newsmen here Monday that after detailed deliberations the names Zubair Tufail, a former President of Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Zafar Bakhtawari, a former Vice President of Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry including himself were proposed and members of entire core committee voted them to power.

He said entire core committee also reposed unwavering and unflinching confidence in the leadership of SM Muneer



and Iftikhar Ali Malik for rendering selflessly matchless and remarkable services for the welfare of business community and set aside their volunteer consent to step down from their key positions and asked them continue to hold their respon-

sibilities in the larger interest of the traders. However, Dr Mirza Ikhtiar Baig added that new leadership will take SM Muneer and Iftikhar Ali Malik into confidence for taking all important decisions. Zubair Tufail and Zafar Bakhtawari

thanked the core committee for electing them with majority votes and assured to serve the business community across the country by help addressing their genuine legitimate problems being confronted them on top priority.

SM Muneer and Iftikhar Ali Malik also expressed their gratitude to core committee for acknowledging their lifelong meritorious services and asserted that they will keep patronising and guiding them in the shouldering their responsibilities.

Core Committee announced to start working hard and conducting nationwide tour for mustering support of chambers and trade bodies for coming election of Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry with special focus on Baluchistan and KPK provinces.

Prominent among them who attended meeting were Mian Khalid Tawab, Muhammad Idres, Dr Nouman Idris Butt, Sh Riaz, Zahid Iqbal, Sh Tanvir Ahmad, Aziz Chan, Sohail Malik Manzoor Malik, Hameed Akhtar Chadda, Rehmat Ullah Javed, Ata Bajwa, Bilal Munir Arshad, Ch Amjad, Ghazanfar Bilour and Samina Fazil founder president Islamabad Women Chamber of chambers and Industry.

Top India scientist quits COVID panel

FOREIGN DESK

NEW DELHI: A top Indian virologist has resigned from a forum of scientific advisers set up by the government to detect variants of the coronavirus, days after questioning the authorities' handling of the pandemic.

Shahid Jameel, chair of the scientific advisory group of the forum known as INSACOG, declined to give a reason for his resignation.

"I am not obliged to give a reason," he told the Reuters news agency in a text message on Sunday, adding that he quit on Friday.

A top government scientist who is part of the forum said, on the condition of anonymity, that he did not think the departure of Jameel would hamper INSACOG's monitoring of virus variants.

Reuters reported earlier this month that INSACOG, the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genetics Consortium, warned government officials in early March of a new and more contagious variant of the coronavirus taking hold in the country. The variant, B.1.617, is one of the reasons India is currently battling the world's worst surge in COVID-19 cases.

Asked why the government did not respond more forcefully to the findings, for example by restricting large gatherings, Jameel had told Reuters that he was concerned that authorities were not paying enough attention to the evidence as they set policy.

Bitcoin sinks to three-month low

WEB DESK

NEW YORK: Bitcoin slashed to a three-month low on Monday as investors sold cryptocurrencies in the wake of Elon Musk hinting over the weekend that Tesla is considering selling or may have already sold some of its Bitcoin holdings.

Musk's ardent support for cryptocurrencies has boosted crypto markets in the recent past. But lately, he has roiled trade by appearing to cool on Bitcoin in favour of its one-time parody, dogecoin. The gyrations are beginning to spook even steered traders. Bitcoin fell more than 9 percent on Monday to \$42,185, its lowest since February 8, while ether, linked to the ethereum blockchain, fell about 8 percent to \$3,227.22. Dogecoin fell nearly 7 percent to \$0.48, and all three are well under recent records.

Musk's disclosure in early February that Tesla had invested \$1.5bn in corporate cash to buy Bitcoin sent the token's price to a record high and lent legitimacy to virtual currencies, which have come closer to being a more mainstream asset in recent months despite lingering scepticism. But in the past week, his online commentary shook the crypto faithful even as Musk reiterated his support for digital currencies overall.

Last week Musk said Tesla would stop taking Bitcoin as payment, owing to environmental concerns about energy use to process transactions.

Defending that decision on Sunday, he suggested Tesla may have sold its own holdings.

UN court pressed to probe Israel

GENEVA: Rights groups urged the International Criminal Court to determine whether Israeli air strikes that destroyed a Gaza building housing media outlets constituted war a crime.

Israeli missiles flattened the 13-storey al-Jalaa tower in Gaza City, which housed Qatar-based Al Jazeera Media Network and American news agency The Associated Press on Saturday.

Israel claimed the building housed not only news bureaus but an office of Hamas, which controls the Gaza Strip. The Israeli military gave the building's owner an hour to evacuate before attacking and bringing it down on live television.

"Deliberately targeting media outlets constitutes a war crime," press freedom watchdog Reporters Without Borders Secretary-General Christophe Deloire said in a statement.

"By intentionally destroying media outlets, the Israel Defence Forces are not only inflicting unacceptable material damage on news operations. - Agencies



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Kashmir Committee Shehryar Afridi met with Palestinian Ambassador Rabaie Ahmed at his office & passed the prayers of Pakistani nation on the recent attacks of Israeli occupant forces on the land of Palestine. - DNA

Slope planting technology in China to help Pakistan tea planting

"The biggest challenges that Pakistan tea industry faces is that the price of fresh tea leaves is too low compared with other countries"

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Slope planting technology in China to help Pakistan enhancing its tea production, according to a report published by Gwadar Pro.

"The biggest challenges that Pakistan tea industry faces is that the price of fresh tea leaves is too low compared with other countries," said Dr. Abdul Waheed, Director of National Tea and High-Value Crops Research Institute (NTHRI).

"It takes around 6 to 7 years for tea trees to grow and start its yield. The farmers cannot wait for that long, they need earnings for their daily living. Secondly, our farmers have

less amount of landholding. They just have 3 to 4 kanals of land. We should increase the price so that the farmers can happily process tea and supply it to our factories." Abdul thinks that Pakistan should make a special area for tea planting. "All the countries that have grown tea like Kenya, Sri Lanka, Uganda, Brundi or other countries have fixed a special area for tea. In Kenya, they called the army to protect that land. They did not let anyone cultivate other crops there other than tea. We have had a meeting on this with the government but haven't got the final approval is still left. This time, we are introducing a cluster-based system, in which we have 121 clusters."

"Right now, the tea produced in our country is not enough for the domestic requirement. If we establish a Tea Board, we can use the forest and hilly areas for growing tea." Naeem Ahmed, Assistant Technical Officer suggested. "Government should get involved in the process of commercialization and makes policies. Like in Turkey, they have a state reserved for only growing tea. Due to a large number of cultivation fields, they also get lots of revenue. We also need machinery for tea cultivation."

"China is a huge country that exports tea and it has more experience. If there can be a collaboration at the government level or some Ministry

like Ministry of Agriculture and Food, we can get machinery and experience from them."

Naeem believes that cooperation with China can help enhance Pakistan tea production. "People working here should be trained in China so that their work capacity increases. And people from China also should come to Pakistan."

Chinese technologies in tea production also interest Abdul, especially the slope land agriculture technology. "All of our hilly areas are like a slope. The technology will help us to manage this and allow us to irrigate it. If people start planting tea, it will help us de-salt and fertilize the land.

Bill Gates had a romantic relationship with a Microsoft employee

WASHINGTON: Bill Gates left the Microsoft board in 2020 as the board pursued an investigation into the billionaire's romantic relationship with a female employee, the Wall Street Journal reported Sunday.

The founder and former head of the US technology giant stepped down as board chair in March 2020.

"Microsoft Corp. board members decided that Bill Gates needed to step down from its board in 2020 as they pursued an investigation into the billionaire's prior romantic relationship with a female Microsoft employee that was deemed inappropriate," the Journal reported, citing people close to the matter.

This was "an affair almost 20 years ago which ended amicably," a spokeswoman for Gates told the Journal. According to the spokeswoman, Gates left Microsoft to focus more on his philanthropic organization, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Gates and his wife Melinda, who co-founded their charity two decades ago to battle global poverty and disease, announced their divorce on May 3 after 27 years of marriage. A spokesperson for Microsoft told AFP that the company was alerted in the second half of 2019 that "Bill Gates sought to initiate an intimate relationship with a company employee in the year 2000. - Agencies



China to launch Pakistan as pilot country for HSR

DNA

ISLAMABAD: China will invest in human development infrastructure under CPEC by launching Pakistan as a pilot country for the Health Silk Road (HSR), says Pakistan's Economic Haroon Sharif in an article published by Gwadar Pro.

He recalled in May 24, 2020, Wang Yi, China's Foreign Minister said China will work with other countries along the Belt and Road to vigorously promote cooperation on the Health Silk Road (HSR) as after the epidemic, the need for cooperation in the field of

public health will increase significantly. China's commitment to BRI projects remained unchanged.

The article added, Chinese President Xi Jinping pledged that a Covid-19 vaccine from China will be made a "global public good". Following this, the Chinese government also announced that the vaccines will be made available in an equitable manner and at a fair and reasonable price.

Unlike the United States, China has joined COVAX partnership to ensure timely and affordable availability of Covid-19 vaccine to poor countries.

China's National Biotech

Group, a subsidiary of Sinopharm, is conducting third phase trials in several partner countries including Argentina, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Pakistan and UAE.

Many of these partner countries have entered into to agreements with China for procurement and local production of Covid-19 vaccines. Pakistan has received over one million vaccines dosages from China so far and more shipments are being procured. It will a major development if China and Pakistan announce joint production of vaccine under CPEC.

While China has already donated Personal Protec-

tion Equipment (PPE) and hospital supplies to Pakistan, perhaps the time has come to scale up investments in the healthcare sector through the proposed "Health Silk Road" with CPEC being its pilot corridor. Like in the rest of the world, the current crisis has exposed serious shortcomings in Pakistan's public healthcare capacities.

There is every possibility that when both China and Pakistan talk about infrastructure during their next Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) meeting, they will discuss hospitals and laboratories along with other ports and highways.

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Briefs

Pakistan has more than 181m mobile subscribers

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Telecommunication said Monday mobile subscribers in the country have crossed 181 million, as it marked the World Telecommunication and Information Society Day (WTISD). The purpose of the WTISD is to help raise awareness of the possibilities that the use of the internet and other information and communication technologies (ICT) could bring to societies and economies, as well as ways to bridge the digital divide. 17 May marks the anniversary of the signing of the first International Telegraph Convention and the creation of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). The year's theme is "Accelerating Digital Transformation in challenging times". The overall teledensity – the number of telephone connections for every hundred individuals living within an area – of Pakistan stands at 85%, the telecommunication authority said. There are now over 100 million broadband subscribers in Pakistan, PTA said, with 88% of the population having access to internet/broadband services at one of the "lowest rates in the region".

'Opposition holds no power to topple govt'

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Interior Sheikh Rashid Ahmad on Monday said that Opposition was holding no power to topple the ruling party's leadership because of heavy mandate given by the people in the last election.

In an interview with a private television channel, he said no one could dare to remove the present leadership because Prime Minister Imran Khan was sincerely working for the welfare of the masses. He said that Pakistan armed forces were playing a vital role for the prosperity of the country. Appreciating the sacrifices of the Armed forces in war on terror, the minister said credit went to the army and law enforcement agencies for quelling the terrorism from this part of the region. He said armed forces were safeguarding the borders and defeating anti-state elements. Sheikh Rashid Ahmad said our leadership had always made great efforts for enhancing efficiency of the institutions. – APP

Work on Allama Iqbal SEZ in full swing: Bajwa

ISLAMABAD: China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Authority Chairman Lt Gen (Retd) Asim Saleem Bajwa on Monday said the development work on Allama Iqbal Special Economic Zone Faisalabad was in full swing as 33 percent of its land had so far been purchased by 69 investors. He said in a tweet that the total saleable land in the zone was 2,276 acres, and 182 acres had been purchased by seven foreign investors. Several Pakistani and foreign industries had started construction work, he added. – APP

Britain eases Covid lockdown

LONDON: Britons hugged their loved ones and streamed into pubs, gyms and other indoor venues on Monday as the country eased pandemic restrictions, but Asia faced more misery with new variants and a cyclone disrupting the fight against a Covid-19 wave ravaging India. As the United States and Britain move away from harsh restrictions thanks to rapid immunisation campaigns, new strains have forced several countries in Asia to shut schools and impose travel bans, highlighting the persistent global threat posed by the pandemic. – APP

Pakistan concerned over 'baseless Afghan allegations'

"The names of the various decision-making bodies of the Taliban are Quetta Shura, Miramshah Shura and Peshawar Shura – named after the Pakistani cities where they are located. There is a deep relationship with the state," Ghani told the publication

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Foreign Office (FO) on Monday conveyed serious concerns related to the recent "irresponsible statements and baseless allegations" that the Afghan leadership made against Pakistan. According to a statement released by the FO in this regard, Foreign Office Spokesperson Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri said that Pakistan has conveyed its serious concerns to the Afghan side by making a strong

demande with the Ambassador of Afghanistan in Islamabad.

Pakistan has emphasised that groundless accusations erode trust and vitiate the environment between the two brotherly countries and disregard the constructive role being played by Pakistan in facilitating the Afghan peace process, the statement said.

The Afghan side has been urged to effectively utilise the available forums, like the Afghanistan-Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Solidarity (APAPPS), to ad-



dress all bilateral issues.

The statement came two days after Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, in an interview with German publication Der Spiegel,

said that Pakistan supports the Afghan Taliban through an "organised system" comprising logistics, financial assistance, and recruitment facilities.

"The names of the various decision-making bodies of the Taliban are Quetta Shura, Miramshah Shura and Peshawar Shura – named after the Pakistani cities where they are located. There is a deep relationship with the state," Ghani told the publication.

When asked if he still believed in the Afghan peace process, Ghani said:

"Peace will primarily be decided upon regionally, and I believe we are at a crucial moment of rethinking. It is first and foremost a matter of getting Pakistan on

board. The US now plays only a minor role. The question of peace or hostility is now in Pakistani hands." Ghani also said that Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Bajwa has clearly assured Afghanistan that the restoration of the Emirate or dictatorship by the Taliban is not in anybody's interest in the region, especially Pakistan. However, some of the lower levels in the army still hold the opposite opinion in certain cases. It is primarily a question of political will."

Karachi suffers from heat at 43 degrees

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Karachiites experienced sizzling hot weather on Monday as the temperature touched 43 degrees Celsius under the influence of cyclonic storm Tautae. According to the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD), the maximum temperature recorded in the city was 43 degrees Celsius with 19 per cent humidity. Gusty winds are sweeping across the metropolises, the weather department said, adding similar weather conditions are likely to prevail on Tuesday (tomorrow). Last night was May's second hottest night, it pointed out. The Met Office said the cyclonic storm Tautae is moving further north-north-westward and is at a distance of about 800 km south-southeast of Karachi. There are little or no chances of rain due to the system moving away from the city. Tropical Cyclone 'Tautae' intensified into a 'severe cyclonic storm' in the Arabian Sea. The storm is expected to make landfall near Dwarka in Indian state of Gujarat near Porbandar around afternoon as a 'very severe' cyclonic storm on Tuesday (May 18), according to a weather report. Based on the existing meteorological conditions, dust/thunderstorm-rain with few moderate to heavy falls with gusty winds of 60-80 Kmph are likely to occur in Thatta, Sujawal, Badin, Tharparker, Mirpurkhas, Umerkot and Sanghar districts during 17-20 May.

Afzal Latif appointed Secy Establishment

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Establishment Division Monday ordered transfers and posting of high ranking officers. A Grade 22 officer of PAS Afzal Latif has been appointed Federal Secretary Establishment Division.

Khalid Khurshid Kunwar, a BS-21 officer of Railways (Commercial & Transportation) Group, presently posted as Senior Joint Secretary, Communications Division, is transferred and repatriated to his parent department, Railways Division, with immediate effect. Similarly, Neelofur Hafeez, a BS-20 officer of Secretariat Group, presently serving as Joint Secretary, Finance Division is transferred and posted as Joint Secretary, Economic Affairs Division



with immediate effect until further orders. While, Dr. Faheem Muhammad, a BS-20 officer of Inland Revenue Service (IRS), presently posted as Director-General, National Vocational & Technical Training Commission (NAVTC), on deputation basis, is transferred and repatriated to his parent department, Federal Board of Revenue, with immediate effect.

CAA revokes private airline's flight permit

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) revoked a private airline's flight permit flying from Dubai to Peshawar over violations of the government's mandated coronavirus protocols, media reported on Monday. Earlier, the private airline flight had flown 24 coronavirus positive cases from Dubai to Peshawar on May 10.

Despite warnings, 27 positive cases were brought to Peshawar from Sharjah again on May 16, the CAA spokesperson Saad bin Ayub said. He said the airline is ignoring coronavirus standard operating procedures (SOPs) despite warnings. Last week, Pakistan had allowed airlines to operate additional 30% of flights in a revised policy.

According to a notification issued in this regard, additional flights were allowed to ensure passengers were able to travel abroad without any hindrances, while only cargo flights of foreign airlines were allowed to return to Pakistan. This is in addition to the 20% of flights that were already allowed by the CAA to operate in Pakistan, the notification stated. As per the directives issued earlier by the National Command and Operation Centre (NOC), the number of foreign flights operating to Pakistan was reduced to 20%, keeping in mind the prevalent coronavirus situation in the country and the region.

Germany to offer Covid jobs to all adults

BERLIN: Germany will ditch its Covid vaccine priority list and start offering jobs to all adults from June 7, Health Minister Jens Spahn said Monday, as the inoculation drive in Europe's top economy gathers pace. The move means anyone aged 16 and up will be eligible for a vaccine in Germany, scrapping the existing priority criteria based on age, jobs and pre-existing medical conditions. "We have agreed to lift the priority system on June 7... in doctor's practices, among company doctors and in vaccination centres," Spahn said after talks with Germany's 16 regional health ministers. After a stuttering start, Germany's jobs campaign has kicked into high gear in recent weeks as vaccine supplies increased and general practitioners joined the effort alongside vaccination centres. – Agencies



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Morocco Mohammed Karmounse and Ambassador of Egypt posing for a picture with Governor Punjab Ch. Muhammad Sarwar. – DNA

British PM Johnson honours four Pakistanis

DNA

ISLAMABAD: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has honoured the 'One Million Meals' campaign founded by four Pakistanis through the 'Points of Light Award' for their extraordinary services for the National Health Services (NHS), key workers, homeless and people in need in United Kingdom.

Bilal Bin Saqib, Momin Saqib, Raja Suleman Raza and Muhammad Arif Anis had launched the 'One Million Meals' campaign during lockdown in 2020, which has seen over 100,000 meals sent to the National Health Service and key workers, the homeless, and people in need. The 'Points of Light' are outstanding individual volunteers – people who are making a change in their

community. First established by President George H. W. Bush in 1990, UK Points of Light was developed in partnership with the US programme and launched in the Cabinet Room at 10 Downing Street in April 2014. Since then, hundreds of people have been named Points of Light by the British Prime Minister, highlighting an enormous array of innovative and inspirational volunteering across the length and breadth of Britain.

The One Million Meals campaign has received support from sporting stars such as former footballer David Beckham and boxer Amir Khan, and has inspired hundreds of volunteers to help with communications and deliveries, and local companies who donated food and healthy drinks. Operating in more than 200 locations through 47 hospitals,

trusts and food banks, the initiative aims to continue providing nutritious meals whilst the nation recovers from COVID-19.

Raja Suleman Raza, also the chief executive of a restaurant chain that co-founded the initiative the 'One Million Meals' campaign, said it was an absolute honour to be recognised for the Points of Light Award by the Prime Minister and expressed his intent to continue serving the vulnerable communities.

Muhammad Arif Anis, an author of 'Made In Crises' and expert on leadership said the One Million Meals campaign was Pakistani diaspora's response to a humanitarian crisis above any divisions in society. It was a response above the lines of race, ethnicity and religion, exhibiting a British spirit that is needed now, more than ever, he said.

Rift with govt: Top Indian virologist resigns

NEW DELHI: A top Indian virologist has resigned from a forum of scientific advisers set up by the government to detect variants of the coronavirus, he told Reuters on Sunday, weeks after questioning the authorities' handling of the pandemic. Shahid Jameel, chair of the scientific advisory group of the forum known as INSACOG, declined to give a reason for his resignation. "I am not obliged to give a reason," he said in a text message, adding that he quit on Friday. Renu Swarup, the secretary of the Department of Biotechnology that oversees INSACOG, did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Health Minister Harsh Vardhan also did not immediately respond to a text message seeking comment. – Agencies

Inquiry started in Ring Road project

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Justice Javed Iqbal, Chairman NAB Chairman has directed DG NAB Rawalpindi to conduct transparent, merit based and indiscriminate probe of Rawalpindi Ring Road project in which billion of rupee corruption, irregularities and illegal land acquisition has been reported.

Taking notice of the scam, the Chairman NAB has directed NAB Rawalpindi to cover all aspects of the project in the probe so that responsibility could be fixed against all those who are allegedly involved in corruption and corrupt practices and culprits may be brought to justice as per law.

Chairman NAB said that NAB's faith is corruption free Pakistan. NAB is strictly adhered to the accountability for all policy. He said that the bureau has concrete evidence of billion of rupees money laundering, fake bank accounts, assets beyond means, looting national exchequer by abuse of authority, and looting billion of rupees in illegal and fake housing societies cases. NAB has recovered

record Rs. 490 billion directly or indirectly from corrupt elements in the last three years. While the bureau had recovered whopping Rs. 790 billion since its inception. NAB has no affiliation with any political party, group or individual, but state of Pakistan. NAB is determined to take the cases of those who looted billion of rupees of this nation to logical conclusion as per law.

Meanwhile, Minister for Aviation Ghulam Sarwar Khan Monday clarified that there was no political involvement in finalizing the alignment of Rawalpindi-Islamabad Ring Road project. "If there is any change in the road alignment, it is purely due to technical reasons that can be explained by relevant experts," he said while addressing a news conference. The minister viewed that the inquiry report about the project should be revisited as some members of the investigation committee had attached their separate dissenting notes with it. He regretted that although there was no mention of his or any of his family members' name in the inquiry report, yet some elements were attempting to involve him in the scandal.

China urges US to play role in halting Israeli attacks

"The Israeli military launched another series of air raids on Gaza early Monday, hours after Israel's caretaker Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the attacks on the Palestinian enclave would rage on," it said

WEB DESK

BEIJING: The United States should shoulder its fair share of responsibilities Palestinian issue, take a just stance, and work with the majority of the international community to support the Security Council in playing its due role in easing the situation, rebuilding trust, and advancing political settlement, China urged Monday. Recently, tensions in Palestine have flared up, and a conflict of the largest scale since 2014 took place between Israel and Palestine, China's Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian said. Lijian said China has worked for two UNSC emergency consultations and drafted the press statement. On that basis, State Coun-

cilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi chaired the UN Security Council Open Debate on "The Situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question" on May 16 to work toward a de-escalation of the situation. "State Councilor Wang Yi put forward a four-point proposal regarding the Palestine-Israel situation, pointing out that ceasefire and cessation of violence is the top priority and all parties, especially Israel, are urged to exercise restraint and stop hostilities immediately," he said. Humanitarian assistance is an urgent need and all parties are urged to step up humanitarian assistance to Palestine to spare no effort to avoid a humanitarian disaster. International support is a due obligation and

the international community, especially the Security Council, is called on to take vigorous actions to deescalate and cool down the situation, he said. The "two-state solution" is the fundamental way forward, and Palestine and Israel should be supported to resume peace talks at an early date and advance the political settlement of the Palestine question, Lijian said. In particular, Israel should exercise restraint, earnestly observe relevant UN resolutions, stop the demolition of Palestinian homes and the eviction of Palestinian people, discontinue its settlement expansion, put an end to violence, threats and provocations against Muslims, and maintain and respect the historical status quo of the holy

sites in Jerusalem, he added. Since the latest Israeli attacks against Palestinians began last week, at least 198 people, including 58 children, have been killed in the Gaza strip, Al Jazeera reported, with more than 1,300 Palestinians sustaining injuries. "The Israeli military launched another series of air raids on Gaza early Monday, hours after Israel's caretaker Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the attacks on the Palestinian enclave would rage on," it said. A day earlier, China had voiced regret the United States was blocking a UNSC statement on Israeli-Palestinian violence as it urged greater international efforts to stop the bloodshed. "Regrettably, simply because of the obstruction of one coun-

try, the Security Council hasn't been able to speak with one voice," Foreign Minister Wang Yi, whose country holds the Council's rotating presidency, told a virtual session. "We call upon the United States to shoulder its due responsibilities." The United States, the primary ally of Israel, delayed the Security Council session from last week and has shown little enthusiasm for a statement. President Joe Biden's administration says it is working behind the scenes and that a Security Council statement could backfire. In its public remarks, the Biden administration has steadfastly said that Israel is justified in self-defence in response to rocket fire by Hamas, even while urging de-escalation.