



# Islamabad POST

Thursday, May 20, 2021

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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**Corona pandemic: Lesson learned for the global community**

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**Pak to promote commercial ties with Belarus**

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**Benzema gets recalled to French squad**

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## Briefs

### KSA to revive deferred oil facility

ZUBAIR AHMED

ISLAMABAD: Saudi Arabia has agreed, in principle, to revive the facility of oil supply to Pakistan on deferred payments, revealed information minister Fawad Chaudhry on Tuesday.

The prime minister, on his recent visit to the kingdom, had made a request to Saudi Arabia to resume the supply of oil to Pakistan on deferred payments for an extended period. The exact details of the deal between the two countries will be known later when there is a formal agreement. When contacted, Chaudhry confirmed the two sides had agreed to it.

### Imran architect of economic collapse

NAZIRY SIYAL

KARACHI: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Wednesday said that 'worst corruption' committed during the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government was chiefly responsible for the country's economic plight.

In a statement, Bilawal Bhutto has said that the country cannot be developed under the supervision of corrupt leader. "The country whose chief executive is corrupt could never progress economically," Bilawal remarked. The PPP leader alleged that PTI bigwigs were busy in corrupt practices by leaving masses at the mercy of inflation. "Prime Minister Imran Khan, who is the 'architect' of the country's economic collapse, could not hide his 'incompetency' and 'corruption' by making his ministers and advisers scapegoats," the PPP chairman commented.

## ANNOUNCEMENT



Ambassador of Indonesia to Pakistan Adam Tugio has penned down a detailed article about COVID and its impacts. The ambassador has discussed as to how the pandemic can be dealt with. His article appears on the Opinion pages of the Islamabad POST today.

- Editor

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Humanity is being killed in Gaza, Palestine, says Erdogan - Page 06

Azerbaijan committed to intl humanitarian law obligations - Page 07

Govt unveils prototype of electronic voting machine - Page 08

# Outdoor dining, tourism opened from May 24

Educational institutions to be reopened in districts with positivity ratio less than 5%; wedding ceremonies from June 01

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) on Wednesday announced the lifting of a number of restrictions imposed to control the spread of the coronavirus in the country, including the staggered reopening of educational institutions in districts where the positivity rate is less than five per cent and resumption of outdoor dining. Earlier in the day, the NCOC reviewed the existing non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) in a meeting chaired by Minister for Planning and Development and NCOC head Asad Umar. The meeting was also attended by Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Health (SAPM) Dr Faisal Sultan, Sindh Health Minister Dr Azra Fazal Pechuho as well as all the chief secretaries of all provinces, Islamabad, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan. According to a press release issued after the meeting: Outdoor restaurants will be opened daily till

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## Mass vaccination center inaugurated

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Planning Minister Asad Umar inaugurated mass vaccination center in Islamabad Wednesday. Speaking on the occasion, along with Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Health Services Dr. Faisal Sultan, he said Seven thousand people will be vaccinated in a day at the newly inaugurated vaccination center. He said seventy five counters and 100 well trained people have been deployed to vaccinate the people. Asad Umar said decisions regarding marriage halls, educational institutions, and business centers will be issued on Tuesday. The Minister this campaign is meant to make the city corona free. Asad Umar vowed to achieve vaccination target at the earliest. He urged the public to get vaccinated to fight this dangerous pandemic. He said forty six hundred thousand people have been vaccinated so far.



ANKARA: Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi called on Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu is also present on the occasion. - DNA

# Erdogan lauds Pak support to Palestine

Qureshi appreciates the Turkish President's categorical stance on Kashmir and Palestine disputes

IP REPORT

## Qureshi leaves for UNGA session

NEWS DESK

ANKARA: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has applauded Pakistan's unflinching support to the oppressed Palestinian people.

He was talking to Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi who called on him at the presidential palace in Ankara. Discussing bilateral relations, the Turkish President said his country will host the seventh meeting of Pakistan Turkey high level strategic cooperation council. Shah Mahmood Qureshi said

ANKARA: Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi, who is on a diplomatic peace mission, left for New York from Turkey. Foreign Ministers of Palestine, Sudan and Turkey are also accompanying the Pakistani Foreign Minister. Shah Mahmood Qureshi will attend the emergency meeting of United Nations General Assembly in connection with Palestine issue today and will draw the attention of international community on Israeli atrocities against unarmed Palestinians. Shah Mahmood Qureshi will urge the world body to play its due role in stopping Israeli atrocities against Palestinians.

both Pakistan and Turkey enjoy strong relations and share identical views on a host of issues. He appreciated the Turkish President's categorical stance on Kashmir and Palestine disputes. Earlier, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi and his Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu at a meeting urged the international community to restore peace and facilitate a just solution to the Palestine issue. The two foreign ministers discussed ways to mobilize the international community to help stop Israeli aggression against Palestinians.



ISLAMABAD: Special Representative to PM on Religious Harmony and Middle East Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi in a meeting with Ambassador of Saudi Arabia Nawaf Bin Said Al-Maliki. - DNA

# Biden for de-escalation as violence continues

DNA

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden has told Israel's PM Benjamin Netanyahu he expects a "significant de-escalation" in the Gaza conflict on Wednesday. Mr Biden wanted a "path to ceasefire", the White House said. The US is a staunch ally of Israel and has so far opposed a joint UN Security Council statement on the conflict. Earlier Mr Netanyahu said the Israeli military was "taking care of objectives", adding "we're not standing with a stopwatch".



military responded by firing artillery shells at "a number of targets in Lebanese territory". It was not immediately clear whether this would prove to be a significant escalation. The Gaza fighting began after weeks of rising Israeli-Palestinian tension in occupied East Jerusalem that culminated in clashes at a holy site revered by both Muslims and Jews. Hamas, which controls Gaza, began firing rockets after warning Israel to withdraw from the site, triggering retaliatory air strikes.

Continued on Page 06

## Pakistan reports 3,256 new virus cases

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has reported 104 deaths in the last 24 hours by novel coronavirus as the number of positive cases has surged to 886,184. The nationwide tally of fatalities has jumped to 19,856 on Wednesday. According to the latest figures by the National Command and Operation Center (NCOC) 3,256 persons tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 24 hours. Punjab remains the worst-hit province in terms of deaths and cases followed by Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Till now 9,563 individuals have lost their lives to the epidemic in Punjab 4,835 in Sindh, 3,827 in KP, 735 in Islamabad, 519 in Azad Kashmir, 270 in Balochistan, and 107 in GB.

# Regular dialogues between Pak, Thailand stressed

Permanent Secretary Thani Thongphakdi shared perspective about Pakistan-ASEAN relationship

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Secretary Sohail Mahmood and Permanent Secretary of Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Thani Thongphakdi led their respective delegations at the 2nd round of Pakistan-Thailand Bilateral Political Consultations (BPC) held virtually. A bilateral meeting preceded the delegation-level talks. They reviewed the entire gamut of bilateral relations from political, defence and security to economic,

trade and investment ties, education, science and technology, culture, tourism and multilateral cooperation. Welcoming the steady progression in multi-dimensional bilateral relations over the years based on mutual trust and understanding, the two sides renewed strong desire and commitment to consolidate and further enhance cooperation in diverse fields in line with their shared objectives of peace and development. They noted the importance of regular interaction and

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# India reports highest death toll

WEB DESK

NEW DELHI: India recorded 4,529 Covid-19 deaths on Tuesday, the pandemic's highest single known daily death toll in any country so far, the authorities said on Wednesday, as the virus spread into the country's vast hinterlands. The previous deadliest day for a single country was recorded in the United States in January, when 4,468 people died. India reported 267,000 new cases on Tuesday, pushing the official case tally past 25 million, with more than 280,000 deaths.

# PSL 6 postponed for indefinite period

DNA

LAHORE: The Pakistan Super League's (PSL) sixth edition has been postponed indefinitely, media reported, months after it was put off due to players and staff testing positive for coronavirus despite being inside a bio-secure bubble. The development came after there were reports of the remaining matches to be held in the United Arab Emirates, with the Gulf country's cricket board receiving clearance from its government to hold the tournament. The meeting of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) with the franchisees is underway following which further details will be available, sources said, adding the decision was taken due to operational hurdles.

# Nation our only concern, not election: PM

-inaugurates low cost housing scheme in Peshawar; a nation can only succeed through two things: justice system equal for all and by empowering the poor segments

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: Following his address at the Labour Complex inauguration on Wednesday, Prime Minister Imran Khan paid a visit to the Mohmand Dam construction site where he said the previous governments instead of building dams for affordable electricity generations, signed exorbitant agreements to make money off the top. "With these expensive agreements we are bound by," the PM said while talking to media persons there, we have to pay them off whether or not we buy electricity from them due to which our capacity payments will jump to Rs1,455 billion by the year 2023. However, PM Khan said his



government is concerned about the future of the nation and not the win in the next

elections alone for which they have put 10 projects under way for cheaper electricity

that will complete by 2028. "We are revisiting the agreements with the independent

power producers (IPPs) and have signed some new ones which will benefit us with

cost-cutting. He said at present the full cost of power is not borne by people but they are paying less than the real amount of electricity they are consuming," said the premier. He said with the construction of dams, the country can produce up to 50,000 megawatts of power and it will also help the country with water allocation and agricultural land irrigation. A nation can only succeed through two things: by creating a justice system equal for all and by empowering the poor segments of the society. "This is how the world's first welfare state, Madina, was run," he said. The premier congratulated Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for being the first province to provide universal healthcare for its residents.



## Briefs

DC Visits  
vaccination  
center

SARGODHA: Deputy Commissioner Naila Baqir Wednesday visited corona vaccination centres set up at Government Comprehensive Girls School and Government Ambala College. She also inspected counters and asked from visitors about facilities being provided at the centre. She was briefed that 21 vaccination centres were operational in the district for free vaccination against coronavirus. On the occasion, Chief Executive officer health Dr Rai Samiullah said 85,039 people, including health workers, had been administered coronavirus vaccine in the district. He said some 169,919 people had been registered for the COVID-19 vaccine throughout the district. The CEO added 69,532 people had been administered first dose and 15,507 had been administered the second one.

Another  
five die of  
coronavirus  
in Faisalabad

FAISALABAD: Another five patients died of COVID-19 while 121 people were tested positive in the district during the last 24 hours. A spokesperson for the health department said on Wednesday that 1,048 coronavirus tests were conducted in public and private sector labs during the period. He said that total active cases in Faisalabad were 1,446 while 18,215 patients had so far recovered from the disease. He said that 334 beds were allocated at the Allied Hospital, 133 at the DHQ Hospital and 150 at Government General Hospital Gulam Muhammad Abad for COVID-19 patients. At present, 181 patients were under treatment at the Allied Hospital, 80 at DHQ Hospital and 51 were admitted to General Hospital. He further said that 788 confirmed patients were isolated at their homes in the district. - APP

15 outlaws  
arrested in  
Sargodha

MEHBOOB AHIR

SARGODHA: Police arrested fifteen accused and recovered narcotics, weapons from them, said police on Wednesday. A spokesman said that during continued drive against drug pushers and criminals, the teams of different police stations conducted raids and arrested 15 accused, recovered 2.59 kg hashish, 30 litres liquor, seven pistols 30 bore, two guns 12 bore and a pistol 9mm from their possession. They were identified as—Muhammad Waqas, Muhammad Amjad, Ameer Ali, Tanveer, Ramzan, Sanwal, Irshaad Hussain, Khuram Shehzad and others. Police registered separate cases and started investigation.

**Youth commits suicide**  
A young man committed suicide near here in Kot momin police limits on Wednesday. Police said that Ayub, 26, had an altercation with his family members over some domestic issue. In a fit of rage, he consumed poisonous pills. He was shifted to hospital in serious condition where he breathed his last. Police handed over the body to the heirs after completing legal formalities.

PFFE staged  
protest  
against Israel

ISLAMABAD: European Union Pakistan Friendship Federation Europe (PFFE) Chairman Chaudhry Pervez Iqbal and representatives of human rights organizations on Wednesday staged a protest rally against Israel outside the European Parliament, the European Commission and the European Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Brussels. The rally was aimed to raise voice for the oppressed Palestinian brethren and shake the international conscience against Israeli atrocities, said a press release. The protest was also attended by large number of workers of Pashtun organization Europe. The participants of the rally also chanted slogans against Israel and India. - APP

Deputy Speaker expresses  
solidarity with Palestine

The Palestinian ambassador expressed his gratitude for Pakistan people and government for their unequivocal stance against this aggression. He also said that Palestinian masses would never forget the support of Pakistan

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly Deputy Speaker Qasim Khan Suri Wednesday remarked that Pakistani masses and government stands shoulder by shoulder with their Palestinian brethren as they were facing brutalities inflicted by terrorists of Israel. He expressed these views while meeting with Ambassador of Palestinian Ahmed Jawad A Rabi during his visit to Palestinian embassy in Islamabad, said a press release. He said that Parliament of Pakistan categorically and unanimously has passed resolution against aggression and barbarity of Israel. He also mentioned that the heart of Pakistani masses beat with their Palestinian brothers. He said that the Founder of Pakistan Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah re-



jected the illegal idea of creation of Israel at that very time. The deputy speaker expressed that Prime Minister Imran Khan has clear stance against recent aggression and barbarity of Israel against innocent Palestinian people especially children and women. He also resolved that Parliament of Pakistan and its people would always raise their voices with Palestinian brethren. He also mentioned the steps taken by Prime Minister Imran Khan to raise the issue of Palestinian at every national and international forum. He also inscribed remarks in the visitor book. The Palestinian ambassador expressed his gratitude for Pakistan people and government for their unequivocal stance against this aggression. He also said that Palestinian masses would never forget the support of Pakistan.

## Minister for enhancing dengue surveillance

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Punjab Health Minister Dr Yasmin Rashid on Wednesday directed the Health department to enhance dengue surveillance testing in the provincial laboratories. Addressing a meeting of the cabinet committee at the Civil Secretariat here, she said the surveillance testing must be scaled up in the entire province. She said the commissioners and deputy commissioners must

personally monitor the dashboard of dengue statistics. She said that all the government hospitals had adequate stock of medicines. She said that dengue should be kept under control and larvicidal activities must continue. "Coordination among the concerned departments must be strengthened for effective epidemic response," she said. She said that the implementation of DEAG recommendations must be ensured. "I appeal to the people to

keep their homes and offices clean and dry," she urged. The minister said the Health department was providing guidance to people through helpline. She cleared that no negligence would be tolerated on dengue prevention so the administration would have to stay alert on dengue prevention. The minister informed that the government was undertaking third party evaluation as well surveillance must be intensified. The Health Minister

and the Chief Secretary reviewed the preparations of dengue prevention. Secretary Primary and Secondary Healthcare shared progress measures taken to control dengue spread. The concerned departments presented their respective measures. Commissioners and DC joined the meeting via video link. The meeting was attended by representatives of Police, DGPR, Civil Aviation, Livestock, DHA, PHA, Rescue1122 and officials of the other govt department.

ML-1 project a  
glaring example  
of Pak-China ties

ISLAMABAD: Under CPEC already several projects of power generation and road up gradation have been completed but ML-1 is one of the main components of CPEC, an official said. According to details, the Chinese government is also investing US\$ 6.8 billion ML-1 project which features up-gradation and dualization of railway track under China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). This 1872-kilometer long track from Peshawar to Karachi is expected to create 24,000 jobs and would jump up train speed to 160 kilometers per hour. Railway line would be upgraded from Karachi to Peshawar and Taxila to Havelian while new track would be laid with improved sub grade for 160km per hour. Bridges would also be rehabilitated and constructed. This mega project is a glaring example of Pak-China friendship. Moreover, the provision of modern signalling and telecom systems, conversion of level-crossing into underpasses or flyovers, fencing of track, establishment of dry port near Havelian and up-gradation of Walton Training Academy (Lahore) are also the components of this gigantic project. The completion of this project would not only create direct (20,000 local labour/technical experts and 4,000 Chinese experts) jobs but also reduce travel time between Karachi to Lahore from 18 to 10 hours. As per official information, the capacity of the line will also be increased from 34 trains per day to 170 trains per day and speed of the freight trains be increased at 120 km/h. Pakistan Railways is a state enterprise and it has not been a profit making entity since private transport provided better services beginning of the year 2000. However, the ML-1 project is promising uplift of railways in Pakistan. Keeping in view its importance, the government approved the projects through Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) which is worth \$ 6.8 billion on cost sharing basis as Beijing is the main financier. The projects consists of packages with first one comprising construction of 527-km long rail-track connecting Peshawar, Rawalpindi and Lahore to be completed by 2024, second and third ones are most significant to upgrade 251-km long track between Lahore and Hyderabad and 740-km between Rawalpindi-Peshawar and Hyderabad-Multan respectively, he added. - APP



HYDERABAD: Students holding placards during a protest demonstration against Israeli attacks on Gaza in front of Press Club. - DNA Photo by Jan Ali Laghari

Khudmat Markaz  
obtained ISO certification

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Electronic Khidmat Markaz (Facilitation Center) has obtained ISO 9001 2015 certification from an international public service quality testing company and the certificate has issued after strict scrutiny and assurance that the facilities provided to public are inline with Int'l Standards. DC Muhammad Ali visited the facilitation center and handed over the ISO Certificate to Manager Mustafa Sattar. He reviewed the procedures for providing services to the applicants at the counters of different departments and said that getting ISO certificate is a recognition of standard and ideal services. He said that under the vision of CM Punjab Sardar Usman Buzdar the district administration has supported the Khidmat Markaz for providing best and rapid services to the applicants under one roof. He said that with the help of district administration in e-service center Standard and expeditious services of various departments are being provided at the venue and domicile, Farad issuance, registry related matters, national identity card, character certificate, learner driving license, building map approval, building completion certificate and other services are available. He asked the management of the center to continue providing services as per international standards so that the confidence of the people could be further restored. Manager Khidmat Markaz briefed about the facilities provided to the applicants.

## FUNCTIONAL VACCINATION CENTERS IN DISTRICT FAISALABAD

Sr. No.	Health Care Unit	Category	Initial Capacity	Enhance Capacity	Timing
1	Support complex samanabad, Faisalabad	MASS Vaccination Centre (MVC)	2000	4000	24/7 (Round the Clock)
2	Allied Hospital Faisalabad	Adult Vaccination Centre (AVC)	250	2500	08:00am to 08:00pm
3	Children Hospital Faisalabad	Adult Vaccination Centre (AVC)	250	2000	08:00am to 08:00pm
4	DISTRICT HEAD QUARTER HOSPITAL FAISALABAD	Adult Vaccination Centre (AVC)	250	2500	08:00am to 08:00pm
5	Faisalabad Institute of Cardiology Faisalabad	Adult Vaccination Centre (AVC)	250	2000	08:00am to 08:00pm
6	Govt. General Hospital 224/RB	Adult Vaccination Centre (AVC)	250	2000	08:00am to 08:00pm
7	Govt. General Hospital G.M Abad	Adult Vaccination Centre (AVC)	250	2000	08:00am to 08:00pm
8	Govt. General Hospital Samanabad	Adult Vaccination Centre (AVC)	250	2000	08:00am to 08:00pm
9	THQ HOSPITAL CHAK JHUMRA	Adult Vaccination Centre (AVC)	250	2000	08:00am to 08:00pm
10	THQ HOSPITAL JARANWALA	Adult Vaccination Centre (AVC)	250	2000	08:00am to 08:00pm
11	THQ HOSPITAL SUMUNDRI	Adult Vaccination Centre (AVC)	250	2000	08:00am to 08:00pm
12	THQ HOSPITAL TANDILIANWALA	Adult Vaccination Centre (AVC)	250	2000	08:00am to 08:00pm
13	THQ Hospital New Building, Sumandri	Covid-19 Vaccination Centre (CVC)	250	2000	08:00am to 08:00pm
14	THQ Hospital New Building, Tandlianwala	Covid-19 Vaccination Centre (CVC)	250	2000	08:00am to 08:00pm
15	RHC Khurrianwala, New Building, Faisalabad	Covid-19 Vaccination Centre (CVC)	250	2000	08:00am to 08:00pm
16	Sports Complex Jaranwala	Covid-19 Vaccination Centre (CVC)	250	2000	08:00am to 08:00pm
17	Support Complex Chak Jhumra	Covid-19 Vaccination Centre (CVC)	250	2000	08:00am to 08:00pm

Some elements engaged  
in hatching conspiracies

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar on Wednesday said that some elements were engaged in hatching conspiracies against the PTI government from the day first and regrettably, tentacles of such elements were everywhere. During a meeting with parliamentarians, he said, the opposition was also patronizing them. He vowed to go to every length to nab the mafias. He advised the PDM to shun negative politics after repeated failures. Regrettably, record corruption was made in the past and kickbacks were received in different projects. Billions of rupees were looted by raising minarets of corruption, he added and vowed

that past rulers would have to be answerable for their mega corruption. Those who met included Provincial Ministers Dr Yasmin Rashid, Sibtain Khan, Yasir Humayun, Dr Akhtar Malik, Advisors Asif Mahmood, Faisal Hayat Jabwana, MNAs Muhammad Afzal Khan Dhandala, Syed Mobeen Ahmed, MPAs Malik Asad Ali Khokhar, Muhammad Tariq Tarar, Malik Mukhtar Ahmed, Nazir Ahmed Khan, Muhammad Ijaz Hussain, Javid Akhtar, Saleem Sarwar Jora, Mian Muhammad Akhtar Hayyat, Chaudhry Liaqat Ali, Ghazanfar Abbas Cheena, Mamoon Tarar, Muneeb Sultan Cheema, Amir Anayat Shahani and Shahida Ahmed.

The CM also said proposals of parliamentarians were given importance in the formulation of district development package and every city had been equally included in the development process. Every decision was made with consultation and no compromise would be made on the respect of parliamentarians, he added. Meanwhile, MPAs from Rawalpindi including Major (R) Muhammad Latasab Satti, Raja Saghir Ahmed, Javed Kauser, Chaudhry Sajid Mahmood, Wasiq Qayyum Abbasi, Malik Taimur, Amjad Mahmood Chaudhry, Ejaz Khan and Umer Tanvir also met with CM Punjab. - APP

2 committed  
suicide in  
separate  
incidents

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: Two persons committed suicides in separate incidents in Faisalabad during past 24 hours. Police spokesman said on Wednesday that 56-year-old Anwaarul Haq resident of Jameel Abad committed suicide by shooting himself over some domestic issues. In other incident, Mubarak Ali resident of Chak No.77-JB Mullan Pur also committed suicide over a domestic dispute by swallowing poison pills. The police handed over both bodies to their relatives after completing necessary formalities.

26 criminals held

The police on Wednesday arrested 26 criminals and recovered drugs and illegal weapons from their possession in the district during last 24 hours. According to police, raiding teams nabbed two proclaimed offenders and 16 drug pushers and recovered 1.02 kg hashish and 249 liters liquor from their possession. The police also held two gamblers with stake money of Rs. 2,240. In a crackdown against illegal weapons, police arrested six persons and recovered six pistols from them. Further investigation was underway, said police.

Abducted girl  
recovered  
safely

STAFF REPORT

FAISALABAD: The police have recovered a minor girl safely after one week of her abduction in the area of Mansoorabad police station. Police spokesman said here on Wednesday that 9-year-old Arham Fatima daughter of Shahid Maqbool resident of Roza Park went missing from out side of her house one week ago. Her parents searched her lot but in vain. Then they informed the concerned police. The police after lodging a complaint started investigation on scientific lines and recovered the minor girl safely. The accused, however, managed to escape from the scene when the police conducted raid at their den. Further investigation was underway for the arrest of the abductors, spokesman added.

Karachi NPP  
Unit-2 to be  
inaugurated  
on Friday

ISLAMABAD: Karachi Nuclear Power Plant (NPP) Unit-2 (K-2) will be formally inaugurated on Friday at a virtual ceremony to be held simultaneously at Islamabad, K-2 NPP Karachi and Beijing, China. Prime Minister Imran Khan will be the chief guest at the ceremony. K-2 is a generation III, state of the art plant with improved safety systems, especially internal and external accident prevention ability and enhanced emergency response capability. The plant has 60-year life expectancy, extendable to further 20 more years. It is designed with higher plant availability and capacity factors, and extended refueling cycle. The construction of K-2 commenced in November 2013, whereas its fuel loading started on December 1, 2020 after approval from the Pakistan Nuclear Regulatory Authority (PNRA). - APP

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## Briefs

### 8 Traffic wardens awarded for good performance

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Rawalpindi Rai Mazhar Iqbal has given commendation certificates, and cash awards to the officials showing good performance during lockdown and Eid ul Fitr to maintain traffic flow in the city. According to police spokesman, the CTO has commended 08 traffic wardens for performing best duty during lockdown and Eid while issued orders to charge sheets by suspending 08 other traffic wardens for poor performance.

Those who received awards included Sultan Badshah, Zulqarnain, Faisal, Nadeem, Hameed, Nazakat, Basit and Adil Munir, while Traffic Warden Amir Abbas, Waqar, Asad Noman, Saqib, Shafiq, Khalil, Zaheer and Qasim were issued a charge sheet. On the occasion, Chief Traffic Officer Rawalpindi Rai Mazhar Iqbal made it clear that strict action would be taken against those who were found negligent in performing their duties.

### Police held 16 outlaws during last 24 hours

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Police have arrested at least 16 persons including eight Proclaimed offenders during the last 24 hours in a massive crackdown against drug peddlers and criminals in the federal capital and recovered narcotics, wine, stolen motorbike and weapons from them.

According to a news release on Wednesday, Shalimar police arrested a drug peddler named Asif Rehman and recovered 215 gram hashish from him. Shahzad Town police arrested Nazeer Massih, recovering 10 liters of alcohol from him. Similarly, Secretariat police arrested two drunk accused named Mubarak and Zakir Hussain. Sabazi Mandi police arrested accused Muhammad Usman and recovered one 9mm pistol along with ammunition from him. Moreover, Khanna police arrested accused Arslan Ajmal and recovered one 30 bore pistol from him. Shams colony police arrested a bike lifter named Bilal and recovered a stolen motorbike from him. Bhara Kahu police arrested an accused Gul Khataab. Cases have been registered against the nabbed persons and further investigation is underway. Meanwhile, during a special crackdown police teams arrested eight proclaimed offenders from various areas of the city.

### Covid-19 claims 3 lives in 24 hours

RAWALPINDI: As many as 117 more COVID-19 positive cases were reported during the last 24 hours, raising the tally of confirmed cases to 25,544 in the district while three lost their battle of life against the deadly virus. The total infected cases included 23,595 from Rawalpindi and 1949 from other districts. District Health Authority informed Wednesday that among the new cases, 40 reported from Rawal Town, 19 from Potohar town, 31 from Rawalpindi Cantt, 7 Taxila 4 Murree, 3 Gujranwala, 3 Kahuta, 2 Kotli sattia, 2 KPK, and one each from Islamabad, AJK, Chakwal, Gujranwala and Jehlum. "Presently 96 confirmed patients were admitted to various city facilities, counting 12 in Holy Family Hospital, 15 in Benazir Bhutto Hospital, 45 in Institute of Urology, 22 in Fauji Foundation Hospital and one each in Hearts International and Akhtar Rukhsana Memorial hospital," the health authority report said. District Health Authority informed that so far 23,722 patients were discharged after recovery and 1970 were quarantined including 1184 at home and 786 in isolation. - APP

# GPO Islamabad victim of high-ups nonchalance

Customs section does not have any scanners; the biggest and busiest post office in the Capital lacks in even basic facilities; infrastructure also in a bad condition

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The General Post Office located in the Capital Territory speaks volumes for the apathy of the high ups as the GPO lacks in even basic facilities. A survey conducted by this scribe revealed that most of the staff do not even have chairs to sit on. And the chairs available are in an extremely dilapidated condition. The staff consequently has to discharge its duties throughout the day and by sitting on the edge of the chair. So much so, the Customs section located in the backyard of the main building does not have a scanner to scan items meant for onward transportation to various countries.

Due to non-availability of scanners, the shippers and even the staff deputised for scanning of the goods, had to wait for hours in case of heavy shipments. The manual scanning always takes a heavy toll on the staff and the shippers as well. Mahmood, a customer who was present in the Customs section during the survey, said that he came this morning to ship



off his goods to his relatives in a foreign country. The staff checked all his items contained in the box one by one, which took hours. He further said you need to have one full day at your disposal in

case you want to get clearance from Customs department due to rush and want of staff. He however was all praise for the staff scanning the items adding they tried their best to facilitate customers

within the shortest possible time. Since international bookings are done through the internet therefore this is yet another ordeal the customers have to undergo. Most of the time the internet is not working or the connection is extremely slow thus taking more time in disposing of cases for international booking. Another customer who came to the GPO to get some information about driving license fee, told the government and especially the Communication Minister Murad Saeed claimed to have revolutionized the Post Offices, however the situation on ground was absolutely different. People still had to stand in long queues simply because there were not enough counters and staff. If that is the situation in the GPO, which is located right in the heart of the Capital, then what would be the situation in the rest of the country, he questioned.



ISLAMABAD: Chaudhry Fawad Hussain, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting and Dr. Baber Awan, Advisor to Prime Minister on Parliamentary Affairs briefing the media persons about Electronic Voting Machine (EVM). - DNA

## NAB to file 3 more references against various suspects

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Executive Board Meeting (EBM) of NAB presided over by its chairman Justice (Retd) Javed Iqbal authorized filing three references, nine inquiries and three investigations against various suspects on allegation of inflicting billion of rupees losses to national exchequer. According to a NAB press release, the EBM authorized conducting inquiry against PML-N leader Amir Muqam and closing inquiry against Captain Safdar Awan. The forum authorized filing three references including a reference against Ehsanullah Mehsod, former senior member Board of Revenue, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on the accusations of allegedly allotting 1,976

Kanal State land in Dera Ismael Khan by abuse of power which caused heavy losses to the national exchequer. The EBM okayed filing another reference against Maqbool Ahmed Lehri, former district Nazim, Dr. Kalimullah, former Mayor Metropolitan Corporation, Quetta and others. The suspects has allegedly been involved in doling out 5,292 square feet state land on lease on much cheaper rates illegally to favorites thus inflicting Rs 529 million losses to the national exchequer. The EBM authorized filing a corruption reference against Mir Muhammad Amin Umrani, former Provincial Minister Excise and Taxation, Government of Balochistan and others on the accusations of amassing the assets totally unmatched to their known sources of income - obviously

by abusing the authority. The EBM accorded approval of conducting nine inquiries against various personalities including against Dr. Naveed, DG Agriculture Research, Tariq Mehmood, Administrative officer and others, officers and officials of Ministry of Housing and Works, PWD and others, Mumtaz Khan, former Conservative Forest and others, Nasir Khan, former MNA, Shahab Khattak, Secretary C&DW department, KPK and others, Muhammad Naseem, MD, Nasir, Ghaffar, GM, Aliur Rehman, Zonal Manager, WSSP and others, officers, officials of Revenue department, Gwadar, Ghulam Hussain Jaffar and others, Chairman Township Housing Scheme district Khuzdar, and inquiry against Amir Muqam, former Advisor to the Prime Minister was also approved.



## Coordination key to Sustainable Development

There is huge potential of wind energy in coastal belt and solar in the whole of Balochistan. However, the lack of transmission infrastructure and rural electrification is a bottleneck in the development

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: Chief Economist Planning & Development, Government of Balochistan, Mr. Ghaus Bakhsh Marri, has said that the lack of coordination between various government departments, is one of the major challenges for bringing investment in renewable energy projects in Balochistan. Besides, security related issues are also impediment in achieving sustainable development in the province. He said this while sharing his views with the participants at the Public Private Dialogue 'Roadmap for Sustainable Development of Balochistan: Aligning development priorities with Clean

Energy Transition pathways,' held by sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), here on Wednesday. He emphasized that ease of doing business must be taken care of to tap the real potential of investment. There is huge potential of wind energy in coastal belt and solar in the whole of Balochistan. However, the lack of transmission infrastructure and rural electrification is a bottleneck in the development and thus, micro grid based rural electrification with collaborative efforts of the public and private stakeholders needs to be explored, he added. Mr. Tauha Hassan Siddiqui, while representing Balochistan Board of Investment, highlighted Ba-

lochistan' potential of energy, particularly in terms of investment in renewable energy sector and said that a huge potential of wind corridor that starts from Gwadar and goes up to Makran region, is still remains unexplored. The government strategy is to aim for inviting investors in different fields and our focus on energy investment aims to uplift Balochistan both in terms of foreign direct investment (FDI) and public private partnership. Energy sector expert, Dr. Nadia Farooq, informed the participants that 30% of the world energy is expected to be of solar and wind in near future. She said that Asian Development Bank's project of clean energy in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has supported

the remote rural population. She highlighted that Balochistan capacity in renewable energy sector is extremely high, however, transmission mechanism needs to be addressed on priority basis by the Federal and Provincial governments. Dr. Abdul Salam Lodhi, Professor of Economics, BUITEMS, Quetta, while explaining economic potentials of Balochistan in term of mining, agriculture, tourism, and international trade, said that the wind corridors in Noshki, Kharan and Killa Saifullah, are ideal locations to explore the real potential of wind energy. Director, Bridge Factor, Mr. Ashruff Hasan Rana, emphasized on the need for consistency of pol-

icy and said that the situation of infrastructure and security needs to be improved in the province. Likewise, Gwadar should be utilized as an opportunity along with a strong focus on grid upgradation, he added. Dr. Hina Aslam, Research Fellow, SDPI, while presenting overall landscape of renewable energy in Pakistan, highlighted that SDPI is supporting the government to identify and develop an evidence-based framework for future Energy policy in term of generation and consumption. Moreover, SDPI has also established a network for clean energy transition which has been contributing to the transition of the political economy of the country, she concluded.

## Providing relief to citizens, top priority

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Senior Superintendent of Police (Operations) Dr. Syed Mustafa Tanveer on Wednesday said that 16 persons including eight POs were arrested during the last 24 hours in a massive crackdown against drug peddlers and criminals and recovered narcotics, wine, stolen motorbike and weapons from them.

According to details, Shalimar police arrested a drug peddler named Asif Rehman and recovered 215 gram hashish from him. Shahzad Town police arrested Nazeer Messih and 10 liters of alcohol from him. Secretariat police arrested two drunk accused named Mubarak and Zakir Hussain. Sabazi Mandi police arrested accused Muhammad Usman and recovered one 9mm pistol along with ammunition from him.

Khanna police arrested accused Arslan Ajmal and recovered one 30 bore pistol from him. Shams colony police arrested a bike lifter named Bilal and recovered a stolen motorbike from him. Bhara Kahu police arrested accused Khatib. Cases have been registered against the nabbed persons and further investigation is underway from them.

During a special crackdown police teams of Sihala, Lohibher, Shahzad Town Kohsar, Margalla, Shalimar, Sabzi Mandi and koral police arrested eight wanted proclaimed offenders from various areas of the city. DIG (Operations) Afzal Ahmed Kausar and SSP (Operations) Dr. Syed Mustafa Tanveer have appreciated this performance and directed all Station House Officers for effective crackdown against that involvement in drug peddling activities.

## Newly promoted cops of traffic police honored

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: A ceremony was held in the honor of 17 personnel of Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) who were recently promoted in next grade. The ceremony was attended among others by SSP (Traffic) Farrukh Rasheed, SP (Traffic) Muhammad Sarfaraz Virk and Director ITP FM Road 92.4 Ayesha Jameel.

The SSSP (Traffic) Farrukh Rasheed pinned the badges to the promoted policemen which included Fiaz, Adil, Mushtaq, Muhammad Arif, Zia Ullah, Ghaffar, Zaka Ullah, Ehsan, Anwar ul Haq, Mudassar Abbas, Hafeez, Arif Abbasi, Abdul Rasheed, Sher Afzal, Zaman and Ejaz. The SSP (Traffic) congratulated these police officials and hoped for their best contribution towards effective policing. He also made a group photo with newly promoted police officials and hoped for further effective policing efforts in future.

## Cleansing, desilting work of Nallah Lai starts

RAWALPINDI: On the direction of Commissioner Rawalpindi Syed Gulzar Hussain Shah, dredging and desilting work of Nallah Lai has been started and monitoring teams have been formed. The Director Local Government and Community Development Amna Rafique who led the monitoring team, along with WASA officials, inspected the cleaning work of Nallah Lai on Gawalmandi. Earlier, while briefing the Commissioner Rawalpindi on the cleaning of Nallah Lai, WASA Managing Director said that the Punjab government has given a grant of Rs 30 million to WASA Rawalpindi this financial year. The WASA will work to clean the drain from Katarian, Murree Road and adjoining areas. The obstacles in the flow of water under and around the bridges would be removed. The silt and solid waste dumps in Nallah Lai would also be lifted through heavy machinery. - APP

## IESCO issues power suspension programme

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Wednesday issued a power suspension programme for Thursday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM, Fateh Pur, Khour, Bhangali, Karnab Kaswal, Sukho, Golf City, NIH, Bhara Kahu, Treat, T&T, Athal feeders and surrounding areas.

## "First Free Mobile Restaurant" launches

The multi-wheeler food-loaded vehicle will be utilized to make good quality and hygienically cooked food reachable to everyone throughout the whole year

ISLAMABAD: AAA Associates, A Leading Group of Companies, and JDC Foundation (Jafaria Disaster Management Cell) jointly launched First Free Mobile Restaurant to provide 3-time meal services to the needy and indigent population of Islamabad. AAA Associates has been partnered to fund the noble cause of JDC free food program initiative by successfully setting up the world's largest Free Mobile Restaurant outside PIMS Hospital in the Capital City. After the successful launch of Free Mobile restaurant in Karachi, JDC Collaborated with AAA Associates to extend its Free food program initiative to other cities by carrying out similar activity for underprivileged population of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The multi-wheeler food-loaded vehicle will be utilized to make good quality and hygienically cooked food reachable to everyone throughout the whole year. It can provide 3 times meals for 15,000 people on daily basis. The visitors will be served with variety of Food and beverages prepared by a team of Professional Chefs to serve the deprived community in the most dignified manner. The facility not only serves the visitors with variety of dishes but also allow them to take food for their families at home. The Launching ceremony of First Free Mobile restaurant in Islamabad has been graced by Mr. Noor-ul-Haq Qadri Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Inter-Faith Harmony & Mr. Syed Zulfiqar Abbas Bukhari. They have praised the initiative of AAA Associates & JDC for arranging the 'free mobile restaurant' as it compliments Government's vision of Hunger free Pakistan. The Initiative resonate with Prime Minister Imran Khan vision to eradicate Hunger by providing free food and shelter to deprived section of our society.



## Briefs

## Arrest warrant against CDA ex-chairman

DNA

ISLAMABAD: An Accountability Court (AC) on Wednesday issued arrest warrants against former chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) Farkhand Iqbal and others for nonappearance in a graft reference.

AC-II Judge Muhammad Azam Khan heard the graft reference pertaining to sell of a welfare plot after converting into commercial filed by National Accountability Bureau (NAB).

The court issued non bailable arrest warrants against Farkhand Iqbal and accused Latif Abid for continuous disappearance in the case. The hearing of the case was then adjourned till June 14.

## IESCO recovers Rs 130.976 bln in 10 months

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) has recovered over Rs 130.976 billion during the first 10 months of current fiscal year showing an increase of Rs 10.753 billion over the collection of same period of last year.

Sharing the details here Wednesday, Chief Engineer IESCO Customer Services Directorate Tahir Jamal said that an amount of Rs 120.223 was recovered from government and private consumers on account of utility bills during July 2019 to April 2020. However, he said that a sum of Rs 130.976 billion was recovered from the consumers during July 2020 to April this registering an increase of Rs 10.753 billion.

He said under the vision of Energy Ministry and on directives of Chief Executive Officer IESCO Chaudhary Abdul Razaq, special recovery drive was launched which brought positive results. He said increase in recovery was a clear example of untiring efforts of all field formations and recovery teams. — APP

## SC urged to take suo moto notice of Ring Road scam

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has demanded the Supreme Court of Pakistan (SC) take suo moto notice of Rawalpindi Ring Road (RRR) project scandal. Talking to a private television channel, PML-N spokesperson Marriyum Aurangzeb called 'corruption' in the project a robbery committed in the broad daylight.

At the same time, she also demanded that not only Prime Minister Imran Khan should resign but that he should also be arrested since, what she alleged, it was on PM Imran's order that the alignment of the Ring Road project had been changed to benefit Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) seniors. Marriyum said categorically that her party rejected National Accountability Bureau's (NAB) inquiry into the scam since it could not question the prime minister. "PM Imran should first be kept in prison, and then he should be questioned in connection with his role in the corruption scandal," she asserted.

## Online registration for tenants starts

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP), Islamabad, Qazi Jameel-ur-Rehman Wednesday inaugurated an online registration system for the people residing in the federal capital on rented houses.

Under the initiative the landlords could submit their tenant details on the department website without visiting a police station. A ceremony in that regard held at Central Police Office, was attended by DIG Headquarter Kamran Adil, director IT department Saleem Raza Sheikh and other Officials of Capital police.

## ICCI urges govt to finalize budget with consultation

President ICCI said that Pakistan was in dire need of boosting trade and industrial activities in order to achieve early revival of economy and stressed that the government should bring down policy interest rate to least 3 percent

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: The business community is the key stakeholder in running the economy and the government should finalize the upcoming federal budget in consultation with major chambers of commerce & industry and other trade bodies. This was emphasized by Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry in a statement.

President ICCI said that Pakistan was in dire need of boosting trade and industrial activities in order to achieve early revival of economy and stressed that the government

should bring down policy interest rate to least 3 percent in the next budget that would pave way for availability of low cost credit to the private sector and accelerate the pace of industrialization and investment in the country.

He said that 17 percent GST was a major factor for high cost of doing business and hike in inflation for the common man, therefore, he urged that the government should bring down GST to single digit level in the upcoming budget in order to reduce the production cost and decrease inflation in the country. It would also make our exports more competitive in the international market.

Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan said that

Pakistan was mostly relying on raw materials and agro based commodities for exports while there was a great need to focus on production of value added products for achieving a great boost in exports. For this purpose, the government should allow duty free import of industrial machinery, equipment and technology so that our industrial sector could upgrade itself to produce value added and hi-tech products for exports. He said that the government should also consider providing incentive package to all major industries on the pattern of construction that would bring a new industrial revolution in the country. He said that the government should also reduce

taxes and duties on vehicles to promote investment in the automobile sector along with cutting duties on luxury goods.

ICCI President said that Pakistan has tremendous potential to improve its economy by promoting the tourism sector. He stressed that in the next budget, the government should allow duty free import for all paraphernalia for the development of tourism related projects including tiles, lights, electrical, mechanical & IT equipment in addition to machinery used in 3-5 star hotels and all tourism projects. He said that duty free import of passenger lifts, escalators, chillers, furniture and fittings, GRMS systems, BMUS,

chair lifts for resorts would go a long way in promoting the tourism sector. He said that besides the cost of land, the development of a 4 to 5 star hotel was capital intensive primarily due to the extensive duties in place and much longer payback period. Therefore, he emphasized that the government should announce at least a 5-10 year tax holiday along with various other incentives for investment in the tourism industry. Since the return on investment in the hotel industry comes after 7 to 10 years, therefore a tax holiday of minimum 5-10 years was important to make this sector more lucrative for investors and a game changer for the economy.



ISLAMABAD: Leader of the House in the Senate, Senator Dr. Shahzad Waseem addressing a virtual Youth Caucus organized by the center for Research & Security Studies (CRSS). — DNA

## Cultural and youth exchanges promoting Pak-China relations

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: China and Pakistan have made steady progress and headway, through cultural exchanges and cooperation, in diverse and vital domains ever since diplomatic relations were established in early 1950s. Both the governments, during the last 70 years, have initiated several important measures to increase awareness in their populations regarding difference in cultures, social values and business environments across China and Pakistan. Whether it is with enhancing official visits, investing in the tourism industry or attempting to narrowing the gap between the two friendly nations by addressing the language barrier, both governments have invested in making cultural cooperation

an integral and vital part of their policies.

Physical and cultural connectivity between both the nations have also witnessed a boost under China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) during the recent years, since the project is intensively promoting bilateral interaction and people-to-people contacts. The cultural exchange activities during recent years have received a substantial boost with citizens availing better opportunities to meet and showcase their talents. The way in which governments of Pakistan and China have attempted to close the gap between the two diverse cultures, is exemplary.

Commenting on the celebration of 70th diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan, Provincial Minister, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa,

Faisal Amin Khan Gandapur on Wednesday said both countries have robust ties while China has set precedent of achieving successes in a number of fields.

He said CPEC was a perfect example of China's support and Pakistan's role in the greater Belt & Road Initiative, was important by all means. "In my personal opinion, we can learn from Chinese model in so many ways; take the example of their agriculture, their per acres yields for different crops and they have invested in their rural populations and salvaged millions out of poverty," he said.

Regarding people-to-people contacts, the Minister lauded the role of CPEC in promoting this vital area. "China has been supporting Pakistan in terms of educational scholarships under student exchange

programmes", he added.

Faisal Amin emphasized that programmes in tourism sector should be increased but not just in traditional mode but more as a means of exchange of knowledge. "Our farmers, even some of our departments, still use old techniques and both the countries need to work further in this domain to get optimum results," he said.

In her comments, Director General, Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) said cultural and literary exchanges were vital to further strengthen people-to-people contacts. She eulogized role and activities of China Cultural Center in Islamabad for collaboration and boosting cultural exchange programmes.

## JI to observe Palestine Solidarity Day

Dr. Tariq Saleem said that Ameer Jamaat Islami Siraj ul Haq will lead a grand Labaik Al-Aqsa March from Centaurus Mall to D-Chowk in Islamabad at 3PM on Friday

KHAYAM ABBASI

RAWALPINDI: JamaatIslami Pakistan will observe Friday 21 May as Palestine Solidarity Day to protest over the genocide of Muslims in Gaza by the Israeli forces. On this occasion, the Jamaat will also organize Labaik Al-Quds Rally from Centaurus Mall to D-Chowk which would be led by Ameer JI Siraj ul Haq, Palestinians and leaders of religious and political parties.

This was announced by Ameer JamaatIslami Punjab Dr. Tariq Saleem in a press conference at JI's district office in Syed Maududi building here Tuesday. He said that Israeli forces were involved in committing war crimes against innocent Palestinians by launching air attacks on hospitals and media houses in Gaza. JamaatIslami will always remain at forefronts before the Israeli terrorism against the women, children and the innocent civilians of Palestine by becoming their voice, he said and added that countrywide anti-Israel protests and marches would be organized on Friday to express solidarity with the Muslims of Palestine. Dr. Tariq Saleem said that Ameer Jamaat Islami Siraj ul Haq will lead a grand Labaik Al-Aqsa March from Centaurus Mall to D-Chowk in Islamabad at 3PM on Friday. He said that more than 200 civilians including 59 children and 35 women were martyred in Israeli air attacks in Gaza besides bombardment on international media houses aiming to stop showing the true picture of Israeli barbarism to the world.

Appreciating the passage of Palestine Solidarity Resolution by the National Assembly, Dr. Tariq Saleem asked the Opposition and the government to send parliamentary delegations to Europe and other countries to apprise their leaderships about the inhuman Israeli actions in Gaza. He also called upon the media to counter the Jewish influenced western media. Provincial Secretary General JI Iqbal Khan, Dy SG Rasal Khan Babar, Ameer JI district Rawalpindi Syed AriefSherazi, Ameer JI Islamabad district Nasrullah Randhawa, Secretary Information JI Punjab InamulHaq Awan, President JI Youth Punjab Awasi Aslam Mirza, Secretary JI district Rawalpindi Muhd Usman Akash, President Pakistan Business Forum Punjab Muhammad Taj Abbasi and others were also present on the occasion.

## Prior dengue infection can double Covid-19 risk: Study

ISLAMABAD: People who have had dengue in the past are twice as likely to develop symptoms of Covid-19 if they are infected by coronavirus, finds a new study. The study, led by University of Sao Paulo in Brazil, detected the presence of antibodies against dengue virus and SARS-CoV-2 in blood samples from 1,285 inhabitants of Macio Lima, a small town in the state of Acre, part of Brazil's Amazon region. "Our results show that the populations most exposed to dengue, possibly owing to socio-demographic factors, are precisely those that most risk falling very sick if they're infected by SARS-CoV-2. This is an example of what has been called a synergic interaction between two epidemic diseases so that one exacerbates the effects of the other," principal investigator Marcelo Urbano Ferreira, Professor at the varsity's Biomedical Sciences Institute (ICB-USP) said. "On one hand, Covid-19 has hindered efforts to control dengue. On the other hand, the latter appears to increase the risk for those who contract the former," Ferreira added. There may be a biological basis for the phenomenon, in the sense that antibodies against dengue virus somehow exacerbate Covid-19, or it may simply be due to socio-demographic factors that make certain population groups more vulnerable to both diseases for various reasons, according to the researcher published in the journal Clinical Infectious Diseases. "The results evidence the importance of reinforcing both the social distancing measures introduced to contain the spread of SARS-CoV-2 and efforts to control the dengue vector, as the two epidemics are occurring at the same time and affecting the same vulnerable population. This should be getting more attention from the federal government," Ferreira said. The blood samples analyzed for the study had been collected in November 2019 and November 2020. — DNA

## Roshan Digital Account

SARMAD SOHAIL KHAN

ROSHAN Digital account is State Bank of Pakistan's initiative in collaboration with the commercial banks in Pakistan. The RDA aims to provide innovative banking systems for millions of Nonresident Pakistanis (NRPs) seeking to undertake the payment, banking and the investment in Pakistan For the first time in the history of the Pakistan. NRPs are being provided with the opportunity to remotely open a digital account in Pakistan through an entirely digital and on-

line process without the needs to visit the bank branch. The Roshan Digital Account changes the lifestyle banking of the Pakistan history. It fully integrates the Pakistanis Diaspora with the Pakistan banking and payment system. The Roshan Digital Account is providing several services with digital access to all the conventional account services which include bills, funds transfer, fee payment and e-commerce. It enables NRP to invest in Naya Pakistan certificate (NPCs) issued by the Pakistan government at risk free rates. On the NPC the 10% withholding tax on profit is applicable which is full and

final. It also gives you an opportunity to invest in the listed companies at the Pakistan Stock Exchange. It also enables opening up investment opportunities in Pakistan's property market. Now the funds that are available in the account can be remitted back from Pakistan without any distortion in the process. Now the major banks in the Pakistan banking sector are collaborating with the SBP on the RDA operations. The SBP Governor maintains the Roshan Digital Account will allow overseas Pakistanis to engage themselves with the e-commerce activities in Pakistan.

Which technically means to pay the bills for the families and digitally and remotely invest in the Pakistan stock market? The Roshan Digital Account means that the account holder will be able to seamlessly remit the funds back to the country where the individual lives. Now to open a Roshan Digital Account a customer has to choose from a foreign currency or rupee account or both. For the NRPs the accounts will have the information and will enable the real time online conversion of the currency from a foreign currency into Pakistani rupee denominated account and also the opposite.

The INPCCL will issue the INPC in a scrip-less format, which will be subscribed by the eligible individuals through the foreign currency value account or NRP rupee value account being marketed as the Roshan Digital Account. The funds for investment in INPC's must be remitted from abroad in the investor FCVA or NRVA after 30th day of June 2020. The investor will have the option to subscribe PKR dominated or US Dollar denominated INPC's of 3 month, 6 month, 12 month and 3 year or 5 year tenor.

— The writer is student of SZABIST ISLAMABAD

## Journalists to counter propaganda against pandemic

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: A total of 3,387 journalists, reporters and bloggers have been engaged at both federal and provincial level for promoting key messages and countering negative media and Covid-19 related myths.

According to UNICEF Pakistan, report 2021, to counter the belief that corona virus is fake, journalists and reporters have been asked to continue writing about the severity of the disease, importance of testing, early professional health seeking behaviors and the importance of physical distancing as well as key behaviors to follow, such as hand washing and general hygiene.

## PFA discards 4,030 kg unhygienic chicken meat

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Punjab Food Authority (PFA) have seized 4,030 kilograms of substandard and unhygienic meat of ill chickens during an operation in the city area here on Wednesday. According to the PFA spokesman, the enforcement team carried out a raid in the Chick market in the wee hours at the BaghSardaran area and discarded 4,030 kg of chicken meat on the spot. He said that meat was being supplied to the city hotels and was not up to hygienic standard. The teams also imposed a heavy fine on 7 vehicles involved in delivering substandard chicken to the market while warning notices were issued to 12 suppliers for improving the weight and quality of chicken.

## Islamabad police starts Eagle Squads' training

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad police has formally started training of its 'Eagle Squad' on the pattern of Dolphin Force Punjab. The officials of Dolphin Force and Police Training School Islamabad were imparting training to the personnel of Eagle Squads, said DIG (Operations) Afzaal Ahmed Kausar on Wednesday. Addressing to the under-training 'Jawans', he said the new squads would be introduced in the Capital after successful conclusion of training who would be responsible for effective patrolling in the city.

He thanked the team of 'Dolphin Force' for sparing time and imparting professional training to the cops of Islamabad police. The DIG (Operations) further said that the performance of Islamabad police would ensure positive image of 'Dolphin Force'. He urged the training cops to earn respect for the department and to be professional in their conduct.

He hoped that they would help secure the capital city. He was of the view that there was no short cut to success and one has to work hard to achieve success in life. Kausar asked the under-training personnel to learn what was being taught to them and serve the community with best of their professional capabilities. He said that Allah is very kind to us who has given opportunity to serve the masses. — APP

## Pakistan Post to organize online open court today

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Post will organize online 'Khuli Katchery' (Open Court) for resolving the complaints of postal services clients on Thursday from 11 am to 1 pm. According to an announcement by Directorate of Pakistan Post, Director General Pakistan Post would listen the complaints through online zoom meeting of the postal clients and will issue orders to concern for redressal.

The initiative was taken on the special directives of Prime Minister Imran Khan and Ministry of Communications and Postal Services. The high ranking officers based in all provinces including Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir would hold such courts.



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## No smoking

FOR too many years, the warning signs printed on cigarette packages sold in Pakistan have been ignored. Pakistan has one of the highest numbers of smokers or persons using tobacco-based products in the world, with 22 million persons over 18 using these substances including cigarettes, bidis, water pipes, sheesha and other similar means of tobacco intake on a regular basis. Over 15 million Pakistanis use tobacco daily, according to the limited figures we have. It has also been reported that many juveniles smoke despite the ban on children under 18 buying tobacco products and that nearly 50 percent of the population faces health hazards from second-hand smoke.

In this context, the decision by Prime Minister Imran Khan to withdraw from a webinar hosted by an international tobacco company on Covid in the region in which other heads of cabinet from countries across the region had been invited to take part is welcome. The decision sends out a strong message against smoking, and also fits in with WHO conventions that Pakistan has signed. At present, despite some campaigns, there are too many people either willing to risk their lives by adopting smoking as a habit or are oblivious to the risks due to illiteracy and the ignorance that comes with it. O

The prime minister's action has been welcomed by health activists, child rights groups and other organisations across the country. We now need further messaging from people with influence to help eliminate smoking, including the sheesha culture which has quickly gained popularity amongst young people, despite findings by institutes such as the Aga Khan Hospital about the very real dangers this presents. Nations around the world have worked hard to eradicate smoking. We must join them. Much more needs to be done, with bans on smoking in public places strictly implemented, so that smoking can be discouraged and people prevented from taking it up or becoming addicted to the substance which some health experts believe is more dangerous than any other addictive material as far as health risks and the cause of death go.



## The Ring Road saga

THE Rawalpindi Ring Road project controversy has claimed its first major victim. Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Zulfi Bukhari resigned from his position on Monday. Scrutiny is also on Aviation Minister Ghulam Sarwar, who has now repeatedly rejected having any role in the project and has vowed to quit politics if any corruption could be proved against him.

This is an incriminating saga on corruption and domestic failure—it is refreshing to see the Prime Minister demanding accountability by ordering a full-fledged inquiry. We see consequences already for those involved, even if by means of speculation through the political resignations as well as the transfers of hundreds in the bureaucracy said to be beneficiaries.

Yet, overall, this development is bad publicity for the government. The different fact-finding reports released before the decision for a full-fledged inquiry has led to rumours of several political figures being involved.

This is unsurprisingly being taken advantage of by the opposition—the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) is demanding action not just against alleged “direct beneficiaries” like cabinet members Ghulam Sarwar Khan and Zulfi Bukhari but also against CM Buzdar and PM Khan, claiming that the project was realigned with their approval. The waters are being muddied further with new reports coming out of the irregularities in the project.

It is in the government's interest thus to expedite the investigations so that clear action can be taken against those found culpable. The longer the inquiries into the project remain in the dark, the more controversial it will become. It is undeniable though that the mishandling of this initiative is a loss for the government—this project affects the civilians directly, with Islamabad Expressway being an absolute mess from DHA-2 till Gulberg Interchange. All investigations must be conducted quickly and transparently, and those found guilty must face consequences.

# Corona pandemic: Lesson learned for the global community

Adam M. Tugio



Special to Islamabad POST

No one is safe until everyone is safe. More than ever, global community has to work together to address this emergency global health situation if we want to gain herd immunity. We cannot allow vaccine nationalism to rule. We have learned that the first wave of the pandemic caused nations to turn inward

MORE than sixteen months since the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic in Wuhan, the world is still facing pressing challenges to find effective ways to curtail the unprecedented spread of the virus and to save the precious human lives. Inoculation programs have been rolled out in various parts of the world earlier this year. Yet, they have been insufficient to respond to the rapid spreading of more infectious new variants of COVID-19. The pharmaceutical companies have been in a race to produce Corona vaccines, like racing towards

the Mars. However, their production capacity remains inadequate to meet the high demand. To make the situation worse, some countries are buying the vaccines more than they genuinely require, leaving other majority in need behind.

The COVID-19 pandemic has spread with phenomenal speed, infecting millions and bringing economic activity to a near-standstill as countries imposed tight restrictions on movement to halt the spread of the virus. As of 16 May 2021, more than 163 million cases have been confirmed, with more than 3.37 million deaths attributed to corona virus, making it one of the deadliest pandemics in history. What we are witnessing that the fast spreading of corona virus has converted the global health emergency crisis into multi-dimensional global crisis. As the health and human toll grows, the economic damage is already evident and represents the largest economic shock the world has experienced in decades.

In the light of this background, I can identify some lessons learned from this pandemic for reflection. First, no single country is immune from COVID-19 virus. We can go further to browse the Worldometer.com to get an update on the latest developments. Globalization has accelerated the spread of viruses. Increased mobilization and international traveling have further contributed to make COVID-19 pandemic a catastrophic new chapter. As countries around the globe started closure of their borders, the pandemic wreaked havoc to global supply chain of manufactured goods. And as the virus has spread around the globe, concerns have shifted from supply-side manufacturing issues to decreased business in the services sector. All fashion, entertainment, sport, and technology events have been canceled or have been shifted online. While the monetary impact on the travel and trade industry is yet to be fully estimated and understood, it is likely to be in the loss of hundreds of billions of dollars.

Second, the COVID-19 pandemic has had far-reaching economic consequences beyond the spread of the disease itself and efforts to contain it. The pandemic plunged most countries into recession last year, with per capita income contracting in the largest fraction of countries globally since 1870. These downturns are expected to reverse years of progress toward development goals and push tens of millions of people back into extreme poverty. Over the broader horizon, the deep recession triggered by the pandemic are expected to leave lasting scars through lower investment, an erosion of human capital through lost work and schooling, and fragmentation of global trade and supply linkages.

Third, the extra ordinary situation posed by this pandemic has to be responded by extra ordinary measures in order to make prevention measures works. The nature of this new pandemic brings a lot of uncertainties on the efficacy of the vaccines, and potential long-term side effects of newly developed MNRA based vaccines. Some even questioned the legal basis for the procurement since interested states have to make advance payment

without guarantee should clinical trials fail. Noting this extra-ordinary situation, we need to be open-minded to understand the pressing challenge posed by countries around the globe to take a prompt yet extra-ordinary measures. In doing so, they have to make necessary but urgent adjustments on various aspects of governance in order to prevent the imminent danger to the health of their citizens. The unprecedented pandemic, therefore, requires an unprecedented global response.

Fourth, countries need to improve their own public health care to adequately provide immediate response in time of crises, and to become more resilient. During initial phases of pandemic, we learned widespread reports of shortages of face mask, gloves, and other health protection gears. We observed also panic buying and consequent shortages of food and other essential grocery items. Raw materials for Remdesivir Dexamethasone were difficult to be found in the market, making countries unable to produce those drugs.

Indonesia is equally affected by this pandemic and therefore has designed a strategy to tackle this pandemic. It is a three-pronged strategy which consisting of addressing health emergency situation; allocating safety net for social protection program; and providing stimulus for SME industries and to boost domestic consumption. The budget amounted to USD 48 Billion was allocated to meet these ends last year alone. Some amounts were reserved to improve our public health system, promote research & development in the health sector, including helping the national pharmaceutical companies to produce homegrown COVID-19 vaccines. As we know, current global manufacturing capabilities are far below what is actually needed - only about a dozen countries have the capacity to produce COVID-19 vaccines.

Fifth, increasing role of scientific-based evidence for policy recommendations. The pandemic has taught us to listen to the experts. Governments around the globe have appointed eminent scientists to lead them in making health policy's recommendations for effective COVID-19 prevention. Health protocols are being implemented taking into account their recommendations. The use of Information Technology has been promoted to monitor and control the spread of viruses. We have witnessed painfully clear evidence of rising cases of infections if we fail to honor their recommendations e.g. to stay home, wearing mask if we go out, or avoiding the crowds. As the vaccination is up against a new set of challenges due to more contagious new strains of the virus, we need to pay close attention to scientists' recommendations.

Sixth, no one is safe until everyone is safe. More than ever, global community has to work together to address this emergency global health situation if we want to gain herd immunity. We cannot allow vaccine nationalism to rule. We have learned that the first wave of the pandemic caused nations to turn inward. As corona virus is proceeding in waves, what is clear is that the virus and its aftermath likely to be with us for some time. Consequently, fair and equitable access for vaccines is there-

fore imperative. It is better to have some vaccines to all countries rather than to have vaccination to all people in some countries. Likewise, the waiving off the intellectual property protections on corona vaccines is needed to help end the pandemic. COVID-19 vaccines should be considered a global public good so that manufacturers in all countries would be able to get access to produce vaccines for all. We should seize momentum where the global efforts are involved to develop and distribute an effective vaccine with several promising options. The accelerated development of multiple vaccines is unprecedented - the process typically takes five to fifteen years. I anticipate new health protocols for new normal situation to govern our future activities. People are now more aware to maintain their health and well-being. And they will not be hesitant to accept COVID-19 vaccine passports to allow them to continue business and travelling around the world. I expect that sports events and entertainment industries which invite larger audience will also require spectators to undertake rapid PCR test that is being developed now, before entering the stadiums, theaters or even restaurants. Natural law dictates that every while the global community will experience an outbreak of new viruses. Despite consistent global efforts to increase public health and improving prevention, the incidents of SARS, MERS, Ebola outbreaks have occurred in the recent past.

As a pundit says “outbreaks are inevitable but pandemics are optional” - thus corona pandemic teaches us to enhance global cooperation by sharing knowledge and lessons learned if we want to succeed in the prevention to flatten the trajectory. Probably, it is time to reflect the wisdom of crowd sourcing method whereby scientists and practitioners are encouraged to contribute their knowledge. This is particularly relevant to address the challenge posed by developing countries due to existing communicable diseases, which are threatening their population. The pharmaceutical companies may have different priorities and more likely to be interested in finding magic pills to cure hair loss than curing TBC or dengue fever due to big potential markets for the former.

Finally, there have been some good news of increasing global cooperation. G-7 nations have committed billions of dollars toward equitable vaccine access over the next two years. Multilateral initiatives such as COVAX and individual governments are investing billions of dollars to expand production plants. And COVAX has been starting distribution of COVID-19 vaccines for developing countries. By joining hands together with enhanced collaboration at the global level, we can surely yield positive results in controlling this life-threatening pandemic. The collaborative efforts and exchange of knowledge and experience have always been the best effective ways to overcome any situation of dangerous crisis - a lesson learned from the human history.

—The writer is the Ambassador of Indonesia. Views expressed in this article are personal.

## With power comes responsibility

Wajeעה Bilal



The United States has been burning coal, oil, and natural gas far longer, with just over 4 percent of world's population, it is responsible for almost a third of the excess carbon dioxide that is heating the planet. China is responsible for less than a sixth

OLD wars and proxy warfare have always influenced the world politics as every country is in the race to win the superpower label that can project its dominating power and influence anywhere in the world. Perched on the canvas of influence, the modern-day conflicts between superpowers are fought in the fields of propaganda and subliminal messaging rather than battlefields. The last two decades have seen a spike in the cold war posturing between China and the US. The latter has ratcheted up the narrative in the world of social media, it has become obvious that the play is in motion, yet it requires online strategies and tactics to stay in the race.

There is usually some compelling argument by each side to convince their adherents of their authority rather than fulfilling its responsibility. It is an established adage that when two elephants fight, only the grass gets trampled, that applies to foreign theatres of wars like the Middle East and Afghanistan these days. Like a bull in a China shop, reigning carnage with impunity, the United States gets away with pulling off any unilateral stunt abroad while sanctioning others. Sometimes however, the cloak and dagger conceal a different paradigm behind the veil. Data from the US Bureau of Economic Analysis showed that the US' GDP declined 3.5 percent in 2020 on a yearly basis. The record decline is the first negative reading since the financial crisis in 2009 and the lowest since 1946. The UK-based Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR) had stated that China's skilful management of Covid-19 would boost its relative growth compared to the US and Europe in coming years.

The superpower possesses a powerful military force that could benefit the rest as well, but the US spends more on national defence than China, India, Russia, Saudi Arabia, France, Germany, United Kingdom, Japan, South Korea, and Brazil - combined. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SI-

PRI), which tracks the numbers on military spending from year to year, the top five military spenders were the US, China, India, Russia, and Saudi Arabia. The United States is the world's biggest military spender, and China is a distant second on the list. In 2019, the US remained the world's top military spender by far, at about \$649 billion. China was second at about \$261 billion.

Addressing the climate change is a collective responsibility especially for one that claims to be a superpower. All countries, including developing ones must address climate change. Early climate negotiations at the United Nations recognized a shared responsibility for climate change that relied on developed countries to cut greenhouse gas emissions. Developed countries are responsible for most of the greenhouse.

The United States has been burning coal, oil, and natural gas far longer, with just over 4 percent of world's population, it is responsible for almost a third of the excess carbon dioxide that is heating the planet. China is responsible for less than a sixth. The 28 countries of the European Union, taken as a group, come in just behind the United States in historical emissions. China has four times as many people as the United States, but the Chinese still burn far less fossil fuel on average than Americans.

Keeping these facts in mind it was claimed that the large American role in causing climate change brought on an even bigger responsibility to fight it, with an obligation to send billions of dollars abroad to help people in poorer countries. But President Trump announced that the United States would withdraw from a 195-nation agreement on climate change in Paris in 2015. The decision to walk away from the accord was a momentous setback, in practical and political terms, for the effort to address climate change.

With a stable homeland and a superior economy, the United States has always crossed the line of error repeatedly, without suffering much in return. Only a pow-

erful country could engage in a war as insidious as that in Iraq or Afghanistan creating the worst global crisis yet maintaining its stance as the wealthiest state and keeping its allies.

It can willingly involve itself in any part of the world. Most countries are too weak to settle issues in their own neighbourhoods and must spend most of their time doing damage control around their borders. Just as China can not ignore the disunion in Taiwan, rebellion in Hong Kong or any of the 10 countries that presently claim Chinese territory - Russia, can not ignore NATO or EU expansion. As a superpower, the United States has a bigger margin to decide on what issues it wants to be a part of.

Immunity from damage also applies to US citizens. The US government can effectively protect US citizens and their rights abroad. The United States stability compels other countries to invest or even finance its dues as dollar is the world's capital currency.

The dominant position the US holds in the world economy attracts smart people from all over the world that revives its workforce.

The facts make it obvious that America is more interested in keeping its title rather than fulfilling its duties as a result of that title. In 1906 Winston Churchill said, “Where there is great power there is great responsibility.”. The quote is so eminent mostly due to the wisdom behind it. People and nations believe that once they have some form of power, they can usually master it over people and abuse it. However, the connection between power and responsibility needs to be carefully set out. United States has enjoyed the status of a superpower for quite a long time and can justify the exercise of its power by showing the use to which it can be put in solving the political and economic problems of the world, not aggravating them.

—(Wajeעה is author of two books)



## Briefs

## Regular dialogues...

From Page 01  
dialogue under existing mechanisms and exchange of high-level visits to provide momentum to the relationship. Thailand's "Look West" and Pakistan's "Vision East Asia" policies complement each other. The Foreign Secretary highlighted Pakistan's focus on ensuring economic security leveraging its geo-economic location, development partnerships, and regional peace and security. He stressed the importance of translating the long-standing friendship, shared heritage and political goodwill between Pakistan and Thailand into substantial economic relationship for greater mutual benefit.

There was immense scope for cooperation in trade and investment, connectivity and development given that the two countries were "gateways" to their respective regions. It was agreed to work together for early conclusion of a mutually beneficial bilateral free trade agreement. Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi has also extended invitation to Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Thailand H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai for the next round of Joint Economic Commission (JEC) to be hosted by Pakistan.

The recent signing of the bilateral MOU on Defence Cooperation was welcomed and it was decided to expedite several other agreements in the pipeline including in the fields of agriculture and science and technology. It was agreed to enhance tourism, cultural cooperation and people-to-people exchanges. Pakistan was particularly keen to promote and facilitate tourism to its Buddhist Ghandara sites.

In terms of regional perspective, the Foreign Secretary briefed about Pakistan's constructive role in promoting peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan, and the imperative of a just and peaceful resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute for regional peace and stability.

Permanent Secretary Thani Thongphakdi shared perspective about Pakistan-ASEAN relationship. The Foreign Secretary reiterated Pakistan's desire for Full Dialogue Partnership with ASEAN and thanked Thailand for its consistent support in this regard. It was agreed to continue to remain engaged on all issues of mutual interest and enhance frequency of high-level exchanges between the two countries.

## Outdoor dining...

From Page 01  
11:59pm while takeaway will be allowed 24/7 from May 24. Tourism sector will be reopened under strict Covid-19 protocols from May 24. Educational institutes in districts with less than five per cent positivity rate will be reopened from May 24. Outdoor marriage ceremonies will be allowed with a maximum of 150 people from June 1. Elective surgeries will be reopened from June 1. Educational institutes in all districts will be reopened in a staggered manner from June 7.

All matric and intermediate exams will be held after June 20. All professional and non-professional exams will take place on a case-to-case basis as recommended by the Ministry of Education. However, certain restrictions will remain in place. These are:

All shrines, cinemas, amusement parks and indoor gyms will remain closed. Tracks for walking and jogging will be allowed to remain open with strict adherence to SOPs. Indoor dining will remain closed.

All contact sports, festivals, cultural, musical and other events will be banned. All types of indoor and outdoor gatherings, including religious events will be banned. Inter-provincial public transport will remain suspended on the weekends from May 22. In its meeting, the NCOC also decided to reopen the Gadani and Misri Shah industries from May 20. The forum urged compliance on wearing masks and said broader lockdowns would be implemented with stringent enforcement protocols based on risk assessment.

## Humanity is being killed in Gaza, Palestine, says Erdogan

"It is not the children who died in Jerusalem or Gaza, but humanity itself. The houses destroyed collapsed on humanity," he said, addressing the Commemoration of Atatürk, Youth and Sports Day celebrations

## FOREIGN DESK

ANKARA: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on May 19 criticized those who remain silent to the oppression of Palestinians by Israel and said it was humanity that was killed in Palestinian territory.

"It is not the children who died in Jerusalem or Gaza, but humanity itself. The houses destroyed collapsed on humanity," he said, addressing the Commemoration of Atatürk, Youth and Sports Day celebrations.

Referring to the U.S. accusations that the Turkish president made "anti-Semitic" remarks in his criticism of Israeli strikes in Gaza, he said, "They tell us 'Erdogan should not speak this way. What to do, clap? Where we see the persecution, we will shout in the highest manner.'"



He stressed that it is a misconception that "the strong is always right."

"Turkey exists to build a world

where we believe the righteous are strong," the president stated. "Today, cruelty, conflict, grudge and hatred abound in most of the

places where people lived peacefully under the umbrella of justice and security of our ancestors," Erdogan said.

Turkey will always defend the rights of Palestinians, whatever the price might be, he said.

"If a price has to be paid to resist the persecution and protect the oppressed, we will never hesitate to pay it," he stated. International institutions and states preaching democracy, human rights, law, justice, freedom and security are watching this "persecution" in silence, Erdogan said.

"If we remain silent to what is happening in Jerusalem today, we know that it will be the turn of our other holy cities tomorrow," the president said.

The command of Turkey's civilization and its ancestors to them is "to oppose the cruel, but to take care of the oppressed," he said, noting that together with the young generation, they would continue to oppose the persecution in Palestine all over the world.



GAZA CITY: Palestinian photojournalist Mohammad Dahlan injured in Israeli attack in Gaza on Wednesday. Dahlan was wounded in the leg when an Israeli missile struck a house in Tel al-Hawa neighborhood in Gaza City. - DNA

## Shusha's tourism potential showcased at international expo

## DNA

DUBAI: Azerbaijan has presented tourism potential of its Karabakh region, particularly Shusha city at an international exhibition Arabian Travel Market 2021 in Dubai, the UAE, for the first time since the region's liberation from the Armenian occupation in last year's war.

Nine local partners representing the country's tourism sector, including Azerbaijan Airlines (AZAL) and Heydar Aliyev International Airport, are participating in the exhibition that started on May 16. Azerbaijan's Tourism Board CEO Florian Sengstschmid has said. The country's Tourism

Board Deputy CEO Bahruz Asgarov said that the exhibition is a good platform to introduce Karabakh as a new tourist destination, adding that the participants and visitors of the exhibition showed great interest in the Karabakh region.

Visitors of the exhibition were informed about Azerbaijan's tourism potential, the existing and developing tourism products, and new tourism offers.

Azerbaijan is represented at the exhibition by a national stand on an area of 100 square meters.

The exhibition, participated by 2,500 people, will last until May 19 and has been attended by 39,000 visitors from around the world.

## Karim Benzema recalled to French squad after six-years

## SPORTS DESK

PARIS: Karim Benzema was named in France's provisional Euro 2020 squad by Didier Deschamps on Tuesday, giving the Real Madrid striker a shock international recall after years in the wilderness over his alleged role in a blackmail plot.

The 33-year-old has not played for France since October 2015, but is now set to line up alongside World Cup winners Kylian Mbappe and Antoine Griezmann at the delayed European Championship.

"So proud of this return to the France team and of the trust placed in me," Benzema said on Twitter.

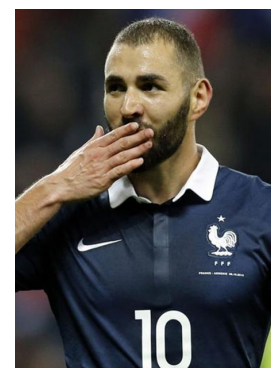
"Thank you to my family, my friends, my club... and

to all those who have always supported me and give me strength every day."

Benzema, who has scored 27 goals for France in 81 appearances, was named as this season's best French player playing abroad by the country's players' association earlier on Tuesday.

He has netted 29 times for Real Madrid this term, passing 20 league goals in all three seasons since Cristiano Ronaldo left the Santiago Bernabeu for Juventus in 2018.

"How was it done? We made contact, we fixed an appointment and we saw each other," said Deschamps. "I never said anything bad about him on a human level. From the start, there was a relationship of trust. We are not going to go back over



what happened." France kick off their Euro 2020 campaign against three-time winners Germany in Munich on June 15, face Hungary in Budapest four days later and finish their Group F schedule against holders Portugal on June 23. Les Bleus have impressed

at major tournaments without Benzema, reaching the Euro 2016 final on home soil before losing to Portugal and lifting their second World Cup three years ago in Russia, defeating Croatia 4-2 in the final.

"The (final) decision was taken today, but in my head, it was a long time ago," added Deschamps. "With my staff, there were a lot of discussions, they also had a feeling."

Benzema has repeatedly hit out at the French Football Federation (FFF) and Deschamps for not selecting him. He said racism was a possible factor in his exclusion from the Euro 2016 squad, while he criticised FFF president Noel Le Graet after missing out on the World Cup.

## Tokyo doctors call for Olympics to be cancelled

TOKYO: A top medical organisation in Japan has thrown its weight behind calls to cancel the Tokyo Olympics, saying hospitals are already overwhelmed as the country battles a spike in coronavirus infections less than three months from the start of the Summer Games.

In an open letter to Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, dated May 14 and posted online on Monday, the Tokyo Medical Practitioners Association said hospitals in the host city

"have their hands full and have almost no spare capacity". "We strongly request that the authorities convince the International Olympic Committee (IOC) that holding the Olympics is difficult and obtain its decision to cancel the Games," the letter said.

The association, which represents about 6,000 primary care doctors, made the appeal amid a jump in infections that has resulted in a shortage of hospital beds. - Foreign Desk



MANCHESTER: Manchester United's Paul Pogba (L) and Amad Diallo applaud fans while holding a Palestinian flag. - DNA

## Shanghai to further promote co-op with Karachi

SHANGHAI: May of Shanghai, Gong Zhen said on Wednesday that Shanghai city government will actively support efforts to further promote mutual cooperation between Shanghai and Karachi cities under the sister city framework.

He made these remarks in a meeting with Pakistan Ambassador to China, Moin ul Haque in Shanghai. Both sides held detailed discussions on further enhancing bilateral cooperation in the fields of economy and trade, education and science and technology during the meeting. Welcoming the Ambassador to Shanghai,

the Mayor briefed the Ambassador about Shanghai's successful control and prevention measures to combat Covid-19 pandemic and the revival of city's economic growth to the pre-pandemic level.

He highlighted that Shanghai will play its role of a bridge between the two countries to further strengthen bilateral relations. Solidarity during the pandemic is a testimonial of our brotherly relations.

Some prominent Shanghai enterprises have been engaged in China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects and have made sig-

nificant investment which are positively contributing to Pakistan's infrastructure and economic development. He said, Shanghai will actively support efforts to fur-

ther promote mutual cooperation between Shanghai and Karachi cities under the sister city framework.

Thanking the Mayor Gong for warm welcome and his



sentiments for friendship between the two countries, Ambassador Moin expressed satisfaction at the growing ties between Pakistan and Shanghai in diverse fields of cooperation.

Shanghai city will be one of the key partners of Pakistan in its ongoing development. Ambassador urged for further enhancing mutual cooperation between the two sides and welcomed more enterprises from Shanghai to invest in Pakistan especially in Special Economic Zones (SEZs) under CPEC. Pakistan was looking forward to participate in 4th China International Import

Expo (CIIE) to be held in November 2021 in Shanghai, which provides an effective platform for promotion of Pakistani products to China. Ambassador appreciated Shanghai Municipal People's Government for jointly holding of activities with Consulate General of Pakistan to celebrate the 70th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic ties between the two sides this year.

Ambassador conveyed his congratulations to Chinese leadership and the people on the 100th anniversary of founding of Communist Party of China this year. - APP

## Federer beaten by Andujar

## SPORTS DESK

GENEVA: Roger Federer has lost his comeback match after two months away, falling to Pablo Andujar 6-4, 4-6, 6-4 in the second round of the Geneva Open.

Federer's first match on clay in almost two years kept him on court for almost two hours in only his second tournament since the 2020 Australian Open. The past 15 months have included two surgeries on his right knee.

In the decisive set, the top-seeded Federer forced a service break and led 4-2 before Andujar rallied.

Federer saved two match points on his own serve, but the third ended with a wayward forehand under pressure on the baseline. Andujar put his hands to his head after clinching victory and exchanged an almost apologetic smile with Federer at the net.

The 39-year-old Federer and 35-year-old Andujar were playing each other on tour for the first time.

Before going on court, Federer was a spectator for part of the ATP Tour debut of perhaps the best prospect in Swiss men's tennis since his own rise in the 1990s.

With Federer watching some of the match, 18-year-old Dominic Stephan Stricker beat former U.S. Open champion Marin Cilic 7-6 (5), 6-1 in the first round.

Stricker, last year's French Open junior champion, is ranked 419th. Cilic, who won his only Grand Slam singles title in 2014, is ranked 46th.

The Swiss left-hander had nine aces and no double-faults. He broke Cilic's serve four times and was broken only twice.

"I was getting nervous," Stricker said. "It was actually OK until 5-1, 30-love. I was happy to finish it at 6-1 and not serve again." Stricker has practiced previously with Federer. His next opponent will be 40th-ranked Marton Fucsovics, who beat Swiss qualifier Henri Laaksonen 7-5, 7-5.

## Biden for de-escalation...

## From Page 01

On Wednesday morning, Mr Biden held his fourth call with Mr Netanyahu since the conflict started.

A statement released by the White House said: "The president conveyed to the prime minister that he expected a significant de-escalation today on the path to a ceasefire."

The US has called before for a truce but has held up any joint UN statement, saying it would not help with de-escalation.

The Palestinian representative at the UN, Riyad Mansour, called the Security Council's failure to express a unified position "shameful".

The latest bid for a council resolution calling for a ceasefire, launched by France, failed on Wednesday when the US said it could "undermine efforts to de-escalate".

Meanwhile, Israeli fighter jets continued to pummel the Gaza Strip in the early hours of Wednesday, flattening residential buildings and killing at least four Palestinians, including a journalist.

The latest raids came as Palestinian groups launched more rockets towards cities in southern Israel. There were no immediate reports of injuries.

Earlier, Israeli forces shot dead four other Palestinians and wounded scores more during protests and an historic general strike in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem.

At least 227 Palestinians, including 64 children, have been killed in Gaza since the latest violence flared on May 10. More than 1,600 Palestinians have been wounded. Twelve people in Israel have died, including two children, while at least 300 Israelis have been wounded.

Despite the escalating violence - now in its tenth day - diplomatic efforts for a ceasefire between Israel and Gaza's Hamas rulers have failed to make much headway. The United States continued to block the UN Security Council from issuing a joint statement urging an end to the hostilities, telling diplomats that a public statement would not help calm the tensions.

France, however, says it is working with Israel's neighbours, Egypt and Jordan, on a new ceasefire resolution. China said it was "supportive" of the French proposal.



## Briefs

## Haniyeh calls on Indonesia for support

DNA

JAKARTA: Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh on Tuesday wrote to Indonesian President Joko Widodo about the escalating Israeli aggression in Palestine.

"We call upon you to act urgently, and to mobilize Arab, Islamic and international support, to take a clear and firm position to oblige the occupation an immediate end of aggression and terror practiced by the Israeli occupation against the besieged Gaza Strip," Haniyeh said in his letter.

He called for the end of all violations in the occupied Jerusalem and its people," including Judaization schemes, settlements, forced expulsion and racial discrimination, and revoke all decisions targeting its gates and neighborhoods, especially the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood."

Haniyeh also called on Widodo to mobilize international support to urge Israel to "keep its hands off the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque, and to stop its violations against worshippers and allow them to practice their rituals and prayers freely."

"May God preserve and grant you success, and for brotherly Indonesia further progress," he concluded.

## Indian navy recovers 22 bodies

WEB DESK

NEW DELHI: Indian navy ships have recovered 22 bodies of people who were on board a barge that sank off Mumbai as a cyclone blew ashore this week, officials said.

The search is continuing for 55 more missing people, navy spokesman Mehul Karnik said on Wednesday. He said the three ships and helicopters involved in the search had rescued 184 people in rough seas with waves of up to seven metres (25 feet). Cyclone Tauktae, the most powerful storm to hit the region in more than two decades, packed sustained winds of up to 210km (130 miles) per hour when it came ashore in Gujarat state late on Monday.

The storm left more than 50 dead in Gujarat and Maharashtra states.

## Azerbaijan committed to int'l humanitarian law obligations

Azerbaijan is committed to upholding the international rule of law, including its obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law as applicable to its detention operations and the disposition of detainees, Abdullayeva said

DNA

BAKU: Azerbaijan is committed to its obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law related to prisoners of war, Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Leyla Abdullayeva said.

Abdullayeva made the remarks while commenting on allegations that Armenia continues to raise, accusing Azerbaijan of detaining Armenian "POWs".

"Let me reiterate that Azerbaijan is committed to upholding the international rule of law, including its obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law as applicable to its detention operations and the disposition of detainees. As agreed in the tripartite statement, and consistent with its obligations under international humanitarian law, Azerbaijan has released and repatriated all Armenians in its custody who were entitled to prisoner-of-war status," Abdullayeva said.

She stressed that Azerbaijan regularly addresses the false and inflammatory allegations

that continue to be raised by Armenia.

The spokesperson said that Azerbaijan is presently detaining Armenian saboteurs, who were found to be unlawfully on Azerbaijani territory weeks after the signing of the tripartite statement on 10 November 2020, which mandated the cessation of all hostilities.

"Based on information and evidence gathered by Azerbaijan, after the hostilities ended, a detachment of more than 60 people was dispatched from the Shirak region of Armenia to the territories of Azerbaijan in the last 10 days of November. This detachment launched terroristic attacks on Azerbaijani civilians and military personnel, including in late November and December 2020, killing four Azerbaijani servicemen and severely injuring one civilian, an employee of a mobile phone company who was simply doing his job to restore communication lines to a region devastated by years of Armenian occupation," Abdullayeva added.

She stressed that Azerbaijan is lawfully detaining the aforesaid individuals as a matter of both



international and domestic law while it investigates them as appropriate, prosecutes them on charges of murder, sabotage, or other crimes committed under Azerbaijani law.

"Consistent with its laws, Azerbaijan is presently conducting a detailed review of all individuals who were detained after the

44-day Patriotic War to assess the evidence against them. On 4 May 2021, as a humanitarian gesture, Azerbaijan repatriated three of the individuals to Armenia without pressing charges," the spokesperson said.

She said that "in view of Armenia's repeated mischaracterizations, Azerbaijan is proceeding

with its review with a view towards ensuring greater transparency regarding their basis for detention, conditions of confinement, and disposition".

Abdullayeva stressed that Azerbaijan remains committed to upholding its international obligations and ensures that individuals it detains are treated humanely and are subject to just and lawful dispositions.

Azerbaijan entered the Patriotic War with Armenia after that latter started firing at Azerbaijani civilians and military positions starting September 27, 2020. The war ended on November 10 with the signing of a trilateral peace deal by the Azerbaijani, Russian and Armenian leaders. The peace agreement stipulated the return of Azerbaijan's Armenian-occupied Kalbajar, Aghdam and Lachin regions.

Before the signing of the deal, the Azerbaijani Army had liberated around 300 villages, settlements, city centres and historic Shusha city.

The signed agreement obliged Armenia to withdraw its troops from the Azerbaijani lands that it has occupied since the early 1990s.

## Turkey rejects US statement on Erdogan

DNA

ANKARA: Turkey's Foreign Ministry on Wednesday completely rejected the US Department of State's statement accusing President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of anti-Semitism.

In a statement, the ministry called on the US administration to make efforts to stop Israel's incessant attacks on Palestinian civilians, instead of leveling false accusations on the Turkish leader.

The concept of anti-Semitism should not be used to cover up Israel's ethnic, religious and cultural cleansing policies, the statement noted.

Erdogan's comments were not targeting Jews, but the Israeli government, which has the blood of many innocent Palestinians on its hands, most of whom were children, women and youths, the ministry added.

The statement noted that Turkey has been the homeland for many Jews who fled from the Inquisition centuries ago and from the Holocaust during the Second World War.

## Public places in France set to reopen

FOREIGN DESK

PARIS: Authorities in France are appealing to residents to guard "collective responsibility" as several public places are set to reopen Wednesday after six months of restrictions because of a surge in coronavirus infections.

The second phase of gradual lifting of the lockdown will be marked by the reopening of non-essential commercial shops, museums, cinema halls, theaters, outdoor terraces of cafes, restaurants and indoor sports centers, with certain restrictions. An evening curfew will be further relaxed from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. The government issued a sanitary protocol for public places. Bars, restaurants and cafes can only open outdoor seating areas with 50% capacity. Indoor restaurants at hotels can reopen for guests. Indoor swimming pools and sports centers will only be open for schools and extracurricular activities. Close confined spaces like cinemas and theaters can have a maximum of 35% seating and large concert halls will have a spectator capacity capped at a maximum of 800 people.

## Pak, Belarus to enhance commercial relations

BREST: On visit to Brest region Pakistan ambassador to Belarus Sajjad Haider Khan visited Best Tex, a leading textile company in Brest city and met with its Director Oleg Borovkov and other officials. The meeting was also attended by Minister (T&D) Nasir Hamid and DHM Abdullah Amin. The two sides discussed the ongoing negotiations between textile enterprises of both the countries and about available opportunities for furthering cooperation including establishment of joint ventures.

Ambassador Sajjad Haider Khan along with Mr. Nasir Hamid, Minister and Deputy Head of Mission Abdullah Amin also held a meeting with Mr. Valery Labun, Director General of BelCCI (Brest Branch). The meeting was also attended by Ms. Elena Pivnik, Deputy Director of Foreign Economic Cooperation. - DNA



BREST: Pakistan ambassador to Belarus Sajjad Haider Khan posing for a group photo along with Director Best Tex, Oleg Borovkov a leading textile company in Brest city and with other officials. - DNA

## UNGA supports Uzbek President Development of Aral Sea region

OVER the past years, under the leadership of the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev, comprehensive measures of unprecedented scale and significance have been carried out in the field of solving environmental problems. Measures to solve problems associated with the consequences of the drying up of the Aral Sea are outlined as the most important priorities in this direction.

All this is gaining great urgency and relevance in the context of global climate change and worsening environmental disasters. Today, there is a growing understanding in the world that the negative changes associated with the Aral Sea catastrophe pose a serious threat not only to the countries of Central Asia, but also to sustainable development on a global scale.

The President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev, speaking in September 2020 at the 75th session of the UN General Assembly, once again drew the attention of the world community to the continuing destructive impact of the Aral Sea crisis on the entire region. Then the President of Uzbekistan proposed to declare the Aral Sea region a zone of environmental innovations and technologies.

All these initiatives and proposals of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, voiced at reputable world platforms, as well as in the course of events of a high regional level, are being consistently embodied in reality.

It is, therefore, remarkable that on 18 May 2021 in New York, during the plenary meeting of the 75th session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, a special resolution was unanimously adopted on declaring the Aral Sea region a zone of environmental innovations and technologies.

The special resolution declares the Aral Sea region a zone of ecological innovations and technologies, and in this context calls upon Member States, the funds, programmes and agencies of the United Nations system, international financial institutions and other relevant stakeholders to develop and implement in the Aral Sea region environmentally sound technologies, sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, and energy- and water-saving technologies.

As per the research of Nozim Khasanov, Chief Researcher of ISRS, under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the area of the dried bottom of the Aral Sea is 4.5 million hectares,

"The President Shavkat Mirziyoyev has repeatedly called from the high rostrum the world community to actively consolidate international efforts in order to overcome the consequences caused by the drying up of the sea"

including on the territory of Kazakhstan - 2.2 million hectares, Uzbekistan - 2.3 million hectares. Annually, up to 100 million tons of salt dust is removed from the seabed, which is carried over thousands of kilometers, causing irreparable damage to the health of the population, nature and economy of the region.

In this regard, fundamental changes were envisaged in approaches to solving the problems of the Aral Sea in the Action Strategy for five priority areas of development of the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2017-2021. In particular, systemic measures were outlined to mitigate the negative consequences of global climate change and the drying up of the Aral Sea for the development of agriculture and human life.

Already on 18 January 2017, within the framework of the implementation of these tasks, the State Program for the Development of the Aral Sea Region for 2017-2021 was adopted. In the same year, the Aral Sea Region Development Fund was established to provide reliable and stable financing. An important step in this regard was the implementation of 67 projects worth almost US\$800 million, aimed at mitigating the consequences of the disaster, improving the environmental, socio-economic situation and living conditions of the local population.

A significant event was also the holding in 2018 after a ten-year break of the meeting of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea in Turkmenistan.

The meeting discussed issues of improving the fund's activities, improving the environmental situation in the region, coordinated water resources management, strengthening cooperation between Central Asian countries in this direction.

Speaking about the need to unite efforts to overcome the negative consequences of the Aral Sea crisis and improve the socio-economic situation in the Aral Sea region, the head of Uzbekistan stressed that IFAS is the only regional organization in this direction, which can become an effective mechanism for interaction between countries

of the region.

The President Shavkat Mirziyoyev has repeatedly called from the high rostrum the world community to actively consolidate international efforts in order to overcome the consequences caused by the drying up of the sea. Back in 2017, President of Uzbekistan, speaking from the rostrum of the UN General Assembly, clearly demonstrated

the auspices of the United Nations. It was attended by representatives of many countries, as well as the UN, World Bank, Asian Development Bank, European Investment Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. At the conference, topical issues were raised related to the need to unite the efforts of the international community aimed at overcoming the conse-



quences of an environmental catastrophe, improving the living conditions of the inhabitants of the Aral Sea region. This forum and other events allowed attracting the necessary investments in a short time and starting the active work of the UN Trust Fund.

Currently, the Fund has accumulated funds in the amount of US\$26.1 million, of which in 2019 - US\$17 million, 2020 - US\$9.1 million. another 123.2 million dollars to create new jobs in the region, improve social and natural conditions in the disaster zone.

The systematic work of the Fund is intended to contribute to the Advisory Committee on Sustainable Development of the Aral Sea Region created under it on December 1, 2020. It provides valuable guidance on how to develop comprehensive solutions to your challenges. Thus, the committee meeting, held on March 30, 2021 under

the auspices of the UN and the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Trade of Uzbekistan, was attended by more than 130 representatives of academia, international financial institutions, UN agencies, NGOs, the private sector, government agencies and representatives of civil society.

During the meeting, it was noted that the fund has currently financed projects in the Aral Sea region to ensure access of the population to drinking water, improve the quality of perinatal care, support innovative youth initiatives in agriculture, improve sanitary conditions in secondary schools and improve the health care system.

In particular, it was emphasized that about 35 thousand people in five settlements of the Republic of Karakalpakstan are provided with drinking water, the infrastructure has been significantly improved. In addition, new equipment has been installed in maternity hospitals in Kungrad and Beruniy districts, as well as in the perinatal center of Nukus.

The meeting also approved new projects worth US\$12.4 million. The construction of a multidisciplinary hospital in the Muynak region, the introduction of a number of innovative, resource-saving technologies in agriculture, production and utilities were supported.

During the meeting, development partners - the European Union, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the Islamic Development Bank, the United Nations Environment Program, the US Agency for International Development, representatives of a number of countries expressed their readiness to support measures for sustainable development in the Aral Sea region.

The work done testifies to the fact that the idea of creating a UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund turned out to be timely and highly demanded. Thanks to this, it became possible to unite international efforts in overcoming the consequences of one of the largest environmental disasters on the planet, when, before the eyes of one generation, the sea actually turned into a desert with an area of 38 thousand square meters. km.

The Fund has become an important

international platform for the implementation of large-scale and long-term projects aimed at providing practical assistance to the world community to the population of the Aral Sea region.

At the same time, the problem under consideration is also in the focus of the leaders of the states of the region. Two consultative meetings (the first in March 2018 in Nur-Sultan, the second in November 2019 in Tashkent), held at the level of the heads of the Central Asian countries, became one of the effective platforms for discussing and solving problems of a regional nature, including environmental ones. The initiator of such meetings was the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

As a result of the second meeting of the leaders of the countries of the region, a joint statement was adopted, which, along with other topical issues, covered the problems associated with eliminating the negative consequences of the drying up of the Aral Sea.

The document expresses the intention to further develop and strengthen cooperation in the Aral Sea basin. It was also decided to use the capabilities of the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea and the resources of the Multi-Partner Trust Fund to solve practical problems of attracting new knowledge, innovative technologies to the region, comprehensively introducing the principles of a "green" economy, preventing further desertification, environmental migration and other measures.

Today we are not talking about returning the Aral Sea, but at least overcoming its painful consequences for people. To minimize the disaster caused by this large-scale ecological disaster. Man was the cause of the death of the Aral Sea, but it was he who was able to return life to this land. Man-made forests, which rustled at the bottom of the former sea, give hope for this. This land is literally changing before our eyes, people are getting clean drinking water, modern houses, roads, schools and hospitals are being built. Foreign investors come here, the number of tourists from different parts of the world is growing. All this is evidence that the Aral Sea region is being revived and has great prospects.

-This article is based on research conducted by Nozim Khasanov, Chief Researcher of Institute of Strategic and Regional Studies under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan.



**Briefs**

**32 frontline workers test positive amid**

**BUREAU REPORT**

PESHAWAR: As many as 32 frontline workers of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) have tested positive at Baccha Khan International Airport, Peshawar as the number of COVID-positive passengers arriving from Gulf countries at the airport has increased to 80. According to details, the airport manager of the Peshawar airport confirmed that 32 frontline workers have tested for COVID-19 at the airport, mainly including members from vigilance and airport services. Bridge operators and staffers from the human resource and medical department are also among the affected. The authorities at the airport cited an increasing number of COVID positive passengers' arrival from Gulf countries as the main reason behind spread of the infection among airport staffers. So far 80 passengers have turned out to be COVID-positive at the Peshawar airport after undergoing rapid testing before leaving the airport premises. "The airport premises is being disinfected properly and a regular spray is being carried out to avoid a spike in cases among those serving at the airport," the manager said.

**All bodies allowed to conduct exams**

ISLAMABAD: As per directions of National Command and Operation Center (NCOC), all professional and examining bodies are allowed to conduct their respective examinations. According to the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training on Wednesday, the exams will be conducted in accordance with strict implementation of COVID-19 related standard operating procedures (SOPs) and NCOC guidelines subject to approval of the Ministry of education. All professional and examination bodies are directed to contact the ministry of education to seek permission for examinations, it added. They will have to provide the details relating to exams including dates, cities, number of participants and examination centres. The NOC with SOP details will be issued within 24 hours after receipt of information, it mentioned. - APP

**Corps Commander Karachi lauds Sindh Police**

**DNA**

RAWALPINDI: Corps Commander Karachi Lieutenant General Nadeem Ahmed Anjum on Wednesday appreciated the dedication of Sindh Police in maintaining law and order in Karachi and Interior Sindh. The Corps Commander Karachi expressed these views while visiting Central Police Office Karachi, said an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release here received. While interacting with all ranks of Police, Corps Commander paid rich tribute to police shuhada (martyrs) and also met with the family members of Shuhada. Corps Commander laid wreath at Shuhada monument and offered Fatiha. The Corps Commander Karachi was received by IG Police Mushtaq Mahar.

**Modi the worst leader against virus**

NEW DELHI: The Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi has topped the list of world leaders who cemented their place in history for failing badly in pandemic management. According to an American news publication, five world leaders have made little effort to combat outbreaks in their country, whether by downplaying the pandemic's severity, disregarding science, or ignoring critical health interventions like social distancing and masks and India's Modi has been titled as the 'worst' on COVID-19. - APP

**Govt unveils prototype of electronic voting machine**

Fawad Chaudhry said a prototype of EVM had been installed at the Parliament House so that all the legislators could get themselves acquainted with the machine, urging the parliamentarians to give their valuable suggestions for its further improvement

**SHUJAAT HAMZA**

ISLAMABAD: A week after empowering the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to use the Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), the government on Wednesday gave the media a practical demonstration of the gadget at the Parliament House. The demonstration was led by Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hussain, Adviser to the Prime Minister on Parliamentary Affairs Dr Babar Awan, Senator Faisal Javed and Commission on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development in the South (COM-SATS) representative Nasir Malik. Talking to media, Fawad said initially the demonstration was given to the Parliamentary reporters, while the members of National Press Club and Bar Associations would also be briefed on the working of EVMs in due course of time. He said opposition parties would

also be sensitized about the functioning of EVMs and their feedback would be welcomed in that regard, he added. Fawad Chaudhry said a prototype of EVM had been installed at the Parliament House so that all the legislators could get themselves acquainted with the machine, urging the parliamentarians to give their valuable suggestions for its further improvement. He said the ECP had given 36 conditions for the EVM when its manufacturing process was initiated a few years back to meet its criteria. "I am proud of our scientists, engineers and institutions that all the 36 conditions have been fully met and incorporated in functioning of the EVMs," the minister said, adding "An EVM is as easy [in use] as a mobile phone." He said the EVMs would help ensure transparency and compile election results on a fast-track basis as the delay in vote count always cast doubt on its authenticity. Fawad said it was habit of some

political parties to level allegation of rigging after being defeated in the elections which was also evident from the recent by-polls held in various constituencies including Karachi's (NA-249) where both the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz and People's Party questioned its transparency. "The biggest issue is that the elections' result take time after completion of polling, but this machine will help produce the result within [some] minutes," he maintained. He again invited the opposition parties to come forward and play their due role in finalizing the electoral reforms for which the government had been striving since it came into the power. Leading the practical demonstration, Adviser to the Prime Minister on Parliamentary Affairs Dr Babar Awan said the EVM was such a model through which a neighboring country, which was five-time bigger than Pakistan, had made its election process 'acceptable' to all.

He said it was unfortunate that in Pakistan the defeat facing parties continued to level the rigging allegations that should come to an end. "We are standing in a phase where the general elections are due in around two-and-a-quarter years. To meet this challenge, the PTI government, on the directives of Prime Minister Imran Khan, has further empowered the ECP through necessary legislation," he said. He said basically, there were five EVMs of different types, out of which two were imported and three others being worked out at different places in Pakistan. "All EVMs will also be finalized by the ECP." He said that NA-249 election's results were not accepted by the candidates and political parties due to old system. Talking to media about the Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), he was of the view that existing election system has been suffering from an acute cancer disease since 1977 which would only be

curable through adoption of new technologies like 'Electronic Voting Machine', adding that it would ensure fair and transparent polling results. He said 'We invite opposition parties including Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) leader, Shahbaz Sharif and Pakistan Peoples Party leader, Yousuf Raza Gilani to come forward and see the model which would bring reforms in election system' in the country. He informed that overseas Pakistanis living abroad are happy of getting an opportunity to cast their votes in elections. A COMSTS expert briefed the media about use of the EVM, of which prototype model had been placed in the Parliament House. He said there were two steps of casting vote through this gadget including verification of voters by CNIC number or thumb impression to ensure validity, after which a voter would go to a specified area and select a candidate of his choice by pressing a button.

**Final statistics of census 2017 released**

**ZUBAIR AHMAD**

ISLAMABAD: The Bureau of Statistics has released the final figures of the Census 2017. The statistics agency says that the population of Pakistan is 207,684,626. The total population consists of 106,018,220 males and 101,344,632 females while the population of eunuchs is 21,774. The statistics agency says that the rural population is 132,013,789 and the urban population is 75,670,837. The population of Punjab Province is 1099,89,655, while the population of Sindh is 47,854,510. According to the data released by the Statistics Agency, the population of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is 35 million 8 thousand 920 while the population of Balochistan is 123 million 35 thousand 129. According to statistics, the population of FATA is 49,93,044, while the population of Islamabad is 2,03,368. Earlier in the month of March, Federal Minister for Planning Asad Umar had said that the Council of Common Interests (CCI) meeting had approved census results of 2017 on a condition that another census would not have to wait another decade especially given the controversy the last one entailed.

**Pakistan HC requests to include Urdu as individual language**

**DNA**

TORONTO: The High Commission of Pakistan in Canada has requested the Canadian authorities to consider inclusion of Urdu in the list of individual national languages and Punjabi Shahmukhi and Punjabi Gurmukhi as two separate entries for mother tongue for the Canadian census 2021. In a letter addressed to Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada, the High Commission for Pakistan said a large number of notable Pakistani origin Canadians have approached the high commission to request the Canadian authorities for inclusion of Urdu in the list of individual languages of Canadian census 2021 for the recognition and celebration of rich cultural heritage of Pakistani origin Canadians. The letter noted that Urdu is the national language of Pakistan and has been serving as robust medium of connectivity and cohesion in a culturally diverse national landscape of the country. The High Commission further requested to consider for future census, entries of Punjabi Shahmukhi and Gurmukhi as separate mother tongues because both languages followed two entirely different scripts as is the case with Urdu and Hindi. The letter concluded that the Canadian census does not record this distinction affecting resources which are currently allocated for the promotion of media and content only in Punjabi Gurmukhi used in the Indian Punjab.

**Trump faces New York state criminal probe**

NEW YORK: Donald Trump and his family faced the increasing likelihood of criminal charges Wednesday after New York state's prosecutor said it was working with Manhattan investigators in its probe into the former president's business dealings. The office of New York state Attorney General Letitia James announced late Tuesday it was investigating the Trump Organization in a "criminal capacity." Previously, it had said its probe into possible tax, insurance and bank fraud was through civil proceedings, which do not carry the threat of an indictment or imprisonment. Trump denies wrongdoing, and has described the parallel criminal investigation by Manhattan's district attorney as "a continuation of the greatest political witch hunt in the history of our country." - Agencies



ANKARA: Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi held a bilateral meeting with Foreign Minister of Palestine, Riad Al Maliki at airport before their joint departure to New York. - APP

**Pakistan's progress in controlling polio lauded**

**DNA**

LONDON: International Monitoring Board has appreciated Pakistan's progress in controlling polio virus, despite complex challenges faced by the immunization programme. The appreciation came at a virtual meeting of the Board that was attended by the IMB Chair Sir Liam Donaldson, and its members, all international experts in polio eradication and public health. Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on National Health Services, Dr. Faisal Sultan in his inaugural speech at the meeting said despite the complex challenges of the COVID 19 pandemic, Pakistan is optimistic about controlling polio before the end of next year.

**'Hajj vaccination restriction not a worry for Pak'**

**BUREAU REPORT**

ISLAMABAD: A condition to be vaccinated for coronavirus will not be "a matter of concern" for Pakistanis looking to travel for Hajj if Saudi Arabia decides to keep its current travel policy during Hajj, say senior officials. They reasoned that Pakistan has plenty of doses of the AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine, with more doses reaching of both AstraZeneca and Pfizer vaccines by next month. "The Saudi government has not yet announced its Hajj policy which is expected by 15th Shawal (May 27, 2021). We don't know yet whether they will allow pilgrims from outside the KSA and if allowed, how many outsiders could perform the pilgrimage," an official said. So currently, Pakistan is

waiting for an announcement by Saudi Arabia on its Hajj policy, the Pakistani government official, who requested anonymity and is based in Riyadh, told media. The government official said so far the Saudi authorities had only announced their travel policy. According to that, Saudi Arabia is only allowing people entry if vaccinated for coronavirus by either one of the three American or the European doses: Pfizer, Moderna, Jhonsen and Jhonsen and AstraZeneca. No Hajj-related restrictions have so far been announced, he said. "If they maintain the travel-related restrictions for Hajjis too, it would not be a matter of concern for Pakistanis as we are already vaccinating them with AstraZeneca and we have sufficient stock available," he said.

**EU to reopen borders to vaccinated travelers**

**WEB DESK**

BRUSSELS: The European Union member states Wednesday took a step toward relaxing tourism travel for visitors from outside the bloc, with EU ambassadors agreeing on measures to allow fully vaccinated visitors in. Meeting in Brussels diplomats also agreed on easing the criteria for nations to be considered a safe country, from which all tourists can travel. Up to now, that list included only seven nations. The recommendations will be adopted by EU ministers on Friday, the Agence France-Presse (AFP) cited sources familiar with the matter. An EU Commission spokesperson confirmed that the envoys had endorsed the update to travel rules. The EU imposed strict measures last year to contain COVID-19 outbreaks.

**Pak stresses strong UN-AU partnership**

NEW YORK: Pakistan Wednesday called for reinforcing the ongoing African Union-UN partnership for resolving the numerous issues of peace and security in Africa, especially the institutional mechanisms aimed at conflict prevention, early warning and mediation. In a written statement submitted to the United Nations Security Council which debated African issues, Ambassador Munir Akram said the coronavirus pandemic had accentuated the importance of preventive diplomacy, mediation and other means of peaceful resolution of disputes and conflicts in Africa. "The root causes of conflict in Africa are complex and multi-dimensional, and include poverty and underdevelopment; internal struggles for scarce resources; external contests for natural resources; and foreign interventions designed to suppress the

rights of peoples to determine their own political and economic destinies," the Pakistani envoy said, noting the continent's painful history of colonization had left behind numerous conflicts and disputes that continued to impact on its peace, stability and progress. These challenges, he said, had been further exacerbated by an unequal global order that often prioritized profits over the common good. The coronavirus pandemic, he said, had also triggered the worst recession and disproportionately impacted the poorest countries, and had a devastating impact on Africa, especially those countries which suffered from existing structural vulnerabilities, with economic activity likely to decline by 3.3% resulting in the loss of USD 115 billion and pushing an estimated 40 million people on the continent into extreme poverty.

"Helping Africa recover from the debilitating impact of the pandemic will not only require international support for a robust vaccination programme that reaches across the continent, including the conflict zones, but also the provision of adequate fiscal space and additional liquidity to recover from the economic reversal," Ambassador Akram said, adding it would also entail renewed efforts to sustain peacekeeping and peace-building efforts in the conflict-affected countries and regions. Unfortunately, he said, low-income countries, especially in Africa, were lagging well behind in terms of vaccine access, despite the UN Secretary-General identifying vaccine equity as "the biggest moral test before the global community". "International support will also be needed to revamp the fragile health systems on the continent," the Pakistani envoy said. - APP

**Jahangir Tareen rubbishes 'split in PTI' claims**

- says the separate group is the result of Punjab government's revenge actions

**ABID RAZA**

LAHORE: Estranged PTI leader Jahangir Tareen said Wednesday that his supporters had decided to form a separate group after the Punjab government initiated "revenge actions" against his supporters. Tareen, however, quickly denied reports he was forming a forward bloc in the party. "We were part of the PTI, we are part of the PTI and we will continue to remain part of the PTI," he announced

outside the banking court where he had appeared for a hearing. "There is no investigation against me going on relating to the sugar scandal," he said, adding that the three FIRs registered against him were not filed in any sugar inquiry. Tareen said his "supporters" were standing with him as far as, what he referred to as the "fake" FIR against him, adding that the pro-Tareen group had met the prime minister. Speaking about the inquiry into his allegations led by

**PTI leaders express commitment to PM**

**STAFF REPORT**

KARACHI: Senior leaders of the ruling PTI have expressed their commitment to Prime Minister Imran Khan after the reported formation of a 'group' within the party. Loyalist party leaders and ministers also issued statements and tweeted after the development. Speaking from Turkey, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, who is the PTI vice president, said all members of the party were supposed to follow discipline and warned that "violation of rules could affect their membership". "No member of the party can violate the rules on Vote of Confidence and Finance Bill," Qureshi said in his statement on issues related to party discipline.

Barrister Ali Zafar, Tareen said he had met him and had given a detailed explanation to him as well. "I am confident the report will be given to the prime minister soon," he said. The PTI leader said there was "another issue" that needed to be addressed. "Khan sahab is an honourable man and I believe he is just," said Tareen. "However, the Punjab government has started taking vendetta against members of my group," he added. He accused the Punjab government of transfer-

ring officers of the ministers that were loyal to Tareen, "left, right and centre", and were putting pressure on them. The estranged PTI leader said the pro-Tareen group had, as a result, decided to "raise their voices against this in the Punjab Assembly". Tareen said members of his group had decided to nominate MPA Saeed Akbar Niwani to "lead the discussions" against the alleged revenge tactics of the Punjab government, in the assembly.