



Islamabad POST

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Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

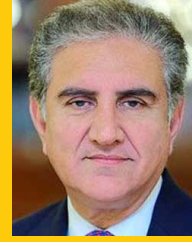
Price Rs. 20

Germany admits it committed 'genocide' in Namibia

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FM Qureshi in Iraq on 3 day visit

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Uzbek envoy lauds CGSS' positive role

Detailed News On Page-08



Briefs

Elected PTI govt is not weak

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Fawad Chaudhry said that Prime Minister Imran Khan is the most popular leader in Pakistan, the people of Pakistan voted for him and are his fans. The elected government should not be considered weak. Speaking on a program on British Broadcasting Corporation "HARD-talk, he said that Imran Khan got millions of votes in the last general elections, Imran Khan is the Prime Minister of a nuclear country, he and his cabinet make collective decisions.

Israeli PM in a state of fear

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi Friday said that said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is in a state of fear. The foreign minister's statement came after the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) decided Thursday to initiate an open-ended international investigation into violations surrounding the latest Gaza violence, and into "systematic" abuses in the Palestinian territories.

PPP doing water politics

LAHORE: Special Assistant to Punjab Chief Minister on Information Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan on Friday said that May 28, 1998 was a historic occasion when Pakistan became a nuclear Muslim state on the world map. Talking to media here, she said that Sharif family and its cronies were making tall claims to take credit of the nuclear explosion but the nation knew who was the real architect of the nuclear program.

Holiday Notice

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

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Israel's divide, rule and erase strategy is failing - Page 05

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Pak, Korea to boost trade and work towards an FTA - Page 07

Uzbek envoy lauds CGSS' role in boosting Pak-Uzbek ties - Page 08

PM stresses need to boost Pak exports

The Premier said govt has come out of the difficult economic situation and the economy was showing upward trajectory

BUREAU REPORT

NEWSHERA: Prime Minister Imran Khan here on Friday said increase in exports was imperative for sustainable economic development and bolstering industrialization to generate employment opportunities and attract direct foreign investment (FDI). Addressing commercial launch of 'Rashakai Special Economic Zone (RSEZ)' project under CPEC the prime minister said RSEZ was a landmark project that would help attract direct foreign investment, ensure inclusive economic development in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and also create significant jobs opportunities for the youth and skilled workforce. This economic zone for its important location for Afghanistan and Central Asian States (CARs) would accelerate pace of economic and industrial development and take country's exports to new heights and turn the KP province into a hub of trade and investment. Imran Khan said Pakistan was blessed with all natural resources and has potential to achieve new heights of economic progress like China by promoting export-oriented income generating industries and Small and Medium Enterprises sectors. "We can take benefit from China's expertise and RSEZ can provide unique opportunities to our domestic investors to learn from Chinese investors" he remarked. He said the government would provide all necessary incentives and facilities to the investors and all the bottlenecks were being removed to attract more investors from across the globe. When PTI government took over, he said the country was facing about 20 billion dollars current account deficit and in last eight to ten months the current account was in surplus due to our prudent economic policies. He said his government had achieved about four percent economic growth rate this year that had unnerved our political opponents. The Prime Minister said the government has come out of the difficult economic situation and the country's economy was showing upward trajectory with increased foreign exchange reserves and record remittances from the overseas Pakistanis. He appreciated the assistance of brotherly countries including China and Saudi Arabia when his government was passing through difficult economic situation after he took over in 2018. Imran Khan said a record sale of vehicles including

4.8% GDP growth expected: Asad

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning and Development Asad Umar said Friday Pakistan's gross domestic product (GDP) growth was expected to hit 4.8% in the financial year 2021-2022. Highlighting the achievements of the government during a press conference in Islamabad, Umar said in the nine months of the current fiscal year, IT exports showed growth of 46%. Umar said the country had "witnessed a strong growth" during the fiscal year, and it is expected that the remittances would shoot up from \$21.7 billion to \$29.1 billion till the year end - an increase of 34% in a year. The federal minister said if we combine the 3.94% GDP growth and the increase in remittances, it will take the gross national product (GNP) growth to 6.5% - the "highest" GNP growth in the last 16 years.

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Walk-in vaccination open for people aged 30+

Teachers of any age can walk-in to any vaccination center and get themselves vaccinated

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development, Reforms and Special Initiatives Asad Umar on Friday said it was decided in the NCOC meeting today to open up walk-in vaccination for people aged 30 and above from Saturday. The federal minister, who also heads the NCOC, took to Twitter and urged all individuals who are 30 or older and registered for the coronavirus vaccine to go to any center and get vaccinated. Asad Umar also told that over five million Pakistanis had received jobs by Thursday. On the other hand, the NCOC, to ensure safe environment for education and conduct of exams, announced to open walk-

100,000 doses of Pfizer arrive through COVAX

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: More than 100,000 doses of the Pfizer coronavirus vaccine have arrived in Pakistan through the COVAX facility, UNICEF Pakistan reported on Friday. The doses reached Islamabad this morning with the help of UNICEF, it said, in a statement on Facebook. UNICEF said that a consignment containing diluents as well as syringes is expected in the next two days. The Pfizer vaccine will be utilised across the country in the ongoing vaccination campaign, it said. Friday's consignment marks the second shipment to have arrived through the COVAX facility. The first, which arrived on May 8, contained 1,248,400 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine. COVAX is a global vaccine-sharing programme co-led by the World Health Organisation, the Gavi vaccine alliance, and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI). It has pledged 17.2 million doses to Pakistan.

in vaccination for teachers above 18 years of age. Meanwhile, the NCOC, to ensure safe environment for education and conduct of exams, announced to open walk-

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Vaccinating 70% population vital to end pandemic: WHO

The World Health Organisation's regional director for Europe Hans Kluge said countries and their populations must not become complacent about the pandemic

SPECIAL REPORT

COPENHAGEN: The WHO's European director slammed the region for its slow vaccine rollout warned on Friday and warned that the coronavirus pandemic won't end until at least 70% of people are inoculated. The World Health Organisation's regional director for Europe Hans Kluge said countries and their populations must not become complacent about the pandemic. "Don't think the COVID-19 pandemic is over," Kluge told AFP in an interview while adding that vaccination rates needed to increase.

"The pandemic will be over once we reach 70% minimum coverage in vaccination," the regional director said. In the 53 countries and territories that make up the WHO's European region - including several in Central Asia - 26% of the population has received a first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. In the European Union, 36.6% of the population has received at least one dose and 16.9% have been fully vaccinated, according to a count by AFP. Kluge said one of his main concerns was the increased contagiousness of new variants. "We know for example that the B.1617 (Indian variant) is more transmissible than the B.117



(British variant), which already was more transmissible than the previous strain," Kluge noted. Cases of the so-called Indian variant have been recorded in 27 of the region's 53 countries, while the number of new cases, and deaths, has fallen for five consecutive weeks, reaching their lowest levels since mid-October. Worldwide, new cases have dropped for four weeks in a row, according to an AFP tally. But while vaccines have proven effective against coronavirus mutations, people must still be vigilant, Kluge emphasised. The Belgian doctor said a major concern was that "people drop their guards that they become complacent," especially going into the summer months. In addition, large gatherings are on the horizon in conjunction with the European football championship. "Let's finally give COVID-19 the red card, don't allow extra time for COVID-19," Kluge



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of European Union Androulla Kaminara met with the newly appointed Ambassador of Bulgaria to Pakistan Ms Irena Gancheva. - DNA

Nation observed Yaum-e-Takbeer

DNA

ISLAMABAD: On the occasion of Yaum-e-Takbeer, the nation reaffirmed its resolve to safeguarding Pakistan's sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence against any form of aggression. Pakistan is committed to continue working towards the promotion of environment of peace and stability at the regional and global levels. Pakistan has been actively contributing to international efforts for strengthening global norms on arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament and follows latest international standards on export controls, nuclear safety and security at the national level. This year, Youm-e-Takbeer has been marked by the inauguration of 1100 MWe K-2 Nuclear Power Plant in Karachi which adds much valuable, cleaner, reliable and affordable electricity to the national energy mix.

WHO calls for patient access to Gaza

DNA

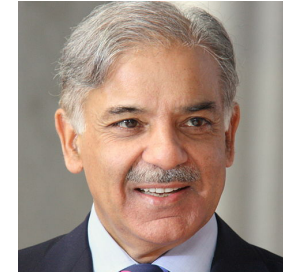
GENEVA: As health workers struggle to care for the sick and wounded after 11 days of violence, the World Health Organisation on Friday sought access to patients in the Gaza strip and free passage to evacuate them for medical treatment. WHO spokeswoman Fadela Chaib told a Geneva briefing that around 600 patients, including some with chronic conditions, needed to be referred outside of the Palestinian enclave since the start of the hostilities, but has been unable to due to crossing closures.

Shahbaz rubbishes rift claims in PDM

"No one party has the right to bring or kick another party out," said Shahbaz

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: Amid attempts to bring back PPP and ANP into the PDM's fold, Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly Shahbaz Sharif on Friday said that no party has the right to kick out another from the alliance. The PML-N president was addressing a press conference in Islamabad alongside PDM chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman after the two met today ahead of tomorrow's much-awaited meeting of the alliance. "No one party



has the right to bring or kick another party out. PDM is a forum and decisions are taken with consensus," said Shahbaz when asked about the PPP and ANP. He also explained to reporters that when the consultations are completed and a decision is

taken then the president of the alliance announces the future course of action. When the reporters pressed the PML-N president about his stance on the two parties return, he clarified that he does not have a "personal opinion" and what he says is always the party's "opinion". The former Punjab CM also shared with the media personnel the agenda for tomorrow's PDM meeting. He said that meeting that will be chaired by Maulana Fazlur Rehman will discuss the country's political situation.

Continued on Page 06

US Chargé d'affaires lauds Pak peace efforts



NEHAL MIRAJ

RAWALPINDI: Senior US diplomat in Pakistan Angela Aggeler on Friday lauded Islamabad for its sincere efforts for bringing peace and stability in the region, especially the Afghan peace process. US Chargé d'affaires Aggeler had called on Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa at the General Headquarters in Rawalpindi on Friday. During the meeting, matters of mutual interest, overall regional security situation

including recent developments in Afghan peace process and bilateral cooperation in various fields were discussed, said a statement issued by the ISPR. This is the US diplomat's second meeting with Gen Bajwa in a month. Earlier this month, she had called on Gen Bajwa to discuss several matters of mutual interest between Pakistan and the United States. Last week, US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin held talks on Monday with Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa.

FM Qureshi in Iraq

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: At the invitation of the Foreign Minister of Iraq, His Excellency Fuad Hussein, Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi is undertaking a bilateral visit to the Republic of Iraq from 28 - 30 May 2021. During the visit, the Foreign Minister will hold detailed discussions on bilateral cooperation with his counterpart. He will also review cooperation between the two countries in multilateral organizations, in particular the United Nations, its subsidiary organizations, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). He will also exchange views on problems concerning Muslim Ummah, as well as global and regional issues of mutual interest. Foreign Minister Qureshi will also call on the leadership of Iraqi Ministers on bilateral matters pertaining to respective areas of cooperation, in particular the issues pertaining to the management and well-being of thousands of Pakistani Zairren visiting sacred sites in Iraq every year.

COVID-19 claims 67 more lives

ISLAMABAD: The national tally on Friday of total active COVID-19 cases recorded 58,611 with 2,482 more people tested positive for the deadly virus and 2,822 people recovered from the disease during the last 24 hours. Sixty-seven corona patients have died during past 24 hours, 60 of whom were under treatment in hospital and seven out of the hospital in their respective quarantines or homes, according to the latest update issued by the NCOC. - DNA

Briefs

Vaccination smoothly underway in Punjab

LAHORE: Punjab Health Minister Dr. Yasmin Rashid on Friday said that the vaccination process was underway successfully across the province. She said this on the inaugural ceremony of a new vaccination center at the Pilot School Wahdat Road here. Minister for Schools Education Department Murad Raas also accompanied her. She said that more than 3.5 million people had been vaccinated in the province. She said the Punjab government would be able to vaccinate more than 250,000 people per day in Punjab from June and from July onwards, the number of daily vaccinations would reach from 350,000 to 400,000 per day. The only solution to saving people from Corona was prevention and vaccinations, she said. She said the government had started vaccination of people of 19 years onwards and the vaccination of frontline workers of every department was an important step. "I salute all healthcare workers who lost their lives during duties," she said. — APP

Pakistan Navy promotes peace in region

LAHORE: Pakistan Navy promotes peace and stability in the region and has remained committed to maritime security and order at sea. These views were expressed by the Commander Pakistan Navy and Director of Indigenous Technical Development (North) Naval R&D Institute (ITD Wing) Tasneem Ahmad during a meeting here at Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The Vice President LCCI Tahir Manzoor Chaudhry chaired the meeting while former President LCCI Engr. Sohail Lashari and Executive Committee Member Malik Riaz Iqbal were also present. Tasneem Ahmad said that purpose of his LCCI visit was to bridge the gap between private sector and Pakistan Navy as well as officially invite LCCI to participate in "Pakistan Navy Industrial Seminar". He added that the event would be a mega forum generated by Pakistan Navy engaging academia, industry and business chambers, adding, an exhibition would also be held during the event. On this occasion, LCCI Vice President Tahir Manzoor Chaudhry said, "We truly value the services of Pakistan Navy which is an integral part of our armed forces in safeguarding the territorial waters of Pakistan." He appreciated the initiative of Pakistan Navy to interact with business Community with regard to inviting the representatives from private sector to participate in development projects being carried out by Pakistan Navy. Tahir Manzoor said the LCCI had always advocated for enhancing defence production through public private partnership. "SAVDEX is the result of that vision and we vow to do more to achieve the desired objectives," he said. — APP

Four die of coronavirus in Faisalabad

FAISALABAD: Another four patients died of COVID-19 while 66 people tested positive during the last 24 hours in Faisalabad. A spokesperson for the Health department said on Friday that 1,201 coronavirus tests were conducted in public and private sector labs during the period. He said that total active cases in Faisalabad were 1,021 while 19,120 patients had so far recovered from the disease. He said that 339 beds were allocated at the Allied Hospital, 133 at the DHQ Hospital and 150 at Government General Hospital Ghulam Muhammad Abad for COVID-19 patients. At present, 130 patients were under treatment at the Allied Hospital, 45 at DHQ Hospital and 33 were admitted to General Hospital. He further said that 567 confirmed patients were isolated at their homes in the district. — APP

Corona cases in Faisalabad are gradually declining: DC

Deputy Commissioner said that at present 18 vaccination centers are functioning in two shifts from 8 am to 8 pm except Friday in which the center of Sports Complex Samanabad is working seven days a week

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ali said that due to the special grace of Allah Almighty and timely & effective preventive measures of the district administration and the cooperation of all sections, the rate of positive cases of corona is decreasing however citizens must take precautionary measures and make the use of masks a part of life and vaccinated on a priority basis for protect yourself because dangers of corona was also intact. He was Addressing

the awareness session held in the office regarding the subject on covid 19 social mobilization and vaccine advocacy demand generation. Assistant Commissioner City Syed Ayub Bukhari, District Health Officer Dr. Bilal Ahmed, CEO Education Ali Ahmed Sian, District Coordinator Dr. Junaid and other officers. During the awareness session, DHO informed about the global and Pakistan situation of Corona epidemic and said that so far 21,097 confirmed cases of Corona have been reported in Faisalabad out of which 867 deaths, 18,976 recoveries

and currently 223 confirmed patients of Corona have been admitted in the hospitals while 319,907 people have been tested. He said that social distancing, hand sanitizing, wearing face mask and Vaccination is necessary for saving corona. He said that after the first vaccination of Corona, 65% transmission is reduced and now registration is being started for those above 18 years of age. He said that rumors about vaccines should not be listened to. Deputy Commissioner said that at present 18 vaccination centers are functioning in two shifts from 8

am to 8 pm except Friday in which the center of Sports Complex Samanabad is working seven days a week. He said that steps have been taken to make 15 Rural Health Centers and WAPDA Hospital as Vaccine Centers. He said that the current third wave of Corona is more intense than the first two and the threat is not yet over. He appreciated the hard work of the health professionals in dealing with the epidemic and said that the district administration would spare no effort to keep the citizens safe from the Corona epidemic. Sahib-

zada Zahid Mahmood Qasmi, Sadaqat Lodhi, Mian Tanveer Riaz Vohra and others also addressed the session. **Khidmat Aap ki Dehleez Par drive underway** Khidmat Aap ki Dehleez Par program was under way on second day also in the district. Under the arrangements of Faisalabad Waste Management Company CEO Kashif Raza Awan and Assistant Commissioner City Syed Ayub Bukhari has cleared the garbage from various alleys on Jarawal and other busiest roads under the first week of the program on the instructions

of the Punjab government. They also made the street lights functional on Sarogodha road. They also removed wall chalking on some of the city walls under week activities. CEO FWMC said that implementation was ongoing and we are committed to meet the expectations of our citizens. He asked the citizen to identified the garbage via mobile app and FWMC would clear the complaints as early as possible. Meanwhile the teams of FWMC were remained in the field whole day and cleared the garbage.

MoU inked between IoBM and P&DD

ATHAR SUFI

KARACHI: The Institute of Business Management (IoBM), Karachi signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Research and Training Wing, Planning and Development Dept., Govt of Sindh (P&DD, GoS). IoBM will design and conduct training programs to build career-focused leadership capacity-building sessions for the officers of the Government of Sindh. Mr. Talib Karim, President IoBM, and Dr. Shereen Narejo, Secretary, Planning and Development Board, Government of Sindh, were the signatories. According to the agreement, IoBM and the P&DD, GoS will pursue the enhancement of knowledge-based training and academic collaborations with partners to create an eco-system of quality research to improve service delivery. Through this MoU, IoBM will streamline tasks pertaining to policy research, academic collaboration, mid-term and impact evaluation studies, training on a variety of sectors among others. Mutually beneficial capacity-building activities and programs for the P&DD Board and its relevant departments will include, among others, the Research and Training Wing, Provincial Bureau of Statistics, Monitoring and Evaluation Cell, and Urban Policy and Strategic Planning.

PTI fulfills its promises

FAISALABAD: State Minister for Information & Broadcasting Farrukh Habib on Friday said the PTI had fulfilled its election promises by undertaking a gigantic development program particularly for the neglected areas of the city. Inaugurating a dispensary, park and new classrooms in a local school of Ahmad Nagar, he mentioned his previous visit to this area and said that City Council No.82 was badly neglected by the previous government. There were neither schools nor public parks while the people were living in miserable condition without any basic amenities, he added. He said that he decided to provide basic amenities and bring deprived area at par with People's Colony. He announced that a technical college would be established in Ahmad Nagar while the residents of this area would also get inexpensive residences. — APP

Sufism, S&T centers to be set up

LAHORE: The research centers would be established across Punjab province to explore the fields of Sufism and science and technology. In the first phase, Sheikh Abul Hassan Shazli Center would be established in Lahore for research on Islam, Sufism, religious thought, interfaith harmony, and modern sciences besides S&T. Under the poor friendly and pro-education initiatives of Prime Minister Imran Khan's spouse Bushra Imran, the downtrodden segment of the society would be given equal opportunities to progress. The first lady is also striving for the uplift of Panagahs, Langar Khanas, shelter homes and child protection bureaus. Sheikh Abul Hassan Shazli Research Center would serve the poor students and those passionate for getting education. The center would also be linked with the shelter homes, child protection bureaus, prisons, particularly women and juvenile jails, schools, colleges, universities, public, private, and religious educational institutions. The center would also be linked with the libraries of world famed research centers like Jstor, Oxford and Cambridge which would also be made remotely accessible across the province. — APP

Sindh: Covid claims 15 more patients

DNA

KARACHI: As many as 15 more patients of Coronavirus died overnight lifting the death toll to 5,003 and 1252 new cases emerged when 15,440 tests were conducted. This was stated by Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah in a statement issued here on Friday. He added that 15 more patients of COVID-19 lost their lives lifting the death toll to 5,003 that constituted 1.6 percent death rate. He said that 15,440 samples were tested which detected 1252 cases that constituted 8.1 percent current detection rate. He added that so far 4,061,903 tests have been conducted against which 315,393 cases were diagnosed, of them 90.7 percent or 285,975 patients have recovered, including 572 overnight. The CM said that currently 24,415 patients were under treatment, of them 23,402 were in home isolation, 22 at isolation centers and 991 at different hospitals. He added that the condition of 937 patients was stated to be critical, including 74 shifted to ventilators. According to the statement, out of 1252 new cases, 780 have been detected from Karachi.



FAISALABAD: State Minister for Information & Broadcasting Farrukh Habib is offering 'Fateha' at mausoleum of Sufi Barkat Ali in Dalawal at Samundri Road. — DNA

PHP Held Blood Donation camp for Thalassemia Patients

DNA

FAISALABAD: In the wake of 3rd wave of COVID-19 and acute shortage of Thalassemia baby red cells and Hemophilia baby white cells, SSP patrolling Mirza Anjum Kamal established a special Blood Donation Camp for Thalassemia needy patients in collaboration with Ali Zaib Foundation at the site PHP Regional office. While talking to media, SSP said that the Thalassemia patients require blood after every 15 days. The officers/Officials donated blood with religious zeal and zest. The donors said that they are very happy to donate blood.

Muhammad Rizwan Bhatti, spokesperson of Patrolling police told that almost 60 patrolling officers done their screening and about 50 donated blood after their clearance of all tests. SSP Patrolling further showed his commitments to donate more blood after regular intervals for the healthy well being of Thalassemia Needy Patients. He appreciated the efforts of Incharge Mobile education for better coordination to establish Blood Donation Camp. Mirza Ilyas Baig, spokesperson of Ali zaib Foundation also lauded the contribution of Punjab Highway Patrolling police for contributing such a big blood donation to Ali Zaib Foundation.

IRSA must ensure mechanism to gauge water losses: Firdous

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Special Assistant to Punjab Chief Minister on Information Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan on Friday said that May 28, 1998 was a historic occasion when Pakistan became a nuclear Muslim state on the world map. Talking to media here, she said that Sharif family and its cronies were making tall claims to take credit of the nuclear explosion but the nation knew who was the real architect of the nuclear program. She said the nation had provided resour-

ces and Dr Qadir Khan led teams worked day and night to make the dream a reality on May 28, 1998. Dr Firdous said the PPP was trying to gain public sympathies through water politics. She said, "Apportionment of waters of the Indus River System between the provinces in 1991 has given Punjab the right to use its share of water at Taunsa and Panjnad and the canal water is provided to the cotton crop." The SACM said only eight percent water losses occurred in Punjab while 39 percent in Sindh, she said.

FCCI urges BOI to play a proactive role for colonization

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: Board of Investment (BOI) will have to play a proactive role for the immediate colonization of existing industrial estates and special economic zones in the country to accelerate the pace of economic development, said Engineer Hafiz Ihtasham Javed President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI). He was addressing a zoom conference organized by the BOI. It was attended by Mr. Saif-ur-Rehman Secretary BOI and representatives of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI), Karachi and Lasbela Chambers in addition

FCCI and PIA signed MoU

FAISALABAD: Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) will offer a 10 % concession in air fare to Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) members and their families who will prefer to travel through the national flag carrier. In this connection FCCI and PIA signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) during a special function held in the boardroom of FCCI. Engineer Hafiz Ihtasham Javed President FCCI and Mr. Muhammad Shahid Husain District Manager PIA signed the documents on behalf of their respective organizations. According to this MoU, FCCI will encourage its members to travel through PIA while the national flag carrier will also set up a dedicated counter for the facilitation of the FCCI members. — DNA

to other chambers and trade bodies from all over the country. He said that 90% land in M3 industrial estate and 60% land in Allama Iqbal special economic zone has been sold out. "Now it's colonization is

efficient regulatory measures and one window operation in according to its true spirit to attract and facilitate the foreign as well as local investors. Regarding one time waiver of custom duty on import of machinery for new investment, he said that this facility is quite insufficient particularly in the prevailing circumstances as they have to pay sales tax and income tax while during the exemption period, industrialists have to import new machinery along with its spare parts without this facility. He said that the Government has done a commendable job by improving the EODB but still investors are facing multiple problems and the Government must intervene and facilitate them.



FAISALABAD: Under the program Khidmat Aap ki Dehleez Par the team of FWMC asking the performance from citizen. — DNA

Palestine, Kashmir share struggle for freedom

MIRPUR: AJK President Sardar Masood Khan, while paying tribute to the people of Azad Kashmir and Pakistan said that their bold and courageous stand on both the Kashmir and Palestine's cause is a testament to our resolve and determination towards global peace and harmony. He said that the nation as a whole has displayed solidarity with our Palestinian brothers and sisters because of religious and brotherly obligations and the Government of Pakistan made seminal contributions towards bringing around a ceasefire in Palestine. The President made these remarks on Friday while addressing a seminar titled "Palestine and Kashmir Crises: Call for Justice",

organized by The Parliamentary Committee on Kashmir and Muslim Institute. Other speakers at the event included Senator Raja Zafar-ul-Haq, Chairman Parliamentary Kashmir Committee Sherry Afridi, Ambassador of Palestine to Pakistan H.E. Mr. Ahmed Rabaie and Lord Nazir Ahmed, AJK President office said Friday evening. The President said that there are many similarities between the struggle of Kashmir and Palestine, as both demand their right to self-determination, restoration of their rights, and peace. "Kashmir and Palestine are, in a sort, twins that define humanity's endeavor for peace and justice and also symbolizing the failure of the global

community. They are geographically apart but share the same aspirations", he said. Masood Khan said that the Balfour declaration initiated a process of settler colonialism in Palestine, which non-indigenous Jews now call their home. Like Kashmir, the land grab is rampant in Palestine, he said. Last year, in Palestine, Israel declared sovereignty over the land they had grabbed, and unfortunately, the then US President backed these illegal claims. Likewise, millions of Hindus from all over India have been brought into the disputed territory of IOJK and given domiciles. "That is the tragedy of our times", he said. The AJK President said that

knocking on the doors of the UN Security Council is futile as they have since the origin of the Kashmir and Palestine dispute ignored the resolution of the issues. President Masood Khan said that we have to unite as an Ummah and individual countries should forgo their weak postures on both Kashmir and Palestine. "Unless Muslims, as a body, do not stand up and unite, they will be beaten again and again. They will have to go to those chambers where their voices have not and will not be heard", he said. The President said Palestine enjoys support from the international community and the global citizenry is more aware and supportive of the Palestinian cause.

On the other hand, the people of Kashmir don't enjoy this luxury, he said. "Despite this, the Palestine issue like the Kashmir remains unresolved. Their land is being grabbed on a daily basis and they are being made homeless", added Masood Khan. Masood Khan urged that our efforts for peace should not be episodic or spasmodic and we must not forget the countless sacrifices made for the just causes of Kashmir and Palestine. Our efforts for liberating Kashmir or attaining the Palestinian statehood should not be driven by hate but rather on pursuance of a world-order based and anchored in values of justice, dignity and love for humanity. — APP

Briefs**PARC to identify innovation in agricultural digitization**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Use of digitization and innovation to benefit sustainable agricultural production (agriculture, livestock and aquaculture) increase food and nutrition security and increase family farmers' access to market through the development of tech-based solutions, Pakistan Agricultural Research Council, PARC has joined hands with Ignite-National Technology Fund.

The MoU signing ceremony was held at PARC headquarters today on 28th May, 2021. The Secretary (Council), PARC Mr. Roshan Zada and CEO, Ignite-National Technology Fund Mr. Asim Shahryar were the signatories on behalf of their respective organizations. Federal Secretary for IT & Telecom, M/o IT & Telecom, Islamabad, Mr. Shoab Ahmad Siddiqui, Dr. Muhammad Azeem Khan, Chairman PARC, Dr. Shahid Hameed, Member (Coordination & Monitoring) PARC and other high officials from both sides were also participants of the ceremony.

Covid-19 positivity ratio declines in Attock

ATTOCK: Coronavirus positivity ratio has fallen to the lowest level in the district during last one week, due to strict measures by the government as well as local administration especially during the Eid-ul-Fitr.

According to official data from the district health department, 3 cases were reported on Saturday, 2 on Sunday, no case was reported on Monday, 11 cases were reported on Tuesday, 5 cases were reported on Wednesday, 8 cases were reported on Thursday while 4 cases were reported on Friday.

Moreover, the tally of novel coronavirus patients in the district surged to 2,163. District focal person for Covid-19, Dr Kashif Hussain said that the number of active patients in the district were 82 in which 78 were home isolated while others were hospitalized. He informed that the number of suspected patients in the district rose to 34,656 while screening of as many as 37,908 persons was carried out across the district in which 32,045 were tested negative. — APP

Gang involved in vehicle snatching arrested

FAISAL MUNIR

ATTOCK: The police claimed to have arrested a gang of vehicle snatchers wanted by Hasanabdal police in ten different cases and recovered three vehicles, a motorbike and Rs 325,000 from their possession. SP Investigation Dr Amara Shirazi said this while addressing a press conference in Hasanabdal. She said that a special team was constituted by DPO Attock Syed Khalid Hamdani to trace the culprits. She said the team which was headed by herself and DSP Hasanabdal Fayyaz ul Hasan, SHO Hasanabdal, Incharge IT Jahanzeb Khan were its members. The team using modern techniques and other available resources traced the culprits. She said the culprits were used to book cars/taxis and these vehicles at gun point from the drivers while passing through some deserted places. She said the gang members booked a Mehran car for Gunga Pind and snatched it at gun point from its driver near Sabzpur. Dr Amara said the arrested gang members included Asif Shahzad, Riasat, Ajab Khan and Ali ali r/o Mansehra, Abdul Wahab r/o Batgram and Sher Nabi r/o Gilgit.

“Youm-e-Takbeer: Celebrating peaceful and nuclear Pakistan”

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: The Arms Control and Disarmament Center (ACDC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad (ISSI) mark the 23rd anniversary of Youm-e-Takbeer on May 28, 2021. The eminent speakers included Brig. Zahir Kazmi, Director General, ACDA-SPD; Mr. Muhammad Kamran Akhtar, Director, ACDIS, MOFA; Dr. Rizwana Abbasi, Associate Professor, NUML; Dr. Perwaiz Butt, former Chairman PAEC; and Air Cdre. (Retd.) Khalid Banuri, Advisor SPD.

Malik Qasim Mustafa, Director ACDC at the ISSI, highlighted that since May 28, 1998, the Pakistani nation, every year, proudly commemorates “Youm-e-Takbeer,” as a day when Pakistan restored the balance of power in the South Asian Region by conducting nuclear tests. After acquiring nuclear weapons capability, Pakistan is ensuring the security of its nation with utmost restraints and responsibility. However, with the passage of time, as the traditional notion of security is changing, Pakistan also realizes that to ensure comprehensive human security, it must ensure economic security, energy security, food security and environmental security, for its masses.

Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, Director General ISSI, in his welcome remarks said that developing nuclear weapons capability was a strategic imperative for Pakistan. He highlighted that in the aftermath of the 1998 Indian nuclear tests, there was tremendous pressure on Pakistan not to follow suit. However, the



top Pakistani leadership withstood all pressure and overtly went nuclear. If Pakistan had not detonated India, with an extremist government, would be coercing Pakistan. Pakistan has always had a defensive strategy and its nuclear weapons are to ensure its security only. Now Pakistan is moving towards a comprehensive security paradigm.

Brig. Zahir Kazmi made remarks on “Socioeconomic and Security Achievements of Pakistan’s Nuclear Programme.” He said that today deterrence is at work – and it did not break down amid crises in the past. The crisis that almost brewed to the brink in February 2019 is still fresh in our memory. He emphasized that today deterrence mechanism is in place against the full spectrum of threats at strategic, operational and tactical levels, which is within the philosophy of Credible Minimum Deterrence. He also highlighted the role of effective command and control which remains in place round the

clock and ensures that nuclear weapons will never be used either accidentally or inadvertently. However, India continually seeks to dilute the deterrence that creates challenges for Pakistan.

Mr. Muhammad Kamran Akhtar said that Pakistan’s nuclear weapons capability aims to ensure strategic stability while, at the same time, avoidance of an arms race. He said that the global arms control regime is supposed to be a guarantor of peace. Thus, it should not be discriminatory. He highlighted that there is a renewed arms race at the regional and global level. On the peaceful uses of nuclear technology, he noted that the PAEC has contributed tremendously to the agriculture, industry, environment and medical sectors. As such, he said that we should not forget to thank our scientists and engineers at PAEC and appreciate their contribution to socioeconomic development. He said that states should now move beyond notions

of traditional security. Pakistan has a huge peaceful nuclear programme and is ready to cooperate internationally to ensure sustainable development.

Dr. Rizwana Abbasi spoke on “International Cooperation for Peaceful Nuclear Technology: A Case for Pakistan.” She emphasized the role of nuclear energy as cost-effective, clean and sustainable. She said that the continued reliance on fossil fuels will generate irreversible damage.

The world is moving away from reliance on fossil fuels. She emphasized the need to create public awareness on the issue. She also noted that Nuclear Suppliers’ Group (NSG) will need to be cognizant of the realities of nuclear power requirements across the world and in Pakistan.

Mr. Perwaiz Butt made remarks on “Prosperity through Nuclear Power Generation in Pakistan.” He highlighted that the cost of generation of nuclear power is low. He said that the advantage

of nuclear energy over other sources of energy is that nuclear power plants operate continuously while Hydroelectricity generation fluctuates according to water levels. He said that the K-2 power plant came online in March and produces 1100 MWe.

Air Cdre. (Retd.) Khalid Banuri spoke on “Roadmap for Peaceful and Prosperous Nuclear Pakistan.” He highlighted three major areas that Pakistan has focused on peaceful uses of nuclear technology – energy generation, food security, and the health sector.

He said that as per Pakistan’s Energy Security Plan to produce 8800 MWe of nuclear power by 2030 and over 42,000 MWe by 2047. Nuclear power will add 2200 MWe every 2-3 year. It will tremendously contribute to the economy. To achieve the goal of zero hunger, four agriculture research institutes using nuclear technology were built that are working tirelessly to augment agricultural production.

SECP for direct listing of companies

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: In continuation of its efforts for creating an enabling eco-system to improve capital formation in the country, the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) in coordination with Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) has approved framework for Direct Listing of companies at PSX.

Direct listing, unlike conventional offerings, is a process whereby a company can get listed on the stock exchange by selling existing shares to accredited investors, existing shareholders and specific category of investors, without mandatory appointment of intermediaries, said a press release issued here.

The framework, finalized after thorough public and stakeholder consultation, will be part of the regulatory framework of PSX i.e. PSX Rule Book. This new initiative will further simplify listing of companies on the stock exchange. Any public limited company having a minimum paid up capital of Rs200 million and audited accounts for two preceding years, can apply for listing at the exchange through this method.

SC issues notice to AG Punjab

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Friday issued a notice to the Advocate General Punjab in the contempt of court case against the provincial government regarding local bodies.

A three-member SC bench comprising Chief Justice of Pakistan Gulzar Ahmed, Justice Mazhar Alam Khan Miankhal and Justice Sayed Mazhar Ali Akbar Naqvi heard the case filed by Mayor Rawalpindi Sardar Naseem and Asad Ali Khan against the Punjab government for not implementing the court order regarding restoring the local government system. On March 25, the apex court had restored the local government system in Punjab and declared Section 3 of the Punjab Local Bodies Act 2019 as ultra vires to the Constitution.

EPA calls coal tar plant owners for hearing

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) has conducted several site inspections of the asphalt and tar coal plants operating in B-17 Sector of the federal capital and called the perpetrators for personal hearings.

This was decided in a meeting between the officials of Pak-EPA and the representatives of the residents of Sector B-17, which was chaired by the Director General Pak-EPA, Farzana Altaf Shah here Friday to discuss the fate of the asphalt and tar coal plants operating in the area, said a news release.

The meeting was told that the tar coal and asphalt plants had yet to stop their operations whereas the citizens demanded that an FIR be launched against the perpetrators to stop these factories for good.

The residents of B-17 have been suffering from excessive dust emission created from these plants, particularly lungs damage. The burning of tires in these factories also created toxic fumes where the particulate matter generated by these factories was enough to form layers of black powder settling on surfaces in the households of the locals, the meeting was briefed by the experts. Despite previous efforts of Pak-EPA to seal such factories which have been deemed illegal, there have been reports by the citizens that the factories were still operating secretly. The Director General Pak-EPA insisted that although the Agency would deliver its best efforts to help the citizens, the citizens themselves should also take responsibility to build a sustainable society by segregating wastes at home, pursuing the developers to create a sewage treatment system, rejecting plastic bags, and planting trees. — APP



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Fawad Ahmed Chaudhry and Federal Minister for Human Rights, Dr. Shireen Mazari addressing a press conference at PID media Center Pak-China Friendship Centre. — APP

AFS organizes workshops for Pakistani students

ISLAMABAD: The U.S. Mission to Pakistan invited renowned Hollywood writers Janet Batchler (writer for Batman Forever and Pompei), Irving Belateche (best-selling author, screenwriter, and professor of cinematic arts), and Donald Bohlinger (award winning screenwriter and lecturer) to lead screenwriting workshops for Pakistani students. The collaboration was part of the American Film Showcase (AFS), the premier American film diplomacy program connecting American filmmakers with their counterparts in more than 40 countries.

The five-day online workshops were attended by film and mass communication students from universities across Pakistan, including the National College of Arts, Indus Valley School of Art & Architecture, Fatimah Jinnah Women University, University of Peshawar, and Gilgit University.

The workshops are part of the U.S. Mission to Pakistan’s efforts to help develop the capacity of the film industry in Pakistan. — DNA

7,000 young entrepreneurs eligible for soft loans under YES

KHAYYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Youth Affairs Muhammad Usman Dar said on Friday that at least 17,000 young entrepreneurs were declared eligible for the provision of soft loans under the Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme (YES) of the Kamyab Jawan Programme (KJP). Addressing a cheque & certificate-distribution ceremony of the KJP here at the National University of Modern Languages (NUML),

he said around Rs 15 billion had already been parked in the banks, associated with the programme, for offering loans to successful candidates of the YES.

“Around 10,000 businesses have already been launched with disbursement of around Rs nine billion [out of the total parked amount],” he added. “This is the beginning,” he said, adding the government, in line with the instructions of Prime Minister Imran Khan, had set a target to facilitate around 200,000 to 300,000 young people in opening their own business-

es across the country. To achieve this target, he said, government had decided to engage the micro-financing institutions and organization, and would add another tier in the existing programme to offer up to Rs 2 million loans without any collateral. Prior to that, he said, a massive drive was launched to sensitize the university students about the features of the KJP that had soft loans and skill scholarships as its major components.

He said the youth, before completing their education, should premeditate about

starting their own business so that they could create jobs, adding they should not hesitate from launching their start-ups as the government would not leave them alone in the entire process.

Usman Dar said his aim to visit the universities was to sensitize the youth about the vision of Prime Minister Imran Khan, who has been stressing to change prevailing mindset of the young people about jobs. “Our youth prefers to get jobs in the public sector, but this has to be changed as future lies in start-ups,” he added.

May 30 –last date to apply for HEC Scholarships

As per the eligibility criteria prescribed by HEC, the candidates must have a minimum qualification of MS/MPhil/ME or equivalent (18 years) before the closing date

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: May 30 will be the last date for the Pakistani and Azad Jammu and Kashmir nationals to apply for Higher Education Commission (HEC) Overseas Scholarships for PhD in selected fields and MS/MPhil in Engineering Technology.

According to an official of HEC, the scholarships will be awarded for Spring-Fall (2022) session in HEC-identified top-ranked foreign universities of advanced countries. As per the eligibility criteria prescribed by HEC, the candidates must have a minimum qualification of MS/MPhil/ME or equivalent (18 years) before the closing date.

The candidates must have mini-

imum of 16 years of education and should be registered with the National Technology Council (NTC), Pakistan for applying in the MS/MPhil scholarships.

The candidates must have a minimum CGPA 3.0 out of 4.0 in semester system or 1st Division (in the annual system) in MS/MPhil/ME/Equivalent degree. The candidates may have maximum one second division throughout the academic career prior to the final degree. The required maximum age is 40 years for full-time regular faculty members of public sector universities/colleges and employees of the public sector Research and Development organizations registered with Pakistan Council for Science and Technology while 35 years age is for all others, the official explained.

The candidates must have minimum 70 percent marks in a valid HEC Aptitude Test (HAT). HEC will consider best AT score of the last two years for shortlisting purpose. The candidates must not be availing any other scholarship.

The official told that the candidates are required to opt for foreign countries/universities of their choice in the online application form. HEC reserves the right to re-allocate any country/university to the candidate.

Only shortlisted candidates will be called for interviews and admission process. The candidates are required to make sure that their field of subject is being offered in their choice of country/university, otherwise, candidates will not be considered for interview or scholarship. The candidates were also

required to fulfill the requirement of the host university to secure admission which may include International GRE, TOFEL etc and are advised to appear in these tests before the interview or admission. The applicants are required to provide the information through an online application process at <http://eportal.hec.gov.pk>. The merit list will be prepared on the basis of online information or data provided by the applicant, the official said.

The awardees will be required to execute a bond with HEC or Respective Pakistan University to serve for a period of five years immediately after completion of PhD study. Request for change of university for the purpose of service bond will not be entertained at any stage.

The scholarships will be awarded on the basis of government approved provincial quota.

The applicants provisionally or finally selected in any of the HEC scholarship scheme in the past are required to obtain No Objection Certificate (NOC) from relevant scholarship section before submission of their applications. The copy of this NOC must be emailed at OSSPhase3@hec.gov.pk before closing date of application submission which is May 30. The Education Testing Council (ETC), Pakistan is planning to conduct HEC Aptitude Test (HAT) in the second week of June-2021. The candidates can acquire more information through visiting HEC Overseas Website: www.hec.gov.pk/site/ossphase3, the official added.

Briefs

Utility stores
acquires
sale of
Rs. 26 billion

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Utility Stores Corporation of Pakistan (USC) acquires sale of Rs. 26 billion under Ramzan Relief Package serving around 11 million households. Under the directives of Prime Minister Imran Khan, subsidy on 19 essential commodities was provided to the people of Pakistan through more than 4,800 retail stores, said a press release issued here.

During the month, Islamabad Zone stood first in sales while Lahore and Multan zones bagged 2nd and 3rd positions. Despite outbreak of Covid-19, Utility Stores remained available to the public and maintained continued supplies of food items at prices lower than the open market.

USC also operated around 150 Mobile Utility Stores during the pandemic to ensure delivery of essential commodities at far-flung areas. In order to serve the people of Pakistan efficiently, Utility Stores ensured availability of sufficient stock of essential commodities through strict monitoring. The credit of achieving this milestone goes to the people of Pakistan who reposed their trust in Utility Stores and enabled it to successfully transfer Government of Pakistan's subsidy to the public. Revision of customer-oriented policy, environment friendly packaging, monitoring, observing strict opening and closing hours, better customer services and a hefty gap in prices of essential items at utility stores as compared to the open market made it possible to acquire historic sales record.

Court awards
4-year
imprisonment
in drug case

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: An Anti-Narcotics Court (ANC) on Friday awarded 4 years and 6 months imprisonment to one accused in a drug smuggling case.

Muhammad Naem was found guilty of possessing 1600 grams of hashish and was arrested by Gujjar Khan Police in November 2020.

The Additional Session Judge Abul Hasnat Zulqarnain pronounced the judgment after recording evidence of the witnesses and final arguments by the defense and prosecution counsels. The Court also imposed a fine of Rs 20,000 on the convicted.

320,407
vaccine doses
administered
in 24 hours

RAWALPINDI: As many as 320,407 people including 23,707 health workers and 296,700 senior citizens have jabbed themselves so far against the coronavirus from 23 centers operating across the district since the vaccination administering drive launched on March 10.

According to data shared by the district administration here Friday, 4278 people had been inoculated the vaccine at Tehsil Headquarters Hospital (THQH) Taxila, 853 at THQH Murree, 2211 at THQH Kahuta, 4843 at THQH Gujjar Khan, 547 at THQH Kotli Sattian, 1882 at THQH, Kallar Sayda, 10,498 at Rawalpindi Institute of Cardiology, 5195 at Holy Family Hospital, 3445 at DHQ Hospital, 8731 at Benazir Bhutto Hospital, 643 at Govt T.B Sanatorium Samli, 9111 at Wah General Hospital, 83,407 at Shahbaz Sharif Complex, 19,834 at Tehsil office(TO) Taxila, 11,699 at TO office Kallar Syedan, 26,555 at TO office Gujjar Khan, 1650 at TO office Kotli Sattian, 3990 at TO office Murree, 60,579 at TO office Potohar, 10,904 at TO office Kahuta, 3602 District Health Office, 92 Government Wapda hospital while 45,868 people received the jab at Red Crescent vaccination center. He said that number of beneficiaries being vaccinated every day was showing a progressive increase. — APP

Asad asks businesses for
co-op in mass vaccination

Asad Umar said that restaurants, marquees, wedding halls and educational institutions have been badly hit by the Covid-19 pandemic and the government was working on a special relief package for them

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: Asad Umar, Federal Minister for Planning & Development said that the government was going to launch a national campaign for vaccination to control the Covid-19 pandemic and urged that the business community should fully cooperate in mass vaccination of their employees and general public that would pave way for removal of all restrictions on the businesses. He said that the government wanted businesses to run for 24/7, but currently only 21 percent of the population of Islamabad has been vaccinated and if the business community cooperates in vaccination of people up to the desired target, the government would remove all restrictions on businesses. He said that the government was ready to set up vaccination centers in ICCI, markets and industries for vaccination of maximum people to make Islamabad a role model city for controlling the coronavirus. He was hopeful that with increased vaccination, all restrictions on businesses would go by the coming Eid ul Azha. He said this while addressing the business community during his visit to Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry. Ali Nawaz Awan SAPM on CDA Affairs, Presidents Anjuman-e-Tijaran of Islamabad/Rawalpindi and Presidents of Mar-



ket Associations were also present at the occasion while the Presidents of various Chambers including Faisalabad, Gujranwala joined the event through zoom. Khalid Chaudhry, former SVP ICCI performed the role of stage secretary.

Asad Umar said that restaurants, marquees, wedding halls and educational institutions have been badly hit by the Covid-19 pandemic and the government was working on a special relief package for them. He said that parks would be opened with limited capacity of visitors. He said that with the balanced deci-

sions of the government regarding Covid-19 pandemic, the economy has achieved 3.94 percent growth and over 4.8 percent growth was estimated for the next year while the PTT government would exceed 5.8 percent economic growth by the last year of its tenure. He appreciated the presentation given by the President ICCI and said that the ICCI ruling group was bringing forward young and talented business leaders through its platform, which was laudable.

In his welcome address, Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, President, ICCI lauded

down to around 4.5 percent while Islamabad has the lowest positivity rate of 2 percent, which showed that the business community and people were following SOPs. Therefore, there was an urgent need to ease restrictions on businesses to help revive the economy. He said that all market associations including associations of other sectors like restaurants and parks have signed a petition to ensure strict compliance of SOPs in Islamabad and urged that the government should open amusement parks, indoor dining in restaurants, cinemas and gyms to revive the business activities. He assured that ICCI would fully cooperate with the government in the vaccination campaign and was ready to set up a vaccination desk for the business community in its premises.

Mian Akram Farid, Chairman Founder in his vote of thanks lauded the efforts of the government for achieving 3.94 percent growth that would go further up due to good performance of stock market, inauguration of Rashakai Economic Zone, construction package and other positive moves. However, he said that the government should remove all duties on the import of industrial machinery to promote industrialization and focus on the GSP plus regime and FATF that could create problems for the growth of the economy.

President lauds NAB for
Rs. 323 billion recovery

The Chairman presented NAB Annual Report 2020 to the President and briefed him about his organization's performance which had recovered Rs. 323.29bn during 2020

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi has called for more effective measures to eliminate the menace of corruption from society and promote transparency and accountability in the governance system. He said that corruption was a major challenge being faced by the nation and it was the collective responsibility of all segments of society to discourage corrupt practices and support government's

efforts to eradicate corruption from the country. He expressed these views while talking to Chairman National Accountability Bureau (NAB), Mr. Justice (R) Javed Iqbal, who called on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, today.

The Chairman presented NAB Annual Report 2020 to the President and briefed him about his organization's performance which had recovered Rs. 323.29 Billion during 2020. He informed that NAB received 24,706 complaints and disposed-off

30,405 complaints including under-process complaints from the previous year. He further stated that NAB processed 878 complaints verifications, besides conducting 369 inquiries, 175 investigations and filed 136 references before the Accountability Courts during the past year. He apprised that the overall success ratio of prosecution was 66% during the year 2020.

Appreciating the performance of NAB, the President said that the organization had done a great

job by waging a battle against corrupt elements and recovering Rs. 323.29 Billion during 2020. He emphasized the need for further intensifying efforts to ensure across the board accountability to fulfil the vision of corruption-free Pakistan. He assured the Chairman of his full support in strengthening the organization to stamp corruption out of society. It is worth-stating that NAB is required to submit Annual Report of its performance to the President under the NAB Ordinance, 1999.

Murad urges youth
to stay determined
and committed

KHAYYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Communications and Post Services Murad Saeed Friday urged the youth to remain determined and committed as the government would provide facilities and all out support to them under Prime Minister's Kamyab Jawan Programme.

Addressing a certificate and cheque distribution ceremony of Prime Minister's Hunarmand Pakistan Program-Kamyab Jawan here at National University of Modern Languages (NUML), he said this program was especially initiated for youth empowerment and to provide them opportunities.

Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Youth Affairs Usman Dar, Rector NUML Major General (R) Muhammad Jaffar, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) National Information Technology Board Shabahaat Shah, Chairman National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTC) Javed Hassan, representatives of Tiger Force, Kamyab Jawan Program beneficiary and students were also present on the occasion.

The minister said that Kamyab Jawan programme has been designed after conducting comprehensive survey with students and aspiring entrepreneurs as per vision of Prime Minister Imran Khan.

IGP for
extending
'bi-cycle
patrol unit'

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad, Qazi Jameel-ur-Rehman on Friday announced to extend the scope of 'bi-cycle patrol unit' to other sectors for the convenience of the locals.

The decision to this effect was made after getting an overwhelming response by the residents over the citizens-friendly initiative, said IGP. During an interaction with patrolling squad here, the IGP appreciate them for promptly responding to criminal incidents. SSP (Operations) Mustafa Tanveer was also present on the occasion. The Islamabad Police chief had inaugurated the 'bi-cycle patrol unit' on April, this year, aimed at monitoring and surveillance of markets, parks, jogging tracks and trails, streets and places where ordinary vehicles could not pass.

On initial basis, the patrolling squad was performing its duties in the area of Kohsar police station.

Rehman noted that the strength of patrolling unit has been enhanced, after building their capacity and equipping with necessary gadgets and tools to check and prevent any criminal activity. Capital police, he said had taken multiple community friendly initiative as it could do nothing without public support. The move would not only contribute to curbing street crime in the city but would also promote cycling among citizens, particularly women, the IGP observed. — APP

Chairman
PAL condoles
demise of
GH Sahar

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Academy of Letter (PAL) Chairman Dr. Yusuf Khushk on Friday expressed grief and sorrow over the sad demise of renowned scholar and Sufi poet Sheikh Ghulam Hussain Sahar. In a condolence message, the chairman said he was a unique poet of the 21st century. He wrote poetry in different languages including Balti, Urdu, Persian and Arabic. His collection of Balti and Urdu languages "Piyam Sehar" became famous.

His sudden death had deprived the country of a great scholar he added.

He prayed the Almighty to rest the departed soul in eternal peace and grant courage to his family to bear the irreparable loss with fortitude.

Crackdown
against
criminals
continues

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) (Operations) Mustafa Tanvir on Friday said crackdown against criminals would continue to bring perpetrators to justice. All-out efforts were being ensured to reduce crime in the city, he said in a statement issued here.

Meanwhile, Saddar Zone police arrested five members of three criminal gangs and recovered snatched cash, mobile phones, gold ornaments, valuables motorbikes and weapons used in crime.

As per details, SP (Saddar-zone) Farooq Anjad Butter constituted police teams under supervision of SDPO Saddar Circle Sajjad Bukhari including SHO Tarnol police station Inspector Asjad Mehmood and other police officials. The teams ensured high vigilance in the area and succeeded to nab two persons involved in various dacoity incidents on Islamabad Highway.

The accused were identified as Muhammad Usman and Faseeh Saood and recovered motorbike and pistols along with ammunition from their possession.

Moreover, SHO Goira police Sub-Inspectors Asim Ghafar and Asim Zahidi along with other officials succeeded to nab two persons involved in various snatching incident at sector G-13.

The accused were identified as Naveed Hayat and Shams-ur-Rehman and recovered snatched cash, gold ornaments, motorbike and pistols along with ammunition from their possession, while investigation is underway from them.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman NAB, Justice (R) Javed Iqbal, presenting NAB Annual Report 2020, to President Dr. Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. — DNA

Nasir
Mansoor elected
as VP FPCCI for
Federal seat

LAHORE: Nasir Mansoor Qureshi, a candidate of United Business Group (UBG) has been elected as Vice President Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) against federal capital seat for year 2020-2021.

Two candidates namely Qurban Ali from Hunza Chamber and Nasir Mansoor Qureshi from Islamabad Chamber contesting for the slot of VP for federal capital seat secured equal votes in FPCCI annual election and after fulfilling procedural requirements, in draw held at federation house in presence a large number of voters and supporters from either side, Mansoor was elected as VP. UBG Chairman Itikhar Ali Malik, patron-in-chief SM Muneer, President Zubail Tufail, Secretary General Zabardast Bakhtawari and Secretary Information Dr. Mirza Ikhtiar Baig congratulated him and hoped he will help solve the problems of the business community of federal capital. — DNA

Covid-19 pandemic and loneliness

How do I stop feeling so isolated? Want to know the solution read this article...

MUQADDAS ZAREEN &
LARAIB KHAN

As we go through lockdowns and isolation during this pandemic, many of us go through loneliness. Some are separated from families as visas and travel is restricted. Even some cities restrict the movement of people from other places. Independent of the current situation, how can we avoid loneliness in life?

We humans are not created and designed to live a lonely life. Loneliness can create negative feelings in our minds and could often lead to unnecessary and harmful addictions. When God created Adam, the first man, He visited Adam every day. They were talking to each other like

friends. There was a close relationship between God and man. Then God found that man should not live alone and created a suitable partner for him. He Created woman and named her Eve.

SYMPTOMS OF
LONLINESS

Inability to connect with other people on a deeper and more intimate level and having no close or "best" friends are the symptoms of loneliness. It also includes overwhelming feeling of isolation regardless of where you are and who's around coupled with negative feelings of self-doubt and self-worth.

HOW TO OVERCOME
LONLINESS

What is loneliness? Most of us are lonely. Out of that loneliness, we want companionship. We es-

cape from loneliness through every form of entertainment, religious as well as that which is most amusing. We escape in so many ways. But like a deep disease that must be cured, it is always there. So one must go into this very carefully because if we don't understand it, our action, which is our daily relationship with each other, will distort that relationship. That relationship then becomes merely exploiting each other to escape from this deep abiding loneliness.

Why are we so lonely? I don't know if you have ever experienced the state of loneliness, isolation, having no relationship at all with others. Perhaps some of you have experienced this, or most of you. And if we don't understand that loneliness, our

actions will be distorted. So we are inquiring not only into action but also into loneliness, which destroys, disrupts, and distorts all relationship in action. Why are we so self-centered? Why are we in our own lives? We may have friends, be married and all the rest of it, but we are always concerned with ourselves. Our actions are self-centered: ambitious, greedy, envious, suffering, aggressive. That is fairly clear. And can that loneliness utterly disappear? When there is a hurt, psychological hurt, any action that takes place must inevitably be affected by the hurt.

We get very hurt, not only about little things but deeply hurt in not being able to fulfil, not being able to achieve, not being

able to become something. We get deeply hurt, and that hurt affects our actions. You cannot escape from distorting action if you are hurt. That is, as long as you have an image about yourself, you are going to be hurt inevitably. And when there is hurt, action will be destructive, will bring about conflict. Is it possible to be aware of this loneliness and not escape from it, but remain with it: not take a drink, not pick up a book, not rush off to some form of entertainment, but to completely, without any movement of thought, remain with that feeling of utter isolation? Then you will see, if you do, that feeling of isolation disappears entirely, because it is thought that creates the sense of isolation.

Social equality

THE Pakistan Bureau of Statistics recently conducted a survey, the Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement (PSLM), to determine the effects of social issues like health, education and food security. The data gathered reflects stagnant growth and a societal structure that prevents the poor from improving their quality of life by depriving them of the necessary skills to thrive.

After covering 176,790 households across rural and urban settlements, the PSLM concluded that severe food insecurity is experienced by 16.4 percent of the national population. Hunger is a common feeling across the country as those belonging to this faction have either no money to fund one meal per day, or are unable to fulfil their nutritional requirements.

Shockingly, even our literacy rate has hovered around 60 percent since 2014. This means that almost half of our population that is over the age of ten still remains uneducated. The possibility to improve their socio-economic position is thus extremely limited by virtue of their lack of knowledge along with the kind of job available for them in the market—often menial work for salaries that are inadequate for long-term investments, let alone change.

The main takeaway here is that our developmental standards need to rise immediately through projects directed at the basic needs of the people. There is only so much we can achieve with welfare programmes alone. We must create a national-level strategy to decrease food insecurity so that people are able to hone their skills and talents rather than worrying about where the next meal would come from. Increasing education would allow for the disadvantaged to compete in the market and increasing employment would ensure that there are at least some kinds of jobs available for the average Pakistani.

The possibilities are endless, we just need to focus on the right objectives. Stalled progress, especially with regards to such delicate matters, is no longer acceptable and the authorities need to ensure that a comprehensive plan of action is created to tackle the grievances of the poor sooner rather than later.

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A new beginning

ARE Pakistan and the US, now headed by President Joe Biden, heading towards a new kind of relationship? A new paradigm on which to base their engagement with each other? Perhaps it is too early to say. But for the moment, beyond the question of Afghanistan, on which the US has little choice but to place at least some reliance on Pakistan, there seems to be little real effort by Washington to engage with Pakistan or to involve and include it in key conversations on a range of issues. Matters got off to a somewhat troubled start, when soon after Biden was sworn in as President, a court in Pakistan ordered the release of Omar Saeed Sheikh, the man found guilty of killing US Wall Street Journal journalist Daniel Pearl in 2002. Initially the US administration did not invite Pakistan to a conference on climate change, which raised eyebrows as Pakistan was the only country among the 10 most populous countries in the world not to be invited to the event.

Beyond the issue of whether Biden, caught up in a number of domestic and foreign policy issues, has the time to concentrate on Pakistan is an issue of precisely what direction relations can move in. A US Senate committee was recently told Pakistan had promised air access to the US into Afghanistan. This has been clearly denied by Pakistan's Foreign Office spokesman who has clarified that Pakistan has not given the US any air rights to use Pakistani airspace.

The US has said it needs Pakistan to make headway in Afghanistan. This is primarily because of the perception that Pakistan has influence with the Taliban. While that may have been the case previously, analysts say this influence has over the years been greatly weakened. The question of whether this will be possible will depend a great deal in the coming months, on Pakistan's handling of the delicate Afghanistan issue, which still remains a US focus and the prime reason it continues to talk to Pakistan directly, as well as other issues in the region, with the US showing over the last years that it has moved closer to India. What is needed at the moment is an honest appraisal by the US on what kind of relationship it is looking for with Pakistan.

Israel's divide, rule and erase strategy is failing

Ahmed Abu Artema



The Israeli government is showing no signs of ceasing its colonial violence against the Palestinians. And in doing so, it is repeating past mistakes of other colonial powers. As its repression of the Palestinians increases in severity, so does the unity of the Palestinian people, their solidarity and determination to resist. The Palestinians will continue to pay a great price in pain and suffering as long as the occupation continues

ON May 21, after bombarding Gaza for 11 days and killing 253 Palestinians, including 66 children, Israel announced a ceasefire. Among the victims were entire families torn to pieces by Israeli fighter jets while sleeping in their homes. The Abu Hatab family was killed in their home in the Shati refugee camp on May 14. A day later, during a massive Israeli air raid on al-Wehda Street in Gaza City, 17 members of the al-Kulak family were killed.

Israel's purposeful targeting of residential areas and homes has left some 74,000 people homeless. Other civilian buildings were also damaged or destroyed, including schools, ministries, police stations, banks, clinics. In addition, Israeli fighter jets bombed vital infrastructure, damaging roads and putting electricity and water installations out of order.

In the face of the massive destruction of civilian buildings and infrastructure, Israel's claim that it targeted Hamas does not stand. The Israeli army constantly boasts about using "precision" military technology; if it is so precise, then how is it that it has caused so many civilian deaths and so much destruction? The answer is clear: it intended to kill civilians, including children, and destroy the homes and livelihoods of Gaza's Palestinians in yet another act of collective punishment.

The other falsehood the Israeli government has been propagating – and which Western media has been blindly parroting – is that this was a "conflict" between Israel and Hamas. The reality is that this is a confrontation between Israel, the occupier, and the Palestinian people, the occupied. It was the Palestinian people in Jerusalem, the West Bank, the Palestinian territories Israel occupied at its establishment in 1948, Jordan, Lebanon, and the diaspora that rose against Israeli oppression. Hamas only entered this round of hostilities at a later stage and in response to popular pressure. This all began in April, with the Israeli forces repeatedly storming Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, harassing Muslim and Christian Palestinians trying to reach their holy places, threatening to evict yet another group of Palestinians from their homes in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, and protecting Israeli extremists marching through the city and chanting, "Death to Arabs!"

Demonstrations erupted in response to these continuous provocations in Jerusalem, which were quickly met with brutal force by the Israeli police. Public calls on Hamas to respond to the Israeli crimes started coming from the streets of Jerusalem, but also Gaza.

Early on May 10, the Israeli occupation forces once again stormed the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, injuring some 300 Palestinians to clear the way for the annual extremist Israeli "flag march" through Jerusalem's old city. Around that time, far-right Knesset members headed to Sheikh Jarrah to reassure Jewish settlers

that Israel will continue with its efforts to "Judaize" the Palestinian neighbourhood.

Palestinian anger at these provocations reached a climax. Under popular pressure, the military resistance factions in Gaza finally decided to intervene and later that day, they issued an ultimatum to the occupation forces to leave Al-Aqsa Mosque and Sheikh Jarrah. Israel did not comply and they fired rockets towards Jerusalem. Videos circulated on social media depicting the joy and cheering of Palestinians in Jerusalem when missiles were launched from Gaza. This popular sentiment suggests that the current round of confrontation is a true and sincere expression of the will of the Palestinian people to fight for freedom.

For far too long, Israel has sought to divide Palestinians, to kill their solidarity, erase their national identity and undermine their cohesion. Even in the media, Palestinians in Gaza, the West Bank, the 1948 territories, Jordan, the camps in Lebanon and Syria are presented as if they are different people with different problems. But their problem is one: Israel's occupation and colonisation of their land, which has led to their expulsion, dispossession and oppression.

On May 15, amid the bombardment of Gaza, the crackdown on Jerusalem, and the lynching of Palestinians by Jewish settlers in the 1948 territories, we marked the 73rd anniversary of the Nakba. The violence and oppression that we were seeing in Palestinian streets was one more reminder that the violent Zionist colonisation of Palestinian land has not stopped. The Nakba keeps going, as Israel's ethnic cleansing of Palestinians persists.

What was happening in Jerusalem in the past few weeks is a clear illustration of this. Israeli forces constantly raid Palestinian houses, throw out their rightful owners and hand them over to Jewish settlers, just as they did in 1948. They constantly raid Muslim and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem, harass, beat and arrest Palestinian Muslims and Christians, to remind them of what has been their ultimate goal since 1948 – a Jerusalem and a Palestine ethnically cleansed of Palestinians.

But the Israeli efforts to keep Palestinians disunited and fragmented have failed and the collective response to this bout of colonial violence proved it.

When Israel attacked Jerusalem, the West Bank, the 1948 territories, the refugees and the diaspora responded. Gaza fired its rockets. The West Bank rose up to protest and hold a general strike. The refugees in Jordan and Lebanon showed up at the border fence, demonstrating once again that they have not given up on their right to return. The diaspora across Europe, the US and elsewhere mobilised large crowds of supporters of the Palestinian cause.

And the "Palestinians of Israel" – those who Israeli

and Western media call "Arab Israelis" in an attempt to erase their identity – proved they, too are just as Palestinian as we are. Despite decades of forced erasure, they, too took to the streets in Lydd, Acre, Haifa, Umm al-Fahm, etc and raised the Palestinian flag. They too chanted for Jerusalem and Gaza.

And these were no "riots", as the Israeli and Western media quickly made them out to be. These were no disgruntled "Israeli citizens" that had their own scores to settle with the Israeli state that treats them as second-class citizens. These were Palestinians joining their brothers and sisters in Jerusalem, Gaza, the West Bank, Lebanon, Jordan and the diaspora to resist the Israeli occupation and colonisation of Palestinian land.

These confrontations represent a resurrection of the Palestinian spirit and a declaration of the failure of the Zionist project to obliterate the Palestinian identity. This movement represents the cry of a people that remains unified in the face of repeated Israeli and Western efforts to disunite it, dispossess it and erase it. This was a one big, "We are here, we are not going anywhere and we will return."

The ceasefire that Israel announced on May 20 may have taken Palestine off the international news agenda but it has not stopped Israeli colonial violence against the Palestinians.

Just three days later, the Israeli police and Jewish settlers stormed Al Aqsa once again. The Israeli government launched a massive campaign of arrests against Palestinian citizens of Israel, for coming out in support of Sheikh Jarrah and Gaza, detaining over 1,500. It also raided dozens of Palestinian homes across the occupied West Bank, arresting more Palestinians. On May 25, Israeli agents executed Ahmad Fahd, a Palestinian man, in broad daylight in Ramallah for no apparent reason.

As for Gaza, which once again stands in ruins, Benny Gantz, the minister of the occupation army, declared that Israel will conditionally allow badly needed aid for reconstruction into the strip on the return of Israeli citizens captured by Hamas.

The Israeli government is showing no signs of ceasing its colonial violence against the Palestinians. And in doing so, it is repeating past mistakes of other colonial powers. As its repression of the Palestinians increases in severity, so does the unity of the Palestinian people, their solidarity and determination to resist.

The Palestinians will continue to pay a great price in pain and suffering as long as the occupation continues. But the events of the past few weeks have re-energised the Palestinian national movement and brought new hope that the Palestinian struggle for freedom and justice will be victorious.

– Courtesy: Al Jazeera

Afghanistan should not blame others for its faults

Ajmal Shams



The message from the 2020 Geneva conference on Afghanistan was very strong: It made all future aid conditional on the Afghan government's progress toward improving governance, tackling corruption and working for genuine peace. It is highly unlikely that the government will be able to achieve these targets in the near future at least

ALL countries have their own national interests. It is quite normal for them to engage with other nations to protect their own interests. With the end of the Cold War, ideology has been fast losing ground to political and economic interests as the defining motivation for international relations. More specifically, geopolitics is now being replaced by geoeconomics.

For the past two decades, the international community has been actively engaged in Afghanistan. The engagement has been multidimensional, from active military partnership to political and economic ties and sociocultural to humanitarian issues. Unfortunately, the Afghan leaders have been unable to grasp the changing dynamics of international politics. Secondly, Afghans have never been good at turning a situation into an opportunity, but very good at raising fingers at others when things go wrong. That is why Afghans have traditionally blamed others for their own problems, rather than themselves or their rulers. With the communist coup in 1978, followed by the Soviet invasion and occupation, there was a flood of military and economic assistance for the Afghan resistance, especially from the West and the Arab world. But, due to disunity among the Afghan resistance groups, as well as a lack of purpose and vision, the country remained in conflict. A typical Afghan response to this dilemma is to blame the dishonesty of our neighbors, without realizing that politics is not a family business – it is a game of interests played at the regional or global level.

Since 2002, there has been renewed interest by the international community in Afghanistan's reconstruction and development. Billions of dollars have been spent on building Afghanistan's hard and soft infrastructure and its virtually van-

ished institutions. Although substantial progress has been made, it does not match the amount of money that has poured into the country. Former President Hamid Karzai and incumbent Ashraf Ghani have blamed the international community for the wastage of resources and their failure to use them cost-effectively. Ghani has been particularly critical of US contractors for the wastage in administration costs.

In spite of the disinformation from some high-level Afghan officials regarding the role of the international community, many Afghans think it is the government that should be blamed, as it has not done enough to tackle corruption or build the technical and institutional capacity to effectively spend the billions of dollars of aid money for Afghanistan's reconstruction and development.

In 2002, the newly established Afghan government had to virtually begin from scratch and was unable to deliver services. The Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) were the mechanism used by the US and other major international partners to deliver infrastructure services like roads, schools, clinics, bridges and irrigation canals. Their engagement helped generate thousands of jobs in the construction sector and helped promote the Afghan private sector. The PRT mechanism was fast-track, with a rapid impact compared to the government's long and bureaucratic procedures, which featured excessive corruption and hindrances for the private sector. Local contractors are still highly reluctant to work on government projects because of unfairness and a lack of transparency in the awarding of contracts and disbursement of payments, even after projects are completed. Such local contractors reminisce about their direct engagement with donors like USAID, which treated them more fairly.

Almost half of Afghanistan's national budget is still being supported by international aid, mainly from the US. But, with Afghan ownership of the development process, project delivery has become slower, less transparent and full of unnecessary bureaucracy in the name of controlling corruption. Over the past two decades, one of the main demands of our international partners was to empower local governments to increase efficiency and the fast delivery of development projects. However, the sad reality is that the government has been concentrating power in Kabul. With Ghani's time in office, things have gone from bad to worse. He strongly believes that the best way to improve governance is to shift virtually the entire government machinery to the presidential palace. Ghani's philosophy of micromanagement is definitely not helping Afghanistan's governance issues.

The message from the 2020 Geneva conference on Afghanistan was very strong: It made all future aid conditional on the Afghan government's progress toward improving governance, tackling corruption and working for genuine peace. It is highly unlikely that the government will be able to achieve these targets in the near future at least.

With the Biden administration's announcement of the complete withdrawal of US forces by Sept. 11, Afghanistan will enter a new phase by increasingly relying on its own capacities and resources. Overcoming these challenges will depend, to a large extent, on the resilience of the Afghan government and people at large. Afghanistan has a chance to prove to the US and other members of the international community that it can be a reliable partner in the future. I wish our rulers could understand this message loud and clear.

– Courtesy: Arab News

Briefs

G7 must secure green recovery from Covid

LONDON: The Group of Seven wealthy nations must seek a "green and global economic recovery" after the coronavirus pandemic, Britain declared Friday before a leaders' summit in two weeks. British finance minister Rishi Sunak made no mention of US demands to harmonise tax rates for companies, after hosting an online gathering with counterparts and central bankers from Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States.

The G7 finance ministers will next meet in person in London on June 4-5, in the run-up to the summit in southwest England the following week, which is set to be joined by US President Joe Biden. In London, the finance ministers are expected to debate the US push to set a minimum rate of 15 percent for corporate taxes, to prevent multinational companies including tech giants from gaming the system. France and Germany have backed the US initiative, but Britain is on the fence, calling for a wider package of reforms to international taxation to target company incomes more broadly. "I look forward to next week's meeting as we continue working together to support jobs and secure a green and global economic recovery," Sunak said in a statement Friday. With Britain also set to host the COP26 UN climate summit in November, he urged the G7 to "ensure tackling climate change is prioritised in economic and financial policy". - APP

Britain's Simon Yates wins Giro 19th stage

ALPES DI MERA: Britain's Simon Yates launched a solo attack to win the 19th stage of the Giro d'Italia on the Alpe di Mera summit on Friday, as Egan Bernal extended his overall lead.

Columbian Bernal, the 2019 Tour de France champion, finished third on the day to keep hold of the leaders' pink jersey with only two stages remaining. He now leads second-placed Damiano Caruso in the general classification by two minutes and 29 seconds, with Yates 20 seconds further back.

"I'm very happy," said Bernal. "The climb went very well." Ineos' Bernal could take a huge step towards his second Grand Tour title in Saturday's 20th and penultimate stage, a mountainous 164km ride from Verbania to Valle Spluga, before Sunday's closing time trial.

He managed his effort well on the final climb, although he could not stay with eventual runner-up Joao Almeida in the final few hundred metres. "I managed, I kept my strength thinking about the time trial on Sunday," Bernal said. "I'm fine but Yates is the strongest... At the moment, I hope to have the same feelings tomorrow (Saturday). With the altitude, it will be even better. I will try to manage the gaps to Caruso and Yates." Yates, the 2018 Vuelta a Espana winner, kept his slim title hopes alive with an enterprising ride on Friday. The 28-year-old BikeExchange rider finished 11 seconds clear of Joao Almeida of Portugal on the day and 28 seconds ahead of Bernal, while also collecting bonus seconds. - APP

HWPL's Conference recognises the Declaration of World Peace

The event also advocated global participation in peace activities such as the peace tree planting campaign that began in Ukraine with 1,000 participants from 21 countries and peace policy proposal dialogue between citizens and policy experts

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: HWPL's 8th Annual Commemoration of the Declaration of World Peace was held online and attended by around 3,000 people from 150 countries around the world.

This event is held annually by an international peace NGO named Heavenly Culture, World Peace, Restoration of Light (HWPL) in association with its affiliated groups, International Peace Youth Group (IPYG) and International Women's Peace Group (IWPG).

With several cases of international partnership for peacebuilding projects endorsed by youth and women organizations categorized by each region - Africa, Europe, and Asia, this year's event aimed to discuss a citizen-led peace

movement and cooperation to promote coexistence and harmony in the global community, and to overcome global challenges that stem from hatred, conflicts, misunderstanding, and lack of communication in this current pandemic era. The event commemorated the Declaration of World Peace, proclaimed on May 25th in 2013, which contains not only the cooperation of each state to establish international law for peace and the role of the media in contribution to sharing information of peace but also the active peace movement of youth and women who seek to transform themselves from the greatest victims of war to the greatest actors for peace. From this peace initiative, HWPL says that millions of global citizens for 8 years have participated in promoting peace projects locally fitted to creating a favorable envi-



ronment of peace, including education, relief, and forums to offer public policies to meet the needs of the community. Chairwoman Pascale IshaWarda of Hammurabi Human Rights Organization (HHRO) in Iraq, who was appointed as Minister of Migration and Displacement by the UN from 2004 to 2005, introduced a legislation project of law that prevents violence against women

and children in cooperation with IWPG. Regarding the importance of peace activities through education, she said, "We need to learn the mechanism of guiding everyone to become a tool of peace, strengthening from daily life, and sometimes throughout the simplest matter of life, starting with personal peace with oneself, in the family, and with others." Ven. AshinHavara, General Secretary of All Burmese Monks Representative Committee in Norway, who went through the Saffron Revolution in 2007, stated that 3 HWPL Peace Libraries were established in Payapon, Myanmar and that a fourth library is currently being prepared.

"There are too few libraries for children in Myanmar. I wanted to give hope to these little children. In the future, the library will con-

duct peace education, peace activities, and peace campaigns, and we will do everything that can help achieve peace," he said.

The event also advocated global participation in peace activities such as the peace tree planting campaign that began in Ukraine with 1,000 participants from 21 countries and peace policy proposal dialogue between citizens and policy experts in Mali where the recent coup triggered social unrest. "It is we in this day who have to do all the necessary things to make peace and prevent our globe from being destroyed. War does not end with words, but it comes to an end with our practical actions. I believe that this can be achieved since no one in our global village is not willing to give peace," highlighted Chairman Man Hee Lee of HWPL.

PM stresses need to boost the exports

From Page 01

motorcycles, tractors and fertilizers was witnessed and sugar mills were now bound to make quick and full payments to farmers contrary to the past governments.

As a result record production of wheat, maize, sugarcane and rice was achieved this year that brought prosperity in the lives of the farmers. He urged overseas Pakistan to send their remittances through banks and invest it in special economic zones like Rashakai. The Prime Minister said his government's anti-corona policies have been globally lauded, adding on one side his government had protected nation from the fatal corona disease and on the other from starvation and hunger adapting smart lock-down policy.

He said rights of landowners would be protected and economic zones' lands would be providing on lease.

Chinese Ambassador Nong Rong in his address said RSEZ would help strengthen economy of both the countries and promote business activities.

The Chinese ambassador while appreciating the economic and investment policies of Pakistani Government said more Chinese investment would come to Pakistan.

He said confidence of foreign investors was restored due to Pakistan Government's investment friendly policies that would bolster business, industrialization and attract foreign investment.

He said Pakistan and China have time tested friendly diplomatic relations spread over 70 years which would further grow under the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan.

Shahbaz rubbishes rift claims...

From Page 01

Shahbaz said the alliance will also discuss the budget that will be presented by govt next month and the situation in Afghanistan. The PML-N President also clarified about the PPP's invite to the dinner party for opposition. Shahbaz said that his party had invited parliamentary leaders of all opposition parties to the dinner and the "PDM had no link with it".

"We had invited parliamentary leaders in NA and Senate and as I am the leader of the opposition it was my responsibility," said Shahbaz. He also added that the dinner was held to discuss how the Opposition could adopt a "joint strategy" against the government ahead of their budget and exposed their "massive failures in all areas".

Walk-in vaccination open for...

From Page 01

Teachers can walk-in to any vaccination center with CNIC, stamped letter from head of Institution / Teachers' ID Card, and get themselves vaccinated, the NCOC tweeted. To ensure safe environment for education and conduct of exams, walk-in vaccination for teachers above 18 years of age is opened. Teachers can walk-in to any vaccination center with CNIC, stamped letter from head of Institution / Teachers' ID Card, and get themselves vaccinated.

Germany acknowledges it committed 'genocide' in Namibia

BERLIN: Germany has officially acknowledged that it committed a "genocide" against Herero and Nama people in today's Namibia at the start of 20th century. "We will now also officially refer to these events as what were from today's perspective: a genocide," German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said on Friday. Some 60,000 Hereros and 10,000 Nama people were murdered by German colonial troops in southwestern Africa between 1904 and 1908. Berlin's move to recognize these crimes as a "genocide" came after over five years of negotiations between Germany and Namibia to address their difficult history.

"I am happy and grateful that we have reached an understanding with Namibia on how to address the dark-

est chapter of our common history," Maas said in a written statement.

"In the light of our historical and moral responsibility, we will ask Namibia and the descendants of the victims for forgiveness," he added.

A joint declaration on reconciliation between Namibia and Germany is expected to be signed next month, according to the diplomats.

German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier will officially apologize for the genocide in front of the Namibian Parliament, but plans for this visit are not yet finalized, local media reported. As part of reconciliation, the German government offered 1.1 billion (\$1.35 billion) in development aid to Namibia, but ruled out legally binding reparations for the victims' descendants. - Agencies



BUCHAREST: Pakistani ambassador to Romania Dr Zafar Iqbal calls on President of Romanian Senate, AncaDragu. Important aspects of Pakistan, Romania relations including parliamentary coop, collaboration in economy & trade, education, culture and people-to-people contacts reviewed. - DNA

Indonesians take to streets to protest US support for Israel



DNA

JAKARTA: Several hundred Indonesians on Friday

protested what they called American support for Israel outside the U.S. Embassy and the U.N. mission in Jakarta. Carrying giant Pales-

tinian and Indonesian flags and signs that read "Indonesian worker solidarity for free Palestine," the demonstrators marched from

several mosques to a major street outside the embassy. The rally was organized by the Indonesian Muslim Workers Movement and several other groups. Authorities with loudspeakers warned the protesters to maintain social distancing. More than 2,300 police, many wearing hazmat suits, were deployed to secure the embassy, the nearby presidential palace and the United Nations mission.

Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation, does not have formal diplomatic relations with Israel and has long been a strong supporter of Palestinians. Indonesian President Joko Widodo has condemned the deadly Israeli airstrikes on the blockaded Gaza Strip.

Nike drops Neymar after abuse allegations

WEB DESK

NEW YORK: Nike Inc. said it ended its partnership with Neymar after the Brazilian soccer star wouldn't cooperate in a probe of sexual assault allegations against him made by a company employee. "Nike ended its relationship with the athlete because he refused to cooperate in a good faith investigation of credible allegations of wrongdoing by an employee," the company said in a statement. "From the very beginning, we have treated the employee's allegations and her experience with great seriousness."

The Oregon-based sportswear giant cut ties with Neymar in August 2020, and at the time gave no public explanation for the split. The Wall Street Journal, which first reported the sexual assault investigation, said there had been eight years remaining on Nike's marketing contract with the athlete. Nike said in its statement that it had been "deeply disturbed" by sexual assault allegations made by the employee in 2018, two years after the alleged incident occurred. She came forward at a company forum where current and former staff members were able to confidentially share concerns, it said. Businesses across the U.S. are rethinking their policies after the #MeToo movement put a spotlight on sexual harassment over the last few years. Nike in particular is under pressure to prove its commitment to protecting women in the workplace after two top executives abruptly left the company in 2018. They had allegedly protected male employees who mistreated female colleagues. A spokeswoman for Neymar said he denies the allegation and the split had occurred for commercial reasons. "Neymar Jr. will vigorously defend himself against these baseless attacks in case any claim is presented, which did not happen so far," she said in a statement. An email to Juan De Dios Crespo Pérez, a lawyer who is reported to have represented Neymar in the past, wasn't immediately returned outside of U.S. and European business hours. Nike called its investigation into the claims "inconclusive." "No single set of facts emerged that would enable us to speak substantively on the matter," it said in the statement.

UK fan sues UAE for alleged torture

LONDON: A UK football fan filed a lawsuit against six officials in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), claiming he was tortured and falsely imprisoned during a trip to the country in 2019. Ali Issa Ahmed said he was imprisoned after attending an Asian Cup football match while on holiday in the UAE. He was charged with making a false statement and wasting police time after he said he was beaten up for supporting the Qatari national team. While being held between January 23 and February 12, Ahmed said he was subject to intentional physical and psychological harm as well as negligence, the lawsuit said. "I was very badly tortured and nearly killed in prison in the UAE," Ahmed said in a statement released by his lawyers on Thursday. "They tried to make it look as though I did these things to myself, that I cut and burnt myself. "The UAE authorities have ignored all my complaints and there has been no investigation, and no one held accountable," he said. "I have decided to launch a civil case against those who are responsible for torturing me so that the truth can come out and there can finally be justice for the terrible things that were done to me." The lawsuit names the head and second-in-command of the Abu Dhabi police force, the head of the Sharjah police force, and the head of the state security public prosecution in Abu Dhabi. In a previous interview with the Guardian newspaper, Ahmad, a dual Sudanese-British citizen, said he was approached by officials and asked to hand over the Qatar jersey he was wearing. Showing sympathy for Qatar is punishable in the Emirati state, with offenders facing a jail term of up to 15 years. - Agencies

The real crimes of Myanmar's Suu Kyi and the farce of her trial

THIS past Monday, the State Administration Council of Myanmar, the military regime, aired on state TV the still images of the detained National League for Democracy (NLD) leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, as she appeared in a closed-door courtroom, sitting alongside her two NLD deputies, in the dock. There is absolutely no question about the farcical nature of this trial of the deposed Myanmar state counselor by the regime that has committed - and continues to commit - all the gravest crimes in international law, as the UN International Independent Fact-Finding Mission (2016-18) had emphatically noted. Among the charges against her are the illegal import and possession of walkie-talkies for her security details, breaking the COVID-19 regulations, corruption and most ominously, breaking the State Official Secrets Act. Alas, the irony should not be lost that

the State Official Secrets Act was the charge, Suu Kyi herself, used to defend the arrest and prosecution of Wa Lon and KyawSoeOo, the two Burmese and Rakhine journalists with Reuters, who attempted to report on the summary execution of 10 Rohingya villagers in the midst of the genocidal purge of over 740,000 Rohingya. Suu Kyi told the world that her government was taking legal action against the duo, not because they were journalists doing their job, but because they revealed what was considered state secrets. The two went on to win the Pulitzer Prize for their investigative reporting and were released by Suu Kyi's government under worldwide pressure. The images of Suu Kyi sitting in the dock had been imagined by others - but not on trumped-up charges or at a Kangaroo court, but on Myanmar's international state crimes for which the Burmese leader does bear responsibility. "I want to be a judge in your trial,

Aung San Suu Kyi," angrily declared Shirin Ebadi, the renowned UK-based human rights defender from Iran. The occasion was the international conference on Myanmar genocide held at the French National Assembly, the parliament, in Paris. Ebadi's anger at Suu Kyi's indifference to the plight of the genocide victims in Bangladesh refugee camps was palpable for those of us in the hall, when she delivered the keynote address before the audience made up of Rohingya refugees, Speaker of the National Parliament of Bangladesh ShirinSharminChaudury, French parliamentarians, and international activists and scholars. As the main founder of the Nobel Women's Group, Ebadi knew and met, her "Sister Laureate" at the group's meeting of which Suu Kyi was a very much welcome member. - Maung Zarni is coordinator of the UK-based Free Rohingya Coalition.

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Briefs

Volodymyr
felicitates
Azerbaijan on
Republic Day

ISTANBUL: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Friday congratulated Azerbaijan on its 103rd Republic Day and voiced support for the country's territorial integrity. "Congratulations to @presidentaz on Republic Day," Zelensky wrote on Twitter, tagging Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev. "I appreciate the strategic partnership between our states," he said, adding Ukraine supports Azerbaijan's territorial integrity. "Look forward to continuing dialogue on bilateral partnership & your participation in marking the 30th anniversary of [Ukraine's] Independence," he wrote, sharing a photo of the two leaders. On May 28, 1918, the Azerbaijani National Council, headed by Mammad Amin Rasulzadeh, declared the independent Azerbaijan Democratic Republic in Tbilisi, Georgia. Azerbaijan first declared independence from the Russian Tsar regime, but was occupied by the Soviet Union after two years.

Covid deaths
reach 150
in Maldives

MALE: The number of COVID-19 related deaths in the Maldives has reached 150, local media citing data from the Health Protection Agency (HPA) reported here Friday. Data shared by the HPA on Thursday showed that 150 people have died of COVID-19 related illnesses in the country. There are currently 25,419 active cases of COVID-19 in the country, out of which 270 patients have been hospitalised for treatment.

Meanwhile, Vice President Faisal Naseem was among those who tested positive for COVID-19 on Thursday, according to a statement by the President's Office. Naseem is the head of the Health Emergency Operations Center (HEOC) which is tasked with overseeing anti-epidemic measures. According to the HPA, 40 percent of individuals who tested positive for COVID-19 in 2021 had not received a single dose of the vaccine. The majority of cases this year have been male and between the age of 18 to 49. A total of 60,943 cases of COVID-19 have been detected in Maldives since the pandemic began. — APP

Russian hack
targeted
USAID:
Microsoft

WEB DESK

NEW YORK: Russian hackers behind the SolarWinds cyberattack, a huge campaign that saw the widespread hacking of several United States federal agencies, have launched a new round of attacks targeting "government agencies, think tanks, consultants, and non-governmental organizations", according to Microsoft. This week's wave of attacks by the Nobelium group targeted about 3,000 email accounts of more than 150 organisations spanning 24 countries, with the largest share of the attack targeting the US, Tom Burt, the tech giant's corporate vice president, wrote in a blog post on Thursday. Notably, the Russian group was able to gain access to an email marketing account used by the State Department's international aid agency, USAID, from which it targeted other organisations. The New York Times reported the breach appears to target the type of groups who have revealed Russian attacks on dissidents or have been vocal about the alleged state poisoning of prominent Russian opposition figure Alexey Navalny. "At least a quarter of the targeted organisations were involved in international development, humanitarian, and human rights work," Burt wrote. "This is yet another example of how cyberattacks have become the tool of choice for a growing number of nation-states to accomplish a wide variety of political objectives, with the focus of these attacks by Nobelium on human rights and humanitarian organizations."



ISLAMABAD: Ambassadors of Morocco and Kyrgyzstan posing for a picture during a reception hosted by Secretary General Pakistan, Romania Friendship Forum Dr. Abrarul Hasnain. — DNA

Pak, Korea to boost trade
and work towards an FTA

Mian Nasser Hyatt Maggo stated that Korea could be one of the top destinations for Pakistani Mangoes and Textiles. He called for broadening the cooperation between FPCCI and Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA)

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Mian Nasser Hyatt Maggo, President FPCCI, has expressed his satisfaction over his successful meeting with Consul General of Korea in Karachi, Kim Haksung; where issues of bilateral trade, business travel, and need to expedite the consultations to agree on a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) were discussed. The visit was organized by Pakistan-Korea Business Council. Mian Nasser Hyatt Maggo stated that Korea could be one of the top destinations for Pakistani Mangoes and Textiles. He called for broadening the cooperation between FPCCI and Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA). H.E. Kim Haksung, Consul General of Korea in Karachi, said that it is a good opportunity for him to visit FPCCI and listen to the views of Pakistani business community aiming to do business with Korea.



Mr. Sung Jae Kim - DG, Korea Trade Centre, Karachi - mentioned that KOTRA is working towards enhancement of bilateral trade between Korea and Pakistan - and, also facilitating businessmen of both the countries.

Mr. Imran Razzak, Commercial Counselor of Pakistan in Korea, shared fact-based inputs with the audience in order to enhance bilateral trade relations between the two countries. He apprised that Korea is more than \$12bn textiles

market and Pakistani exporters should tap that market. Mr. Sohail Nisar, Chairman, Pakistan-Korea Business Council, emphasized the need to expedite the consultative processes which may lead to signing of an FTA between

the two countries and will provide an invaluable impetus to the enhancement of bilateral trade. FPCCI wishes that Korea makes travel and visa issuance to Pakistani businessmen, industrialists, and exporters easier and faster.

Azerbaijan marks
103rd Republic Day

SHUSHA: On the occasion of 28 May - Republic Day, a solemn event was held in the Shusha city with the participation of the servicemen of the Azerbaijan Army. — DNA

DNA

BAKU: Azerbaijanis celebrate the Republic day that honors the date on which the Azerbaijani Democratic Republic (ADR) was founded in 1918 as the first democratic republic in the entire Muslim East. On May 18, Azerbaijan's National Council declared the independent Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, which

marked the country's independence from the Russian Tsar regime. The Azerbaijan Democratic Republic existed only 23 months. After the Bolshevik 11th Red Army's occupation of Azerbaijan on April 28, 1920, the republic collapsed. Although short-lived, the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic left impressive mark in the Azerbaijani history, making series of reforms in many fields including freedom of education, religion and conscience. ADR was a parliamentary state, had a flag, an anthem and an army. ADR is also remembered for being the first Muslim republic to give women the right to vote in 1918 before the United States, France and a number of other progressive countries. Since 1990, May 28 has been celebrated as a national holiday in Azerbaijan.

EU monitoring
Russia flight
refusals

LISBON: EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said Friday the bloc was monitoring whether Russia was systematically refusing to let European airlines land if they avoided Belarus after several flights were cancelled. On Thursday, Austrian Airlines said it had cancelled a Vienna-Moscow flight after Russian authorities did not approve a route change avoiding Belarusian airspace. An Air France flight from Paris to Moscow on Wednesday had to be cancelled for the same reason. "We don't know if it is case by case, specific cases, or is a general norm from the Russian authorities in order to make the European planes overfly Belarus," Borrell told journalists. "There were a couple of cases. Some planes that couldn't land, couldn't take off. But frankly speaking, we have to wait and see in order to take measures." Austria denounced Russia, the key backer of Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, after it refused to allow the Austrian Airlines flight to be rerouted. Belarus sparked global fury by diverting an Athens-to-Vilnius Ryanair plane on Sunday. — APP

Rare antelope
population doubles
since 2019

NUR SULTAN: The population of the critically endangered Saiga antelope has more than doubled since 2019, Kazakhstan said on Friday, citing the first aerial survey of the animals in two years. News that the Central Asian country's Saiga population has risen from 334,000 to 842,000 will hearten conservationists, who warned that the species was on the brink of extinction following a massive die-off in 2015. In a statement, Kazakhstan's ecology ministry called the population boom "an indicator of the effectiveness of measures to conserve saiga populations and counteract poaching". Kazakhstan's vast steppe is home to the majority of the global Saiga antelope population with Russia's Kalmykia region and Mongolia hosting much smaller numbers. In 2015, around 200,000 of the antelopes - well over half the total global population at the time - were wiped out by what scientists later determined was a nasal bacterium that spread in unusually warm and humid conditions. The 2019 aerial survey confirmed that the Saiga was continuing to rebound from the cataclysm but there was no survey in 2020 as Kazakhstan wrestled with the outbreak of the coronavirus. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), whose "Red List" is the scientific reference for threatened wildlife, lists the Saiga as among five critically endangered antelope species. Poaching is a persistent threat to the Saiga, known for its distinctive bulbous nose, fuelled by demand for horn in traditional Chinese medicine. Kazakhstan's leaders pledged to crack down on poaching after two state rangers were killed by poachers in 2019. Earlier this month the ecological ministry said that around 350 female saiga antelopes had been killed by lightning. The discovery came during the Saiga calving season.

Australia
shutters
embassy in
Afghanistan

KABUL: Australia shut its embassy in Afghanistan, highlighting the security fears for foreign missions and their local workers as US-led troops pull out of the war-torn country. With President Joe Biden's September 11 deadline looming, nations are weighing how they might operate without the security blanket provided by US and NATO forces, while scrambling to work out what to do with thousands of Afghan staff who fear being marked as collaborators by the Taliban. Kabul-based political analyst Sayed Nasir Musawi, told AFP he expected more foreign missions to close shop in coming months. "Western countries are not fully sure about the continuation and survival of the incumbent government," he said. The Afghan government insists it can keep the Taliban at bay, but the insurgents have made huge gains in the countryside over the past months and engage daily with local security forces. The Taliban are now present in almost every Afghan province, have full or partial control of thousands of districts, and have effectively encircled several cities - a similar situation to 1996, when they took over most of the country. Their tactics have spurred speculation they are waiting for the last US troops to leave before launching all-out attacks to retake power by force. Announcing the embassy closure earlier this week, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said there was an "increasingly uncertain security environment". — APP

Nepal
greenlights
flights to
China, Qatar

KATHMANDU: The Nepali government has decided to allow once-a-week flights to China, Qatar and Turkey as all international flights except two flights per week with India have remained suspended in the country's efforts to curb a deadly new wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, a Nepali cabinet minister said Friday. "Regular flights once a week were opened for these destinations to ease travel for Nepalis and foreign nationals amid continued suspension of international flights," Bhanu Bhakta Dhakal, minister for culture, tourism and civil aviation, told Xinhua. "The Tourism Ministry will decide the date of regular flights," he said. Nepali officials said another objective of the move is to get supply of medical goods in an easier way to help the medical system control the pandemic in the country. The Nepali authorities suspended almost all international flights in early May and later extended the suspension till the end of this month so as to curb COVID-19, as variants of the virus had left more sick and dead. Earlier, on May 18, the Nepali government decided to open flights to Guangzhou, China and Doha, Qatar. "Now, the Chinese destination will, however, be fixed based on mutual understanding," Yadav Prasad Koirala, secretary at the tourism ministry, told Xinhua. — APP

Croatia
agrees \$1.2
bln France
jets deal

ZAGREB: Croatia has agreed to buy a batch of used fighter jets from France, Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic said on Friday, in a deal worth one billion euros (\$1.2 billion). The 12 Rafale planes will replace Croatia's Russian-made MiGs in the country's biggest arms purchase since its 1990s war of independence from Yugoslavia. The EU member chose France's package over bids from Israel, Sweden and the United States and expects to get the first six planes by 2024. Plenkovic told a cabinet session the French offer to supply the planes for 999 million euros was the best deal. "For the most favourable price, Croatia gets the best rated and best equipped plane," the prime minister said. French Armed Forces Minister Florence Parly hailed the deal as showing the "strengthening of strategic ties" between the two countries and praised Croatia for buying from a European counterpart. — APP

Border tensions between Azerbaijan Armenia rise

Armenia said its forces were carrying out engineering work in the area, while Azerbaijan said the soldiers were part of a "reconnaissance and sabotage group"

FOREIGN DESK

BAKU: Azerbaijan has said that one of its soldiers was wounded after Armenian forces opened fire along the shared border, accusations that Armenia denied. Friday's claim marks the latest in a series of incidents between the two ex-Soviet rivals. In a statement, the Azeri defence ministry said Armenian forces had fired from several directions at its positions in Nakhchivan, an Azeri enclave separated from the remainder of Azerbaijan by Armenian territory. The soldier was wounded in the shoulder, given first aid and

taken to hospital, it said. Armenia's defence ministry denied Baku's assertion, Russia's TASS news agency reported. The simmering border dispute comes after last year's six-week war over the Nagorno-Karabakh region. The region is internationally recognised as part of Azerbaijan, even by Armenia, but is populated and until recently was controlled by ethnic Armenians. Friday's alleged clash came a day after Azerbaijan captured six Armenian servicemen in the Kelbajar district, west of Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenia said its forces were carrying out engineering work in the area, while Azerbaijan said the

soldiers were part of a "reconnaissance and sabotage group". Tensions escalated earlier this month, when Armenia accused Azerbaijan's military of crossing its southern border to "lay siege" to a lake shared by the two countries. Earlier this week, Armenia said one of its soldiers was killed after shooting broke out with Azerbaijan's forces, an incident Baku denied responsibility for. Last year's conflict, which ended in November, saw Azeri troops drive ethnic Armenian forces out of swathes of territory they had controlled since the 1990s in and around Nagorno-Karabakh. Russia eventually brokered a ceasefire.

The conflict killed more than 6,000 people on both sides and led to a political crisis in Armenia, where Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan was widely criticised for what was seen as a humiliating defeat. Pashinyan, 45, said he had no choice but to concede or see his country's forces suffer even bigger losses. He announced snap parliamentary polls under pressure from opposition protesters in the wake of the crisis. The election is scheduled to be held on June 20. On Thursday, Pashinyan described the border situation as "tense and explosive". Earlier this month, he said Armenia and Azerbaijan were

in Russian-mediated talks on the delimitation and demarcation of their shared borders. He also said the two governments could discuss territorial swaps between the two countries. Russia's role as the broker between the two countries has largely come at the expense of Western powers such as France and the United States. All three are part of a mediating group that had tried but failed for decades to find a lasting solution to the decades-long dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenia fought a war with Azerbaijan over the region in the 1990s which killed at least 30,000 people.

Briefs

Govt rejects IMF proposal to levy more tax

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The government has rejected International Monetary Fund's (IMF) proposal to increase taxes on the salaried class. According to sources the Fund had suggested to the FBR to increase the amount of tax deducted from the salaries of people every year from Rs129 billion to Rs300 billion, but the latter rejected it, saying it was difficult to implement.

Sources further disclosed that the FBR had also rejected IMF's suggestion to set the overall tax target at Rs5, 963 billion, and conveyed to the international money lending organisation that the Rs5, 700 billion could be a reasonable target.

FBR's negotiations with the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) will continue for the next two days.

Malaysia: 'Total lockdown' from June

WEB DESK

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysian Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin on Friday announced a nationwide "total lockdown" starting in June as coronavirus infections in the country surged to record levels. Muhyiddin said the stricter lockdown from June 1 to 14 was for all social and economic areas, and that only essential services and economic sectors would remain in operation, which would be listed by the national security council.

The COVID-19 spread in the Southeast Asian nation in recent weeks has been more severe, partly due to highly transmissible coronavirus variants. Hospitals are also strained.

"With the latest rise in daily cases showing a drastically upward trend, hospital capacity across the country to treat COVID-19 patients are becoming limited," Muhyiddin said in a statement.

Malaysia reported 8,290 new coronavirus cases on Friday, its fourth straight day of record infections, bringing its total to 549,514. The number of daily fatalities has also reached records, with 63 earlier this week.

It reported 61 deaths on Friday, taking the total to 2,552.

Pak, Russia to build Stream Gas Pipeline

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Russia Friday signed an inter-government agreement to develop Pakistan Stream Gas Pipeline for gas transportation from Karachi to Kasur. In this regard, both the countries signed a protocol on the amendments to the Agreement on North-South Gas Pipeline Project in Moscow, according to the Pakistan Embassy in Russia.

The protocol was signed by Pakistan's Ambassador in Moscow Shafiq Ali Khan and the Russian Minister for Energy Nikolay Shulginov. As per the protocol, the project has been renamed as "Pakistan Stream Gas Pipeline". The pipeline will run from Karachi to Kasur for transportation of gas. The pipeline project is a flagship strategic venture between Pakistan and Russia that would strengthen bilateral cooperation.

Pakistan desires a strategic partnership with Russia and looks forward to enhanced bilateral relations in all fields of mutual interest.

Uzbek envoy lauds CGSS' role in boosting Pak-Uzbek ties

The ambassador was attending a dinner hosted by Executive Director CGSS, Khalid Taimur Akram

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Khalid Taimur Akram, Executive Director, Center for Global & Strategic Studies, Islamabad hosted a dinner in the honor of H.E Aybek A. Usmanov, Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan to Pakistan and other diplomatic staff of the Embassy. Mr. Khalid Taimur Akram praised the instrumental role of H.E Aybek A. Usmanov, Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan to Pakistan and the diplomatic staff of the Embassy in enhancing the bilateral relationship between Pakistan and Uzbekistan. H.E Aybek A. Usmanov acknowledged and appreciated the efforts and initiatives of CGSS that has achieved milestones in strengthening bilateral ties between Uzbekistan and



ISLAMABAD: Aybek A. Usmanov, Ambassador of Uzbekistan, Khalid Taimur Akram, Executive Director, CGSS, Ansar Mahmood Bhatti, Chief Editor, Diplomatic News Agency and Daily Islamabad POST along with others in a group photo. – DNA

Pakistan. Hespically mentioned the importance of people to people contact that is now strongly being established between both countries.

Both the parties ensured further cooperation to enhance cultural ties, linguistic, economic, students exchange programs among both countries in the coming years. The dinner was also attended by of Lieutenant Colonel Saadullah Tashmatov, Defence Attaché, Mr.Jasur Saidahmedov, Second Secretary, Mr. Hussain Tashbaev, Third Secretary, Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Islamabad, Prof Dr. Shabir Ahmad Khan, Director, Area Study Center, (Russia, China, and Central Asia), University of Peshawar and Mr. Ansar Mahmood Bhatti, Chief Editor, Diplomatic News Agency.

PM Imran will complete five-year term: Rashid

KHAYYAM ABBASI

RAWALPINDI: Federal Minister for Interior Sheikh Rashid Ahmed on Friday said Prime Minister Imran Khan will complete his five-year term regardless of Pakistan Democratic Movement's (PDM) plans.

The interior minister talked to media in Rawalpindi and, in connection with Youme-Takbeer which is being observed on Friday, said the credit of conduction of nuclear tests by Pakistan goes to Raja Zafar-ul-Haq, Gohar Ayub Khan and him.

Sheikh Rashid went on to say that Rs 3 crore have been allocated for Lai Nullah. He said Punjab Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar announced three universities for Rawalpindi which will be remembered forever after their deaths along with sixty universities and Lai Nullah. The federal minister said Chaudhary Nisar Ali Khan has taken oath as Member Provincial Assembly (MPA) of Punjab and he can do what he wants.

Policy rate to remain at 7 percent

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The State Bank of Pakistan will maintain the policy rate at 7% for the next two months, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) said in a statement on Friday.

Since its last meeting in March, the MPC was encouraged by the further upward revision in the FY21 growth forecast to 3.94%, the statement said.

"The MPC noted that this confirms the strength of the broad-based economic rebound underway since the start of the fiscal year, on the back of targeted fiscal measures and aggressive monetary stimulus," it said. This positive momentum is expected to persist, translating into higher growth next year, the statement added.

Inflation rose to 11.1% year-on-year in April, propped up by the lingering impact of this February's electricity tariff increase as well as a pick-up in month-on-month food prices, partly driven by the usual seasonality around Ramadan, the MPC noted. The committee also forecast that the year-on-year inflation rate is "likely to remain elevated in the coming months due to the recent electricity tariff hike". It said that the tariff hike would push the "average for FY21 close to the upper end of the announced range of 7-9%".

Pakistan, Egypt begin joint air defense drills

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The opening ceremony of first-ever Pakistan-Egypt joint air defence exercise "Sky Guard-1" 2021 was held in Egypt's capital Cairo on Friday, according to ISPR.

The military's media wing said that the two-week-long joint exercise is aimed to bolster the military cooperation between two countries in face of existing and emerging threats in the air defence domain. "The exercise will focus on greater integration, interoperability, synergy, information gathering, decision making of air defence tentacles to generate a comprehensive response against multiple hostile air threats in battle," the communiqué read.

The ISPR said that the participating troops will exchange operational drills and procedures to meet the future battlefield environment. It further said that the troops of Pakistani and Egyptian air defence tentacles will participate in the first-ever joint air defence exercise between the two friendly countries.

Director General Joint Staff Headquarters Lieutenant General Muhammad Chirag Haider witnessed the opening ceremony.

Balance of power restored on May 28, 1998: ISPR

"23 years ago on this day, Pakistan restored balance of power in the region by successfully establishing credible minimum nuclear deterrence"

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Armed forces on Friday have paid a tribute to all those involved in establishing credible minimum nuclear deterrence in Pakistan.

In a post on social-networking website Twitter on Youme-Takbeer, the director general in Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) stated, "23 years ago on this day, Pakistan restored balance of power in the region by successfully establishing credible minimum nuclear deterrence." Armed forces and the na-

tion pay tribute to all those involved in making this dream come true, the military's media wing wrote. It is to be mentioned here that Youme-Takbeer, the celebration of Pakistan's atomic explosions in 1998, was being observed on Friday with a pledge to make the country economically and militarily strong.

The day is commemorated every year on May 28 to remember the conduction of nuclear tests on the very day, in 1998, making seventh nuclear nation of the world and first Islamic state equipped with nuclear arsenal.

Pakistan had conducted nuclear tests in Rasko hills of Chaghi district of Balochistan in response to five nuclear explosions conducted by India, threatening the security of Pakistan.

These nuclear tests gave a clear message to the world that despite Pakistan is a peace loving country but it cannot ignore its defence needs and is capable of meeting any challenge. This year, Youme-Takbeer has been marked by the inauguration of 1100 MWe K-2 Nuclear Power Plant in Karachi which adds much valuable, cleaner, reliable and affordable electrici-

ty to the national energy mix. This underscores the role of nuclear science and technology in the socio-economic development of the country and the welfare of its people.

Besides nuclear power generation, Pakistan has harnessed nuclear technology for public service in diverse areas including cancer diagnosis and treatment, public health, agriculture, environment protection and industry. The nation pays its tribute to the contributions of its scientists, engineers and technicians for the security and development of Pakistan.

First case of Indian variant reported in Sindh

KARACHI: The first case of the so-called Indian coronavirus variant has been detected in Sindh, provincial minister for health Dr Azra Pechuho confirmed on Friday.

Speaking to a news channel, Dr Pechuho said that the South African variant of coronavirus is also rapidly spreading in Karachi.

"So far, seven cases of the South African variant and one case of the Indian COVID-19 variant have been detected in the province," Dr Pechuho said. Serological research was carried out on 57 samples which revealed that out of the total, the South African and British variants comprised 71% and 20% cases in Karachi, respectively, the health minister said.

She said that most of the cases had been reported in children below the age of 2 years, adding that parents should get themselves inoculated as soon as possible so that they do not contract the virus from their children.

It may be recalled that the wife of one of the 12 Indian diplomats, who had recently visited Pakistan, had tested positive for coronavirus. All 12 Indian officials, along with their families, have been directed by the government to complete the quarantine period. Back in April, Dr Pechuho has warned residents that they must take extra precaution in the wake of first the UK and the South African and Brazilian coronavirus variants being detected in the province. – DNA

Malaysian envoy pays farewell call on FS

ISLAMABAD: Malaysian High Commissioner Ikram Mohammad Ibrahim Friday paid a farewell call on Foreign Secretary Sohail Mahmood here.

The foreign secretary lauded the outgoing envoy's efforts for strengthening Pakistan-Malaysia ties and deepening cooperation in diverse fields. He also appreciated Malaysia's support on a range of issues including Jammu and Kashmir dispute and Full Dialogue Partnership (FDP) with the ASEAN. Earlier this week, in a meeting with Malaysian envoy, Sadiq Sanjrani said that the common vision of the two countries on the issues facing the Muslim Ummah is considered very important. Cooperation between the two countries in automobile, education, industry and other fields is also very important. – APP



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Foreign Secretary, Sohail Mahmood received Malaysian HC Ikram Mohammad Ibrahim for farewell call. FS lauded his efforts for strengthening Pakistan-Malaysia ties & deepening coop in diverse fields. Appreciated Malaysia's support on a range of issues including Jammu & Kashmir dispute & FDP with ASEAN. – DNA

Agreement signed with Iran for border markets

Speaking during Question Hour in the House, Razak said the construction of markets would be started soon that would bring progress and prosperity in the area

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to Prime Minister on Commerce and Investment Abdul Razak Dawood on Friday informed the Senate that an agreement has been signed with Iran to construct markets at border to facilitate the traders of the area. Speaking during Question Hour in the House, the adviser said the construction of markets would be started soon that would bring progress and prosperity in the area. He said there has been an increase of 7.14 percent (in USD terms) in the total value of exports for the period July-2020 to March-2021 compared to the same period of financial year-

2019-2020. As compared to March, 2020, he said the increase in exports for the month of March 2021, is 30.66 percent (in USD terms). He said the government is making concerted efforts to promote exports through facilitation of the industrial sector; to reduce its costs, duties on raw materials have been rationalized. The Adviser said that in addition to that, for export-oriented sectors gas and – RLNG prices have been rationalized at Rs.852/ MMBtu and \$6.5/ MMBtu respectively. He said to support local industry, electricity has been provided at 9 cents/kWh to export-oriented sectors including textile and apparel, and that the government

has announced 50 percent relief in electricity tariff until June 2021 for SMEs. To provide easier financing, he said the mark up on Long Term Financing Facility (LTFF) and Export Finance Scheme (EFS) has been continued at 5 percent and 3 percent respectively. The Tariff Policy Board (TPB) under National Tariff Policy (NTP) decided to rationalize tariffs, through the Finance Act, 2020, on almost 2000 tariff lines. The additional customs duty of 2 percent on 1623 tariff lines, consisting of basic raw material used by the industry, has been removed, he said. He said the federal government is providing incentives through

payments of duty drawbacks and Drawback on Local Taxes and Levies (DLTL). In order to implement the "Make in Pakistan Initiative" duties have been reduced on 112 tariff lines, consisting of input/intermediate goods, used by the exporters in the domestic production, he said. With the view to incentivize the textile sector, Abdul Razak said the Textile Policy 2020-2025 is in the final stages of formulation, under which electricity will be provided at 9 cents/kWh, and gas and RLNG at a concessionary rate to the industry. The Adviser said that duties on 90 items have also been reduced from 11 percent to 3 percent and 0 percent on intermediate goods

which were not manufactured locally. He said the government is conducting intensive trade diplomacy and trying to obtain access to new markets for local traders and industry through Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and Preferential Trade Agreements (PTAs). Abdul Razak said the government is already working on PTAs with Afghanistan and Central Asian Republics (CARs). Formulation of Strategic Trade Policy Framework (STPF) 2020-25 is in the final stages, which will cover the policy interventions aimed at creating competitiveness, tariff reform, investment in export-oriented production, integration into global value chains, enhanced market access, institutional strengthening, etc.