



Islamabad POST

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Enhanced Pakistan-Turkey co-op crucial for regional peace

Detailed News On Page-06

EU threatens action against Hungary's law

Detailed News On Page-07



Pakistan stands with brothers in Palestine

Detailed News On Page-07



Johar Town blast kills 3, injures 21

Over 30 kg of explosives used; windows of nearby houses and buildings were shattered in the explosion



LAHORE: A view of damaged buildings and vehicles as a result of the blast in Johar Town on Wednesday. Three people were killed in the blast. — Shahbaz Sindhu

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: At least three persons were killed, while 21 others sustained injuries when an explosion took place in the city's Johar Town area, with the provincial police chief believing police were the target, media reported Wednesday. Rescue, police, and bomb disposal teams reached the site of the incident soon after the blast. Witnesses said the windows of nearby houses and buildings were shattered in the explosion. In addition, one of the buildings was severely damaged due to the intensity of the blast. Several cars parked close to the buildings were also damaged. The injured, 21 so far, were shifted to Lahore's Jinnah Hospital via private cars and auto-rickshaws for treatment. Three persons succumbed to their injuries during the treatment, the medi-

cal superintendent of the hospital said. The Jinnah Hospital management has asked people to come forward and donate blood for the injured, adding that wounded are being treated at the hospital. A police officer, a woman, and two children were among those injured by the blast. The injured are in critical condition due to the burns caused by the blast. Such was the intensity of the blast that its sound was heard even in faraway areas. However, the nature of the blast has not been ascertained yet. Police have cordoned off the area for further investigation while traffic has been redirected. A preliminary report of a probe by investigative agencies has been submitted to Inspector General Punjab Inam Ghani, sources said. More than 30kg of explosives were used in the blast, according to the initial report, which adds that "for-

Hafiz Saeed house was the target

STAFF REPORT

LAHORE: IGP Ghani has surmised that the police had been targeted in the attack. While speaking to the media shortly after the blast, he advised the people to not pay any heed to rumours related to the blast. The IGP told the media that the Counter Terrorism Department is probing the incident and a detailed report will be shared about the nature of the blast and the material used. "We are not sure what caused the explosion or whether it was a planted device [that caused the explosion], or a suicide blast," he said at the time. In response to a question whether Hafiz Saeed — the leader of the outlawed Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) was the target — Ghani said: "There is a police picket near the house of a high value target, which is why the vehicle could not have gone near the house." This is why he believes the police were targeted, reported media. He did not provide any further information on the high value target.

Ball bearings, nails and other explosives were among the objects used in the bomb. The initial report states that the material had been planted onto a car and the device was detonated remotely. A 3-foot deep and 8-foot wide crater has formed at the site of the blast, the report said. The blast caused damage within a 100-square-foot radius.



ISLAMABAD: Chief of Defence Forces of Kenya, General Robert Kariuki Kibochi called on President Dr. Arif Alvi at Aiwan-e-Sadr. — DNA

FM Qureshi participates in Belt and Road moot

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi participated in the Asia and Pacific High-Level Video Conference on Belt and Road Cooperation, hosted by China today. Mr. Wang Yi, State Councilor and Foreign Minister of China, chaired the conference in which Foreign Ministers of a large number of BRI partner countries participated. Speaking at the Conference, Foreign Minister Qureshi highlighted the importance of multilateral cooperation in combating COVID-19. He said that fruitful cooperation in combating COVID-19 for timely economic rebound would require sharing experiences and best practices; enhancing the availability, accessibility and affordability of vaccines through joint research and production; and calling for preferential financing from multilateral development institutions for developing countries.

Pakistan keen to engage with Kenya

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Wednesday said that Pakistan highly valued its relations with Kenya and wanted to further increase the bilateral cooperation in the areas of trade, economy and defence for the mutual benefit of two countries. He also underlined the need for enhanced engagements at high political and military levels to further boost mutual cooperation. The president was talking to visiting Chief of Defence Forces of Kenya, General Robert Kariuki Kibochi, who called on him at the Aiwan-e-Sadr. Talking to the visiting dignitary, the president said that Pakistan had initiated "Look Africa Policy", under which Kenya was deemed as an important East-Afri-

"President apprised General Robert Kariuki Kibochi about the potential of defence industry of Pakistan"

can country and desired to develop close relations with Kenya in the fields of political, economic and defence. He said Pakistan's contributions towards African stability were exemplary as Pakistan army was the highest contributor of troops in UN Missions for Africa. He apprised General Robert Kariuki Kibochi about the potential of defence industry of Pakistan and emphasised the need for exchanging defence delegations to explore areas of interest. The president highlighted that the successful handling of Covid-19 pandemic by

Pakistan spoke volumes of excellent discipline shown by the Pakistani nation. General Robert Kariuki Kibochi appreciated the capability of defence industry of Pakistan and professionalism of Pakistan's armed forces, particularly their role in maintaining peace and security in Africa. He underscored the need for increasing cooperation in the area of military training between the two countries and also called for increasing military-to-military cooperation as the both countries had huge potential to expand cooperation in the field of defence.

Lahore blast a worrying incident

Deteriorating peace situation in the Punjab is a matter of concern

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari condemned the blast in Lahore's Johar Town and expressed condolences with the families of those who lost their previous lives. "The deteriorating peace situation in the Punjab capital is a matter of concern," Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said. The PPP Chairman said the blast in a peaceful city like Lahore is a worrying incident and those responsible should be brought under the law.

Afghan peace must be SCO's top priority

Dr. Yusuf said that the vision of the transformed Pakistan was centered on economic security



DNA

DUSHANBE: National Security Advisor, Dr. Moeed Yusuf said that failure to attain peace in Afghanistan was the most immediate challenge facing SCO today. Dr. Moeed Yusuf attended the 16th meeting of the National Security Advisers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization held at Dushanbe. Member states, which include Pakistan and

India, issued a joint protocol signed by all the NSAs at the meeting. In his formal statement at the summit, Dr. Yusuf said that Pakistan's main priority of generating greater economic activity, and reducing un-employment and poverty alleviation were completely in sync with the SCO's direction. He apprised them about Pakistan's success in fighting Covid 19 pandemic.

Continued on Page 06

NSA meets Russian counterpart

NEWS DESK

DUSHANBE: Pakistan and Russia have expressed the resolve to deepen and diversify the bilateral relationship. The resolve was made at a meeting between National Security Adviser Dr Moeed Yusuf and Secretary of the Security Council of Russia Nikolai Platonovich Patrushev in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. During the meeting, they also exchanged views on the regional security and the latest situation in Afghanistan.

Covid-19 positivity rate at 2.04%

ISLAMABAD: Another 39 deaths were reported from coronavirus in Pakistan and a positivity rate of 2.04% was recorded over the last 24 hours, according to the National Command and Operation Center's daily data. The NCOC wrote in an update on Twitter that 45,519 COVID-19 tests were conducted across the country in the last 24 hours, out of which 930 came back positive. According to the official portal, the rate of positive cases of COVID-19 currently stands at 2.04%. — DNA

Islamabad POST gets membership of the APNS

Daily Islamabad POST completed its one successful year of publication in May this year. The newspapers got the APNS membership in minimum possible period

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Daily Islamabad POST has got membership of All Pakistan Newspapers Society (DNA), which is the sole body of newspaper owners of Pakistan. The APNS is currently headed by DAWN and The News group. Daily Islamabad POST completed its one successful year of publication in May this year. The newspapers got the APNS membership in minimum possible period. The newspaper management owes a great deal to the leadership of APNS and especially the readers, who have been a great source of inspiration and encouragement. The newspaper plans to expand its network by starting editions from Lahore and Karachi as well besides increasing the number of pages. It may be mentioned here that CENTRELINE magazine, the largest circulated diplomatic magazine, is already member of the APNS and member of the APNS central executive committee as well.

2m doses of Chinese vaccine arrive

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: A fresh batch of two million Covid-19 vaccines arrived in Pakistan from China on Wednesday. According to reports, a special Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) aircraft - PK6852 - flew from Beijing to Islamabad carrying the Covid-19 jabs. The vaccines were handed over to the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) upon arrival at the Islamabad Airport. On June 20, a special consignment of 1.55 million Sinovac anti-Covid vaccine doses arrived at the Islamabad airport through a special PIA flight, announced the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC).

Inside...

KP CM agrees to proposed reforms plan for ETEA — Page 02

ICCI slams unprecedented hike in taxes on flour millers — Page 03

CDA to revamp Fatimah Jinnah Park to facilitate citizens — Page 04

Countering Islamophobia through Science Comm. — Page 05

Enhanced Pakistan-Turk co-op vital for regional peace: COAS — Page 06

Pak to continue to stand with Palestinian brethren: Envoy — Page 07

Pakistan, Azerbaijan vow to face challenges together — Page 08

PM briefed on 'enhanced intelligence cooperation'

The prime minister appreciated the ongoing efforts and expressed satisfaction over the performance of the NIC Committee



SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: A special meeting of the recently

established National Intelligence Coordination Committee (NICC) was chaired by Prime Minister Imran Khan on Wednesday, said a

press release. The meeting, held at the ISI Secretariat in Islamabad, involved a comprehensive briefing and a discussion on enhanced intelligence cooperation. The statement added that the prime minister appreciated the ongoing efforts and "expressed satisfaction over the performance of National Intelligence Coordination Committee". On his arrival, the premier was received by DG Inter-Services Intelligence Lieutenant General Faiz Hamid and was also attended by federal ministers Sheikh Rashid, Fawad Chaudhry and heads of services intelligence agencies, FIA and the IB.

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ALI ALIZADA
Pak, Azerbaijan have time-tested and deep relations

Amb. Alizada Hosts Salvation Day Reception — Page 14

CEO Serena Hosts Chamber Sirbaz Khan — Page 30

Envoys Take Part in Pedal for Green Pak — Page 34

LARGEST CIRCULATED DIPLOMATIC MAGAZINE

Briefs

Jhagra assures KP employees of raise in salaries

PESHAWAR: The delegations of All Government Employees Grand Alliance Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Secretariat Coordination Council on Wednesday met with Provincial Finance Minister TaimurSaleemJhagra here at his office.

At the meeting, TaimurSaleemJhagra assured the government employees that the issue of differentiations in salaries would be addressed as concentrated efforts were underway towards the end. As promised, the Minister said a raise of 27 percent would be added to the salaries from 1st June. He said a complaint addressing committee has been constituted in case any employee did not get a raise in salary adding he said government employees must discharge their responsibilities with commitment and dedication.

The employees highly commended the provincial government for making a significant raise in their salaries saying they were thankful to the Chief Minister and KP Finance Minister for this generous raise. - APP

78 percent teachers get Covid-19 jabs in KP

PESHAWAR: KhyberPakhtunkhwa Elementary and Secondary Education on Wednesday informed that 78 percent teaching staff and 62 percent non-teaching staff of schools got Covid-19 jabs across the province. The department said it was good news that teachers have acted in a responsible way. Education Minister Shahram Khan Tarakai said that education department expect the same positive attitude from the remaining teachers who were not vaccinated yet. - APP

Eight SHOs reshuffled

FAISALABAD: City Police Officer (CPO) Captain (ret'd) Sohail Ahmad Chaudhary transferred and posted eight Station House Officers (SHOs) on Wednesday. A police spokesman said Inspector Umar Daraz was transferred from Police Lines and appointed as SHO City Jaranwala police station while Inspector MohsinMuneer was transferred from Khurarianwala police station and appointed as SHO Batala Colony police station. Similarly, Inspector Syed AshfaqHussain was transferred from Balochni police station and appointed as SHO Tarkhani police station, Sub Inspector (SI) Khalil Ahmad from Police Lines to Khurarianwala police station as SHO, Sub Inspector Shahzad Ahmad Khan from Tarkhani police station to Police Lines, Sub Inspector Muhammad Ashfaq from Ghulam Muhammad Abad police station to Mansoorabad police station as SHO, Sub Inspector Muhammad Imran Khan from Civil lines police station to Nishatabad police station as SHO and Sub Inspector (SI) Khawaja Imran Mannan was transferred from Batala Colony police station and appointed as SHO in Raza Abad police station, the spokesman added. - APP

63 profiteers fined

FAISALABAD: Special price control magistrates imposed fine on 63 shopkeepers for profiteering in various parts of the district on Wednesday. A spokesman for the local administration said that price control magistrates inspected 1206 shops in 76 markets and bazaars and found 63 shopkeepers involved in overcharging and imposed a fine of Rs 90,500 on them.

Cotton factory gutted
FAISALABAD: A fire broke out in a cotton factory which reduced precious things to ashes in Khurarianwala police limits on Wednesday. A police spokesman said the fire erupted in Haroon Enterprises on Jaranwala Road due to a short-circuit. The fire engulfed the entire surroundings and burnt cotton bales besides other items. On information, fire fighters of Rescue 1122 reached the spot and brought the fire under control. - APP



PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Shah Farman talking to the ambassador of European Union in Pakistan, Androulla Kaminara who visited Governor House Peshawar. - DNA

KP CM agrees to proposed reforms plan for ETEA

The chief minister Mehmood Khan was chairing a high level meeting regarding reform initiatives in the Educational Testing and Evaluation Agency (ETEA)

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: As an important development to strengthen Educational Testing and Evaluation Agency (ETEA) and enable it to meet the testing requirements for all public sector recruitment, Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Mahmood Khan has agreed in principle to the proposed reform plan for restructuring the agency and streamline all its operational matters. He directed the authorities concerned to complete all the pre-requisites and initiatives well in time so that the proposed plan could be implemented in letter and spirit. The chief minister Khan was chairing a high level meeting regarding

reform initiatives in the ETEA. Special Assistant to Chief Minister for Information and Higher Education Kamran Bangash, Secretary Higher Education, Executive Director ETEA and other concerned high ups attended the meeting. The forum was informed that in light with the special directives of the chief minister, multiple reform initiatives were underway to strengthen ETEA which would be presented in the upcoming meeting of the board of governors for final approval.

It was informed that keeping in view the major functions of the agency, necessary reforms had been proposed for reorganization of the existing structure of ETEA whereas hiring of IT experts and other staff was also in progress.

In order to strengthen the legal framework of agency, drafts of financial and service regulations have been prepared whereas work on other legal reforms is in final stages including designing job description for each position, formulating performance appraisal mechanism and development of Standard Operating Procedures. The meeting was also informed that proposed training calendar for capacity building of human resources and a plan to upgrade and procure technical resources would also be presented in the upcoming meeting of the board of governors. For setting up of digital printing press, tender have been floated for procurement of highly sophisticated digital printing machine and this initiative will

enhance the printing capacity from 5000 papers set per day to 50,000 to 60,000 papers set per day. Online requisition system for clients and ticket management system for candidates were also being prepared to ensure efficient service delivery and ease of doing business. It was further informed that implementation of online profile management system of all candidates has been started whereas preparation of Databank and System Based Paper Generator was in progress adding that computer based testing system would be lunched as pilot project while the end of September this year. Briefing about the achievements of ETEA, it was informed that more than 7000 candidates were

tested for engineering entrance tests and above 300,000 candidates were tested for recruitments against 6,750 vacancies in 39 different departments. Similarly, 52,302 candidates were tested for admissions and promotional tests in various institutions. Speaking on the occasion, the chief minister said that ETEA was the single public sector testing agency and needed to be strengthened in accordance with the testing needs of modern era. He was optimistic that implementation of the proposed reform initiatives would provide all time solution to the issues of testing and evaluation in the province and thus the provincial government would not require any private testing agency for the purpose.



PESHAWAR: Secretary Relief, Yousaf Rahim handovers First Aid kit and items to civil defense officials at Civil Defense Directorate. - DNA

FCCI demands to further reduce MRL

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD. Pakistan must further reduce Minimum Residue Levels (MRL) in rice crop to maintain its share in global markets, said Chaudhary Talat Mahmood Senior Vice President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI). He was addressing a seminar on the "importance of MRL of pesticides in rice in global markets". It was joint-

ly organized by the Ministry of Commerce, Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), UK-aid and International Trade Centre.

The seminar was also attended by Dr. Syed Tauqir Shah National Project Coordinator ITC-ReMIT, Muhammad Shoaib Zafar Adviser Trade Policy, Dr. Mubarak Ahmad, Director General Punjab Agriculture Department and Ali Narang in addition to large number of rice growers and exporters from this region. He said

that Pakistan is included in the top ten rice exporting countries and we must maintain this position as the West and EU have further tightened the food safety measures.

He said that our growers generally use excessive pesticides to get maximum per acre yield but due to the excessive use of pesticides, its residue level remains active till its consumption. He said that ideally minimum pesticides could be used so that its ill impacts could be eliminated before its cooking.

Women should harness E-Commerce skills: FWCCI

FAISALABAD: Women should harness E-Commerce skills to give a quantum jump to the national economy, said MrsTehmina Pasha, President Faisalabad Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FWCCI) on Wednesday. She was addressing a Webinar on exploring the Amazon Opportunity for Pakistani Sellers' in collaboration with the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan and SMEDA. She said the US E-Commerce giant which was the largest internet store in the world i.e., Amazon.Com had been introduced for the first time in Pakistan which was a very lucrative opportunity for Pakistani sellers to register themselves and take benefit of the potential having 38 percent share in world E-Commerce Trade.

She said that in the wake of emerging E-Commerce trade, we have already proposed to the government that it should facilitate the introduction of Digital Information Platforms/Digital Economy/E-Commerce in its post-budget proposals. Speaking on the occasion, TDAP Assistant Director MsKashmalJaved said that they were determined to provide technical assistance to empower women in order to promote their businesses through E-Commerce and in this context regular training programmes would soon be arranged. Resource Person from Extreme Commerce Maqsood briefed the participants with the help of slides and informed that Amazon had 38.7 percent share in the world E-commerce trade. He also explained in detail the procedures of creating Amazon Seller Account and the necessary requisite in this regard. - APP



WSSP organizes awareness sessions

PESHAWAR: Water and Sanitation Services Peshawar (WSSP) on Wednesday held awareness sessions in different localities of the city, urging masses to conserve water and keep their surroundings clean.

The sessions titled "Public Dialogue on Water and Sanitation" were organized by Citizen Liaison Cell (CLC) in NothiaJadeed, Bhana Mari and Akhunabad union councils to create awareness on the importance of water and sanitation.

WSSP has been organizing awareness campaign under ongoing UNICEF project on water and sanitation. Local elders, traders, Ulema and WSSP officials including Solid Waste Managers Gauhari Ali and BasitKhattak and CLC Muhammad Ismail participated in the sessions. The officials listened to their complaints regarding water supply, sanitation and sewerage and assured them of timely solution.

WSSP officials in their discussion highlighted masses' responsibilities in cleanliness of the city and conservation of water. They urged them to register their connections to avoid inconvenience like disconnection and fine in future. They said illegal connections were the major cause of damage to supply lines and water contamination. - APP

Dist admin starts action against defaulters

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: The district administration has initiated a series of legal action against the defaulters of government dues in this regard, Assistant Commissioner City Syed AyubBukhari arrested a prominent businessman from his factory office for non-payment of dues of AIT/FBR. The said businessman brought to the Revenue lock up in Tehsil Office.

However he paid the said amount Rs.1.2 million in cash and released. According to the details, notices were sent to the businessman several times for payment of dues and legal action was taken against him for non-compliance. Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ali said that the officers of the district administration are actively involved in recovery of government arrears in different heads and in this regard, Rs. 4 million was recovered from the defaulters in one day. He clarified to the defaulters to pay the dues otherwise they would have to face difficulties in revenue lock up. He urged the Assistant Commissioners and Revenue Officers to expedite the recovery of government arrears and achieve the required targets by the end of the financial year. - APP

Minister reviews FIEDMC issues

LAHORE: Provincial Minister for Industries and Commerce MianAslam Iqbal here Wednesday chaired a meeting to review Industry colonization, development work and future course of action for industrial zones under FIEDMC (Faisalabad Industrial Estates Development and Management Company). The Minister said that FIEDMC should focus on colonization along with speedy completion of development works, adding that accelerating the process of industrialization could create new employment opportunities.

He directed that FIEDMC should fully comply with the government guideline and policy. To ensure transparency in FIEDMC affairs, he said, the dashboard should be completed on priority basis and digital system should be adopted in the organization in collaboration with PITB. He directed to issue final notices to those who did not establish industrial units on their respective plots purchased for this purpose. The provincial minister said that a transparent mechanism would have to be put in place for re-auction of canceled plots. He said that development works in the industrial zones of FIEDMC should be completed at all costs in the next one and half years and a comprehensive development and roadmap of development works in the industrial zones should be prepared and presented. - APP

Pak-China enjoy enviable diplomatic relations

Chief Minister Punjab Sardar Usman Buzdar said the this strong bond of diplomatic relations between the two country will be taken forward with renewed zeal and commitment

DNA

LAHORE: Chief Minister Punjab Sardar Usman Buzdar has said that Pakistan and China enjoy enviable diplomatic relations and these relations stood every test of time over the past seven decades. Addressing a special ceremony to mark 70 years of diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan at the Chief Minister Secretariat here on Wednesday, he said Pak-China relations touched new heights under Prime Minister Imran Khan, adding that China stood by Pakistan in every difficult hour. The ceremony was attended by provincial ministers including Abdul Aleem Khan, MianMehmood-ur-Rasheed, Raja Basharat, MianAslam Iqbal, Akhter Malik, Khayal Ahmad Kastro and others. Holding flags of both the countries in their hands during the ceremony, Chief Minister Punjab Sardar Usman Buzdar and the pro-



vincial ministers expressed their immense pleasure over this long journey of friendship between the people of the two countries and prayed for the longevity of the diplomatic relations. The participants raised slogans 'Long Live Pak-China Friendship'.

Buzdar, speaking on the occasion, said the 10 years of diplomatic bond was a tale of mutual love, respect and sincerity between the two countries, adding that both the countries enjoyed unparalleled relations. He said innovation, research and hard

work were the secret of China's progress, adding that Pakistan is lucky to have a friend in China. He said the Chinese model teaches a lesson of hard work to the Pakistani nation and this lesson must be passed on to the next generations, adding that hard work was the only royal road to progress and prosperity. Chief Minister Punjab Sardar Usman Buzdar said the this strong bond of diplomatic relations between the two country will be taken forward with renewed zeal and commitment. Provincial Minister Culture Khayal Ahmad Kastro, speaking during the ceremony, said ceremonies were being held across the province to commemorate 70 years of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China, adding that Pakistan enjoys strong cultural, diplomatic and friendly ties with China. He said various cultural ceremonies will be held in the provincial metropolises to mark the historic occasion in the diplomatic history of the country.

Briefs**ECC approves
Rs 9855m
grants**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet on Wednesday approved Technical Supplementary Grants (TSGs) worth Rs 9855.984 million for various divisions. The meeting of cabinet committee was chaired by Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Shaukat Tarin approved Rs 300 million TSG for allocation from Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) for establishment of Joint Border Markets at Mand District Kech, Gabb District Gwadar and Chedgi, District Panjgur against Rs100 million each. The ECC further approved technical supplementary grant for Covid-19 Response and other Natural Calamities Control Programme (Sindh Component) worth Rs 9393.226 million. The committee approved of Rs 98.700 million TSG to meet the requirements of Frontier Corps KP (South), D.I.Khanunder Interior Division. The ECC also approved technical supplementary grant of Rs 25 million for Headquarters Pakistan Rangers Islamabad under Interior Division and Rs 39.058 million to Pakistan Institute of Development Economics for payment of salaries as well.

**Qasim Suri
inaugurates
AirSial**

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Speaker National Assembly Qasim Khan Suri on Wednesday inaugurated AirSial Airline services from Islamabad to Quetta here at Islamabad Airport. Speaking on the occasion, he remarked that initiation of private domestic airline service from Islamabad to Quetta would connect Baluchistan to other parts of the country, said a press release.

He also stated that easy access to Gwadar Port and China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) related projects would capitalize the opportunities of growth and investment in province. He said that the successful operation of domestic AirSial Airline Services for Six cities especially for Quetta would bring ease and comfortable traveling to people of Baluchistan.

While mentioning the problems faced by people of Baluchistan, he remarked that present government is making all out efforts to resolve the issues faced by people of Baluchistan. He said that the launching of AirSial Airline services would promote tourism and trade opportunities in Baluchistan province besides providing comfortable traveling. - APP

**Some 15,000
Pakistanis in
foreign jails**

ISLAMABAD: A senior official of the Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (OPHRD) on Wednesday told the Senate's Standing Committee concerned that as many as 15,000 Pakistanis were languishing in foreign jails. The forum, which met here with Senator Manzoor Ahmed in the chair, underlined the need for early release of those prisoners who were jailed against petty crimes. OPHRD Division Secretary Ishrat Ali informed the committee that the government would soon reach an agreement with Sri Lanka and Saudi Arabian authorities for exchange of prisoners. The committee reviewed progress of the OPHRD Ministry and its allied departments whose officials briefed the members on its role, scope of work and overall working. The meeting was attended by senators Naseebullah Bazi, Irfan-u-Haque Siddique, Khalida Ateeb, Liaqat Khan Taraqai, Muhammad Asad Ali Khan Junjo, Shaheen Khalid Butt and others. "The overseas Pakistanis are our precious asset and sending billions of rupees in remittances," the Committee Chairman remarked, while passionately calling for a comprehensive strategy in consultation with the relevant departments to ensure resolution of their grievances. - APP

**ICCI slams unprecedented
hike in taxes on flour millers**

He feared the unprecedented increase in tax on flour mills would make the flour more expensive for the common man consuming a larger share of his income due to which it would become very difficult for him to meet the basic needs of his life

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: The business community in a meeting at Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) has expressed great concerns over the 400 percent hike in tax rates on the turnover of flour mills and called upon the government to immediately withdraw this unprecedented hike to save the common man from a new wave of food inflation and flour shortage. Addressing the meeting, Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry said that wheat flour was the staple food for majority of population in Pakistan and an essential

part of their daily diet, but exorbitant in the income tax rate on the turnover of flour mills from 0.25 percent to 1.25 percent in one go would make significant increase in the price of flour and push it out of the reach of common man making his life more miserable. He feared the unprecedented increase in tax on flour mills would make the flour more expensive for the common man consuming a larger share of his income due to which it would become very difficult for him to meet the basic needs of his life.

Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan said that the Covid-19 pandemic has already rendered many workers jobless, reducing income of many families



and in these circumstances raising tax rates on flour sector would create multiple problems, especially for the low income segments of the society. He demanded that the government should immedi-

ately withdraw the unjustified hike in tax rates on flour mills, otherwise, the people would face food insecurity leading to unpredictable consequences for them. He also slammed the decision of imposing 17 percent sales tax on bran through the new budget, which was abolished four years ago and added that it would also give rise to inflation resulting in restlessness among the masses.

Fatma Azim Senior Vice President and Abdul Rehman Khan Vice President ICCI said that flour was a basic need of the majority of people in Pakistan and increasing taxes on flour millers would naturally make flour costlier that would put extra burden on the low income

people making it more difficult for them to bring food on the table for their family members. Therefore, they urged that the government should reconsider this unwise decision to save the people from the harmful consequences of this increase.

They further said that flour millers have also threatened to go on strike against the 17 percent GST on choker and 400 percent hike in income tax on their turnover, therefore, they urged that the government should immediately withdraw 17 percent GST and restore tax to previous level of 0.25 percent to save the country from exorbitant food inflation and social unrest.

**COVID-19
cases decline
sharply: DC**

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Deputy Commissioner Amir Aqil Khan Wednesday said fortunately COVID-19 cases were decreasing with each passing day due to timely measures taken by the government. Chairing a meeting to review anti-corona arrangements, he underlined the need for vaccinating maximum number of people to curb the spread of Corona virus. On the occasion, District Health Authority briefed the meeting that so far 620,642 people including 590,446 citizens and 30,196 front-line health workers have been vaccinated in the district. He briefed that only 8 more positive cases were reported during the last 24 hours including 2 from Rawal Town, 53 from Potohar town, 2 from Rawalpindi Cantt, 2 Taxila, and one each from Potohar town and Kahuta. "Presently 30 confirmed patients were admitted in various city's facilities, counting 7 in Holy Family Hospital, 4 in Benazir Bhutto Hospital, 11 in Institute of Urology and 8 in Fauji Foundation Hospital," the meeting was briefed.

**Awareness
on job quota
to encourage
women**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi on Wednesday stressed the need for creating awareness about the reserved seats of women and minorities in public jobs, saying it would encourage their participation in national development. The president expressed these views as Chairman Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC) Captain (retired) Zahid Saeed presented him the performance reports of 2018 and 2019. In a meeting held here at the Aiwan-e-Sadr, the president was given a briefing on FPSC with the focus on availability of vacant posts for minorities. It was highlighted that the 98 posts under FPSC, which had been reserved for minorities, were vacant at present. Dr. Alvi emphasized on finding out the reasons for vacant posts in coordination with relevant departments.

**NAB granted
14 days
remand of
accused**

ISLAMABAD: An Accountability Court (AC) Wednesday granted National Accountability Bureau (NAB) a fourteen day physical remand of accused Mumtaz Abbasi in Sindh tractors scheme case. The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) produced former executive engineer Sindh Agriculture Department Mumtaz Abbasi before AC-I Judge Muhammad Bashir. NAB prosecutor Waseem Javed requested the court to grant fourteen day remand of the accused for further investigation from him. The accused had been involved in preparing fake invoices of tractors on names of fake farmers. The NAB had arrested a total of four accused in the case. It alleged that the accused had embezzled Rs 793 million in tractor scheme. The case was also connected with fake accounts scam. - APP

**IHC seeks
COIED's
report on
missing person**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday sought report regarding the proceeding of Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances (COIED) pertaining to a missing person Mudassar Naro. Justice Aamer Farooq of IHC heard the case seeking recovery of above person who went missing three year ago. The court also sought the list of family members of the missing person on next hearing. Deputy Attorney General Raja Khalid Mahmood, a representative of the Ministry of Defense and petitioner's lawyer Iman Zainab Mazari appeared before the court. Expressing annoyance over non submission of COIED's report, the court said that it was the same issue which was heard at the last hearing as well.

The court did not understand what was going on. The deputy attorney general said that he received the report of the commission last evening so he could not submit it. The court asked that whether the commission was above the government, adding that why the said documents were not coming despite repeated directives. On this occasion, the representative of defense ministry Brigadier Palak Naz presented a file in the court, the judge read the file and returned it. Justice Farooq said that we have to see the progress of the proceedings in the commission. To a query, the petitioner's lawyer said that the father of missing person had been appearing before the commission. Deputy Attorney General said that the incident was taken place in Mansehra in 2018. We have also searched in the river, he said.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Federal Public Service Commission, Captain (R) Zahid Saeed, presenting Annual Report for the year 2019 to President Dr. Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. - DNA

**Pindi faces water
shortage amid
supply cuts**

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: The garrison city of Rawalpindi amid spike in temperature after the pre-monsoon season onset has started facing water shortage in the metropolis mainly due to reduced water supply and lack of any mega storage facilities. The solution to one of major urban centers of the country was to establish small and indigenous dams to meet the water shortage issue especially in Rawalpindi city whereas some projects are under construction and would be finalized soon, Chairman Water and Sanitation Agency WASA Raja Tariq Murtaza told APP in an exclusive interview. Murtaza said, "Besides, reduced water availability there is an unprecedented decline in groundwater level or aquifer of the city owing to unbridled urbanization and unchecked ground water pumping that reduced fresh water availability to a drastic level, he added. Rawalpindi city, he said was getting 46 million gallons (MGD) of water against its required need of 59 MGD. Managing Director informed that due to these factors, 460 tube wells installed to fulfill the water requirement of 1.6 million residents of Rawalpindi city were unable to make up the demand. The citizens were not getting water according to their needs and problems were worsening as the weather was turning hot. The residents of Shah Khalid Colony, Adyala Road, Jerahi Stop Ali Town, Akalgarh, AsgharMall Scheme, Bagh Sardaran, New Phagwari and others who were facing serious water shortage issue threatened to lodge protest against WASA for not providing water.

**RCCI urge Govt to address
anomalies in budget**

SHUJAAT HAMZA

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) has urged the government to address anomalies in the financial budget 2021-22, and stressed that suggestions made by the stakeholders should be incorporated in the budget document. Acting President Shahraiz A Malik in a statement said

**Severe power
crisis to hit
country within
days: PEW**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) on Wednesday said the country may slip into a severe power crisis leading to massive load-shedding in the ongoing month of June. The flour and power crisis will hit masses and every sector of the economy badly which should be tackled without delay, it said. President of

that the Rawalpindi Chamber in its response to the budget speech of Finance Minister Shaukat Aziz had made immediate suggestions which should be included before the budget is passed. He said that section 203A is not acceptable and shall be removed. Giving an arrest warrant to a tax officer is tantamount to harassing tax payers. It should be withdrawn immediately. We have always

demand that taxpayers be respected and that taxes not be levied by intimidation. The increase in sales tax on poultry feed and edibles should be withdrawn. The increase in turnover tax on flour mills should be withdrawn. This will increase inflation. Seventeen percent sales tax on gold is a total injustice. It is already beyond the reach of the common man. A fixed tax regime should be introduced

for this sector. The rate of penalty for missing or unavailability of commercial invoices is very high. As the shipment is legal and the payment is made through a bank. Therefore, this fine should be abolished. The target of Rs 500,000 set by the government for the installation of point of sales system (POS) is unrealistic and contrary to the ground realities. It should be reconsidered.

the Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) Dr. Murtaza Mughal said that two gas fields have been closed in Sindh, dams are not producing enough electricity due to water scarcity and there is a shortage of furnace oil in the country.

Sensing the opportunity, owners of an LNG terminal has planned to close their business in the garb of annual maintenance to profit from the situation. Closure of one terminal will discontinue supply to LNG-based power plants which will intensify the crisis to erode the popularity of the government, he said. Dr. Murtaza Mughal said that the gov-

ernment has closed down the LNG sector but soon it will have to shut industry and fertilizer sector to save some gas for power generation. The government should import furnace oil on war footing and direct the terminal operators to leave the maintenance of terminals to winter when the electricity demand is relatively low. Terminal owners avoid annual maintenance to save money therefore the government should direct them to follow the proper SOPs. Strict action should be initiated against terminal operators for jeopardizing energy security if they insist on closing business on the pretext of maintenance. - DNA

NAB authorizes 16 inquiries, 2 investigations

EBM presided over by NAB Chairman Justice (r) Javed Iqbal authorized conducting corruption reference against Muhammad Ramazan Sehato and others on the allegations of some 95 illegal recruitment in Education and Literacy Department Naushero Feroze, Sindh by abusing the authority

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: National Accountability Bureau (NAB) on Wednesday authorized conducting 16 inquiries and investigation against former provincial food minister, Sindh Nisar Ahmed Khoro and inquiry against front man of former federal minister Babar Ghori on charges of corruption and causing losses to national exchequer. Executive Board Meeting (EBM) presided over by NAB Chairman Justice (r) Javed Iqbal authorised conducting corruption reference against Muhammad Ramazan Sehato and others on the allegations of some 95 illegal recruitment in Education and Literacy Department Naushero Feroze, Sindh

by abusing the authority, which caused Rs 160 million losses to the national exchequer.

The EBM okayed conducting a total of 16 inquiries against various personalities including Ghulam Martaza Jatoi, former minister and others; Officers/officials of Sports, Works Department and others; Haji Khan Umrani, Abdul Jabbar Yousafzai and others; Khuda Bakhsh Nizamani, former member National Assembly; Khuda Bakhsh Rajar, former federal minister and others; officers/officials of Board of Revenue, Malir, Karachi and others; subsidy to 19 Sugar Mills (Mirpur Khas, Thatta, Khairpur, Sajawal and others), Pteam Das, Superintendent Engineer; officers/officials and others; Bagharari Gaesh Circle,

Kotri Barrage, Hyderabad Region; officers/officials of Department of Law, Government of Sindh; Sohail Mansoor, Rehan Mansoor Khawaja, (alleged frontman of Babar Ghori former federal minister) and others; Hassan Ali Sharif, private person (alleged frontman of Mukesh Kumar Chawla, Waheed Sheikh, Deputy Director Excise and Taxation Department, Sindh) and others; Sadia Fatima Sikandar, Usman Sikandar, Iram Fatima Sikandar, Khalilur Rehman and others; officers/officials of Revenue Department, Gothabad Scheme, Malir, Karachi; Management of Larkana Model Town Housing Scheme and Gulshan Mustafa Scheme and others; officers/officials of Mineral Department and Revenue department

Sindh and others; consultants AA Associates; Messarss Sardar Ashraf D Baloch, Contractor, Yousaf Ali; former member of construction company; Mukesh Kumar, General Manager Sindh South, NHA, Sukkur and the forum authorized conducting inquiries against Ayaz Memon, former Project Director, Riaz Ahmed Sehato, Project Director Finance Section, NHA. EBM of NAB also authorized conducting two investigations against various personalities including Nisar Ahmed Khoro, former Provincial Minister for Food, Sindh; officers/officials of Sindh Food Department; and others; while investigations were also Okayed against Syed Muzammil Shah, Executive Engineer, Provincial High-

way Division, Sukkur and others. EBM authorized transferring the inquiries against Munir Ahmed, Naeem Khan, Sanam and Sindh Development Organisation and others to Interior Ministry and National Insurance Company, Limited and against others to FIA for further proceedings. The EBM authorized closing the ongoing inquiries against Abdul Jabbar Shahani, Assistant Commissioner, Revenue, Site, Karachi and others owing to absence of evidence. The forum also authorized closing investigations against Abul Karkim Soomro, MPA, Sindh and others; officers and officials of Civil Aviation Authority; JS Bank and others, owners of Abdullah Shah Ghazi Sugar Mills and directors due to non-availability of any evidence.

Briefs

Govt for basic facilities to minorities

FAISAL MUNIR

ATTOCK: President Women Wing of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Attock chapter, Sadaf Zahra Jas Wednesday said that the government was ensuring provision of basic facilities to the minorities and also giving them religious freedom.

She said this while talking to a minority delegation here.

She said that gas facility has been provided in their temple which was their decade's long demand. She said that the credit goes to PTI government which materialized the promise made with Hindu community.

She said that gas facility would facilitate Hindu community to cremate their bodies easily as earlier they were facing financial and other problems in purchase of wood for this purpose.

She said that other problems faced by the Hindu community will also be resolved on priority.

CDA anti-encroachment drive in full swing

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Anti-encroachment operation by the Capital Development Authority (CDA) in collaboration with Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Administration was in full swing and actions were being taken across the city without any discrimination.

In this connection, CDA and ICT administration carried out a joint operation at sector G-11 and its adjoining areas and confiscated around one ton encroachment material, a news release said.

Similarly, several illegal structures were demolished in street number 14, 15 of sector G-9/2, besides dismantling a building in I-14/4 after serving prior notice to its owner.

The authority also retrieved green belt from loading vehicles near Jaffar Chowk, following public complaints.

Likewise, a boundary wall built on an area of one kanal in Bari Imam was razed down. A boundary wall in Muslim Colony and a room was also demolished.

In another operation several encroachments were removed from Bharakahu Athal Chowk to Jhugi Stop.

A room and a wall being built alongside a Nullah in sector G-6 was also dismantled. A foundation wall in sector H-9 while three boundaries wall in Jaba Teli and foundation wall of two houses were demolished during the drive.

IESCO issues power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Wednesday issued a power suspension programme for Thursday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work.

According to IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 08:00 AM to 01:00 PM, Kohistan, Kashif Gul, Mix Industrial, Model Town, Ghazi Kohli, Industrial Estate, Hussainabad, Islampura, KSB, Col. Sher Khan, Sarai Kharboza, Pind Padian, ECHS (D-18), Sangjani, Paswal, Shahullah Dutta, Bhitot, Millat Chowk, Line Park, KSM 1&2, Morat, Basharat, Cho Syedan Shah City Feeders, From 09:00 AM to 2:00 PM Treat, Gulf City, Mangial, T&T, Shahpur, Angori, Gulshanabad, Major Masood Kacyani, B.B. Shaheed, Rata, Race Course, Mangtal, D.M. Mills, Industrial Area, Carriage Factory, Gharial, Ailpur, Kirpa, Tufail Shaheed Feeders From 07:00 AM to 11:00 AM, Kontrilah Chak Daulat Feeders and surrounding areas. — APP



ISLAMABAD: Rector IIUI Prof. Dr. Masoom Yaasinzai and Dr. Sibel Bayram, representative Duzce University Turkey exchanging documents after signing ceremony of MoU for Meviana Exchange Program between the Iqbal International Institute for Research & Dialogue of the International Islamic University Islamabad and Duzce University Turkey. — APP

CDA to revamp Fatimah Jinnah Park to facilitate citizens

Park would be made a state-of-the-art facility by providing more recreational facilities and completing residual development work at the earliest, Chairman CDA

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) Amir Ali Ahmed on Wednesday visited Fatimah Jinnah (F-9) and directed for improved facilities in the park to facilitate the residents.

Park would be made a state-of-the-art facility by providing more recreational facilities and completing residual development work at the earliest, he directed. He said that all available resources would be utilized to make F-9 park, a model park of the city, which is spread over an area of 750 acres.

He directed to authorities concerned to upgrade and uplift the development work of Park before upcoming monsoon season and removed all wild bushes and grass from walking tracks as well. He conveyed his displeasure to the DG environment



and park manager over the incompleteness of work. They were instructed to ensure that no developed area remained unattended with in next 48 hours failing which disciplinary action would be taken against the responsible.

Chairman CDA also directed the concerned formation to ensure proper lighting system in the park particularly along the jogging and walking tracks.

He directed to install more light poles, plantation of more shady and fruit trees in the park. He further directed to carry out trimming of existing trees and removal of wild bushes to improve the general look of the park.

He also directed to make the green restaurant of Park functional and tender should be issued soon adding that civic body is committed to provide all basic facilities to its citizens.

Senate continues debate on federal budget

PTI Senator Mohsin Aziz lauded PM Imran Khan and his economic team for presenting pro-poor budget for the fiscal year 2021-22

ISLAMABAD: Senators of treasury and opposition benches in the Upper House on Wednesday continued debate on the federal budget for fiscal year 2021-22.

The treasury benches appreciated the government for presenting pro-people and business friendly budget, while the opposition lawmakers criticized that no relief was given to the masses.

Resuming budget debate, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Senator Mohsin Aziz lauded Prime Minister Imran Khan and his economic team for presenting pro-poor budget for the fiscal year 2021-22.

He said despite COVID-19 pandemic, the government has made record achievements and recovered the country economy.

He said that country's exports, foreign remittances and foreign exchanges reserves also recorded upward trends due to the prudent

policies of the government. He said that previous government had placed landmines for PTI government which were successfully removed and economy was on put back on right track.

Senator Mohsin severely criticized the previous governments for destroying country institutions and various sectors including health, education, trade and economy. He said that lawmakers should use their status for the welfare of the nation, instead of criticizing budget for the sake of speeches in the house.

He said that previous government had installed the world expensive power plants and caused huge losses to the national exchequer.

Participating in the budget debate, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Senator Faisal Javed Khan said that when PTI came to power, the country was facing serious economic

difficulties and challenges. He said the present government first mission was to recover the economy of the country. He said that the economy was on upward trajectory due to the pro-active policies of the present government.

He said that previous governments have ruined all the institutions in the past. He said that despite COVID-19 pandemic, the country economy had made record growth. He said that the whole world acknowledged and highly appreciated the successful strategy of Pakistan. He said that agriculture and industry also showed growth despite all the challenges.

Faisal Javed said that PTI government was constructing ten mega dams in the country. He said that Capital Development Authority (CDA) was facing huge deficit of 5.8 billion in 2017 and now surplus Rs. 73 billion. — APP

AIOU uploads assignments on website

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University has uploaded assignments of educational programs offered in spring 2021 semester on its website (www.aiou.edu.pk) including matriculation, intermediate, French online courses, bachelor, BS, BBA, B Ed, ATTC, CT, PTC and all post graduate programs. This measure is taken in continuation of university's digitalization project to provide educational facilities at the doorsteps of the students located in distant regions of the country. The university has also uploaded the schedule for the submission of assignments. The students are instructed to follow the deadlines as submission of late assignments will not be entertained and students will be held accountable for any issue arising out of late submission(s). Moreover, university has also expedited the process of assessment of semester terminal examinations of BA (Associate Degree) programs. — Shujaat Hamza

Govt utilizing all-out resources for education

FAISAL MUNIR

ATTOCK: The government was utilizing maximum resources for the development of education sector to enhance literacy rate and to ensure provision of quality education to the students.

CEO Education Attock, Malik Mohsin Abbas said this while addressing a function held in Govt Boys High School Dakhner in connection with distribution of LED lights to different schools provided by social welfare department of PPL (Pakistan Petroleum Department).

On the occasion education officers, school faculty and notables of the village were also present. CEO Malik Mohsin Abbas said that PPL working in this area has provided considerable funds for provision of furniture, schools bags, establishment of laboratories and a library in this school for which department is thankful to PPL administration.

He said that Govt Girls Mid-

dle School has been upgraded to high level and its new building is almost complete and soon secondary level classes will be started and said that four primary schools which include GBPS Amriti, GBPS Chhori Nilhad, GBPS Jabba and GBPS Namal have been reopened which were closed in the past due some unknown reasons.

He said that department is proud of those teachers working in these remote areas schools for promotion of education. He emphasized upon the teaching faculty to keep playing its positive role and increase enrollment of the students as now public sector schools have better facilities and highly qualified teachers. He praised the services of Headmaster Muhammad Ibrahim, DEO Secondary Akram Zia, DEO Elementary Kazim Shah, Dy DEO Abdul Khaliq and Dy DEO Kubra were of the view that teachers were the agents of change who were playing their vital role for spreading education.

IBCC warns to be aware from fake agents

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Inter Board Committee of Chairmen (IBCC) has warned the students and general public to be aware from the fake agents offering services for equivalence and attestation of certificates from IBCC.

In a public alert notice on Wednesday, IBCC informed that it has been notified that some individuals posing themselves as "agents" of IBCC are offering services to get equivalence certificates and attestation of documents from IBCC.

These individuals are also cheating the applicants by pasting fake IBCC Stamps/Tickets on original certificates, it added.

IBCC said that all such activities are criminal and such certificates shall lose their credibility and acceptability. All concerned are further advised in their own interest to be extremely careful in such mal-activities, as IBCC publicly announces that it has absolutely no agent or sub-agent, even use of official tickets is restricted up to authorized officials only. All are therefore warned to avoid such illegalities, such mal-activities will lead to criminal proceedings against agents or other involved individuals including cancellation of degree/certificate thereof, please.

Efforts to provide basic amenities to poor

ISLAMABAD: Optimum efforts were underway to support and rehabilitate the poor and needy people across the country, Managing Director Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM), Malik Zaheer Abbas Khokhar said Wednesday. Addressing the inaugural ceremony of 'Panahgah' centre in Abbottabad, he said Prime Minister's Ehsaas Program was a comprehensive package for the poor persons and bringing a positive difference in the lives of the backward and deprived people of the country.

He told that 'Panahgah' centers were being established throughout the country, in line with the direction of Prime Minister Imran Khan, to provide overnight accommodation and breakfast in neat and clean environment for all the needy people including passengers, students and daily-wagers. Further, dinner was also served to 400 persons on daily basis in 'Panahgah', he added.

Malik Zaheer Abbas also visited the school for the education of working children in Abbottabad and reviewed the facilities provided over here. Later, he also paid visit to Women Empowerment Centers of PBM in Abbottabad and Batgram and got a detailed briefing about the professional training courses being imparted there. "Women's financial empowerment was much needed in present circumstances, enabling them to undertake their own business ventures to help their families extricate from poverty trap", Malik Zaheer Abbas said while urging the trainees to work hard and diligently for a self-reliant and honorable life. — DNA

IGP for conducting courses for CTD

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Qazi Jameel-ur-Rehman has directed the SSP Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) to conduct refresher courses for personnel to enhance their capacity and professional skills. The courses should be based on modern guidelines to effectively respond counter-terrorism threats, the IGP said during his visit at CTD headquarters, the other day.

Senior-Superintendent of Police (SSP) CTD, Dr. Khurram Rashid briefed the IGP about functions and performance of the department. DIG Operations, Atfaal Ahmed Kausar, DIG headquarters and other senior officials of Islamabad police were also present on the occasion. "CTD was the backbone of Police force and has full potentiality to curb the activities of anti-social elements," IGP remarked. He lauded the role of CTD in maintaining law and order and prevention of terrorism related activities in the federal capital. — APP

Climate change in coastal belt of Sindh is grave

Nadeem Riyaz stressed the need to rationalize our approach to deal effectively with the climate challenge so that we could minimize the harmful impacts of environmental changes particularly in the coastal areas of Sindh

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: How the climate change is threatening the coastal belt of Sindh was the subject under discussion in the webinar organized by the Institute of Regional Studies, Islamabad in collaboration with the Centre of Coastal & Deltaic Studies (CCD), Thatta, and Centre for Environmental Sciences (CES), Jamshoro of University of Sindh.

In his opening remarks President IRS Ambassador Nadeem Riyaz stressed the need to rationalize our approach to deal effectively with the climate challenge so that we could minimize the harmful

impacts of environmental changes particularly in the coastal areas of Sindh.

Ms. Aisha Khan, CEO, Civil Society Coalition for Climate Change (CSCCC), has called for a greater understanding of climate change vulnerabilities and their impact on coastal areas. While highlighting the causes of increasing coastal vulnerabilities, she underscored hydrological changes due to global warming as well as the changes in atmospheric pressure that resulted in frequent storms and cyclones, as the leading cause of rapid degradation of coastal belts. The situation is alarming as 10 percent of total population of Sindh is living in

the vicinity of coastal areas along with heavy presence of industry that is around 40 percent, said Ms. Khan. Sindh's coastal areas are more prone to cyclones as compared to Baluchistan, she added. She called for a holistic strategic plan that must include coastal land reforms along with other important elements of coastal resilience such as increasing community capacity, and preserving nature.

Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed Mahar, Director at CCD was of the view that climate change has brought a significant change in the coastline morphology of Sindh's coastal belts. Dr. Mahar added that reduction in sediments, wave

activity, rise in the sea level, pollution & over exploitation of coastal resources and wind erosions were causing rapid degradation of Deltas. He cautioned further decrease in agricultural activities, livestock and fisheries due to increase in sea intrusions which he said would ultimately impact upon the livelihood of the people living in and around the coastal belts. He urged scientific intervention, and enhanced collaboration between the stakeholders to mitigate the adverse effect of climate change.

Dr. Amanullah, Asst. Professor at CES, apprised the audience that increased in the use of fossil fuels, and the deforestation was pri-

marily causing the environmental changes in Pakistan. Though, country's share in the rising global greenhouse gas emissions is minimal yet its impact is extremely consequential, he added. Sea intrusions, cyclones and coastal pollution were also echoed by Dr. Amanullah as the leading cause of coastal degradation along with the reduction in environmental flows, and exploitation of coastal resources. In his closing remarks, Dr. Amanullah called for strict compliance of national climate change policy introduced in the year 2012. Also, urged government, and NGOs to join hands for rehabilitation of 'environmental refugees in Pakistan.

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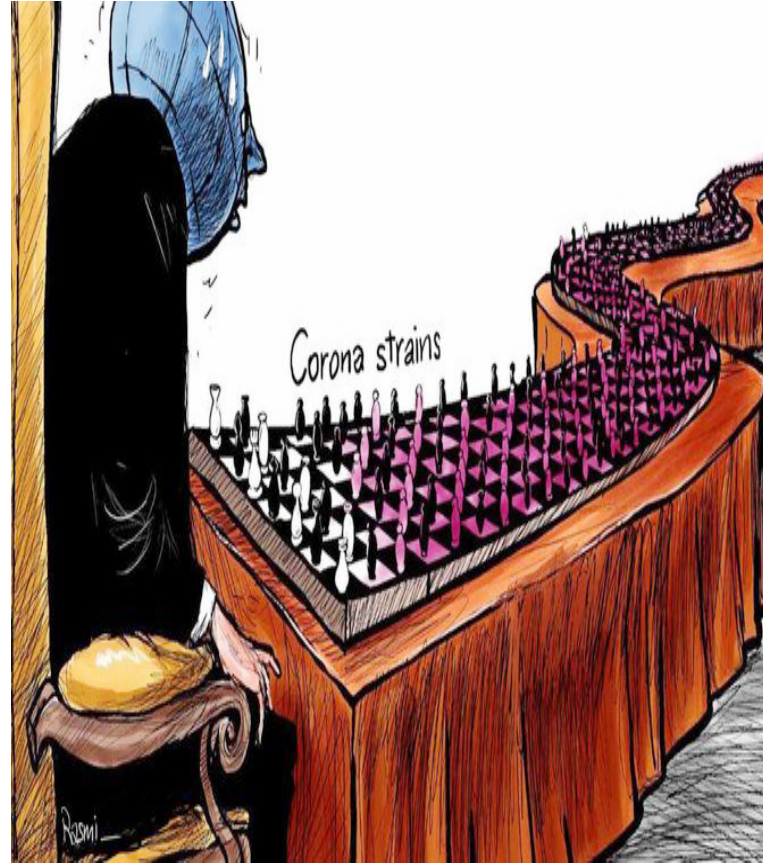
Import bill

DESPITE being an agricultural economy, Pakistan imported food items worth Rs1.2 trillion during the current fiscal year—a 24 percent increase overall. Despite the government's intentions of bringing the trade deficit down, it has widened to \$27.5 billion in comparison to the \$19 billion target. Our agriculture sector has always been our strength and to watch it fail like this is unacceptable. The government must act fast to encourage growth, effective distribution and exports.

Pakistan has always been self-sufficient in fulfilling national food needs and demands. In fact, our largest exports consisted of the produce of our land, which is reflective of the fact that the economy primarily survived on the back of the agricultural sector.

To now be in a position where basic commodities like wheat, pulses, palm oil, spices, dried fruit, milk and cream have to be imported to satisfy local demand is concerning. Already, our import bill is burdened by the hefty costs of crude oil—the price of which increased by 119 percent in the international market—mobile phones, vehicles and machinery. These are items that we are unable to produce or manufacture ourselves. However, when it comes to food commodities, we are more than capable of growing them ourselves. What has allowed us to fall so far behind that we have to rely on other countries to solve domestic food insecurity? The government must give answers.

The matters become much worse when we take into account the fact that the growth of our exports is half of the growth of imports, at best. This means that our current account deficit is likely to remain for the foreseeable future, or at least until we see a surge in exports. The government must realise that the only comparative advantage it has is being taken away. It is vital that the farmers, and the agricultural sector alike, are given incentives to enhance efforts and increase production. Otherwise, we may be nurturing a situation we cannot recover from later.



Kashmiri repression

IN yet another act of state terrorism, Indian troops martyred three Kashmiri youth in Sopore during a cordon and search operation. Such incidents have unfortunately now become a regular occurrence as the Indian state continues its inhumane treatment of innocent Kashmiri civilians under the guise of maintaining law and order.

Reports regarding the operation reveal that over 1000 individuals including women and children were beaten, and 150 were injured. The situation in IIOJK continues to be untenable and it is imperative that a political solution is sought at the earliest. Since August 5, 2019, Indian occupation forces have killed, tortured, and arbitrarily arrested hundreds of Kashmiris, in addition to putting almost the entire Kashmiri leadership behind bars.

Even the mainstream political parties in India now recognise the injustice being perpetrated by the sitting government. The Congress has asked the Modi government to restore the statehood to IIOJK because the revocation of Article 370 was a direct attack on the democracy and constitutional principles of India.

On our part, Pakistan must continue to advocate for a political resolution to this long-standing humanitarian issue at every available forum. Pakistan has time and again adopted a mature approach on this issue, and it is crucial for the international community to recognise that India is holding peace in the region hostage by its continued repression in Kashmir.

Tensions in the region are bound to escalate if the Modi government brings any further changes to the disputed territory. PM Imran Khan also made it clear in a recent interview that the situation in the region would significantly improve and there would be no need for nuclear deterrents if there were to be a political settlement on Kashmir. The PM rightly reminded the US of its responsibility in brokering a solution to this issue, because the international community has for far too long enabled the systematic violations of human rights in Kashmir by looking the other way.

Countering Islamophobia through Science Comm.

Dr M Ali Hamza



Therefore besides reiterating that 'Islam is a religion of Peace' we need to figure out ways to rebuild the entire image of Islam. Here is a way.

Rationally speaking, religious terrorism is an outcome of religious extremism, and religious extremism is a direct product of anti-scientific mind. Let us ground this thought. A scientific mind is one that carries inductive or deductive scientific reasoning

ISLAMOPHOBIA is the fear and hatred of, or prejudice against the religion of Islam or Muslims in general. Especially when seen as a geopolitical force or the source of terrorism. Firstly groups comprise of Christian-Jewish-Hindu-Budhists and white supremacists, who propagate Islamophobia are themselves meeting non-sense extremity. But this is what they are supposed to do, and blaming them will do no good to Islam. We have to openly admit that some Islamic factions are damaging the reputation of the entire religion i.e. ISIS and other violent Muslim groups. It is pretty obvious that these violent entities that are camouflaged in Islamic fabric have been funded with a purpose to mislead the Muslim masses and the world. Therefore besides reiterating that 'Islam is a religion of Peace' we need to figure out ways to rebuild the entire image of Islam. Here is a way. Rationally speaking, religious terrorism is an outcome of religious extremism, and religious extremism is a direct product of anti-scientific mind. Let us ground this thought. A scientific mind is one that carries inductive or deductive scientific reasoning. Scientific reasoning is an ability to think about many variables or dimensions at the same time or ability to think in terms of probabilities and proportions. Such way to approach life and all its tentacles bring profundity. This consolation of scientific reasoning can never let such a person go narrow-minded and turn into extremist or terrorist. This rationale fits to entire history. Wherever and whenever scientific struggles are rendered, the clerics call upon such inquisitive exploration a devilish and satanic act, and instigated masses, flared them up and terror prevailed. The example of Italian scientific philosopher Giordano Bruno is undeniable fact. When Bruno shared a possibility of Sun being in the center of our solar system and earth might not be a pivotal point in the universe; by

the order of church, he was burnt alive. The people of that time were OK with the barbarianism of the church because masses were kept away from scientific reasoning. Nicolaus Copernicus avoided publishing his great work due to the pressure of non-scientific society. He formulated a 'Heliocentric' model of the universe that placed the Sun rather than Earth at its center. Over his death bed he raised his master piece book 'De revolutionists' that opened up possibilities for the birth of today's satellite networks. Galileo Galilei proved through his first ever long range telescope that the moon is not all that sweet. It was again a proof against the church, who bragged about heavenly bodies a lot. Thus Galileo was kept in house-prison and died there. Masses kept quiet: though the church was harvesting fear and hatred of, or prejudice against the Christianity but it was acceptable by the followers because they were blind folded with the prejudice against scientific reasoning. Yes, this is reference from the dark ages in Europe.

During those dark ages in Europe, a popular region for scientific development was Arab and Persia dominated by Muslims. Those scientific developments were occurring almost in every field, from mathematics, chemistry, physics, engineering, medicine, neuroscience, to psychology, economics, sociology, geography, earth sciences, astronomy, and philosophy. Some great minds of those times include Al-Battani who improved existing values for the length of the year and of the seasons, Ibn Sinawho significantly contributed to Aristotelian philosophy and medicine, Ibn Battuta; a scholarly traveler who wrote one of the most famous travel books in history 'the Rihlah', Ibn Rushd who produced a series of summaries and commentaries on most of Aristotle's works and on Plato's Republic, Musa Al-Khwarizmi; one who introduced Hindu-Arabic numerals and the concepts of algebra

into European mathematics, Omar Khayyam; a Persian mathematician, astronomer, and poet, Thabit Ibn Qurra; the founder of statics, Abu Bakr Al-Razi; one of the greatest physicians in history, Jabir Ibn Haiyan known for his highly influential works on alchemy and metallurgy, Ibn Ishaq Al-Kindi who stands among the first muslim peripatetic philosophers, Ibn Al-Haythem contributed to principles of optics and the use of scientific experiments, Ibn Zuhr is known for his immense work on Therapeutics and Diet, Ibn Khuldun who developed one of the earliest nonreligious philosophies of history and the list goes on and on. Those all wonderful people are considered as one of the forerunners of modern way of thinking in science and technology. Those were Muslims belonged to the same religion Islam, but were respected and honored due to their diligence of wisdom. Today's Islam is distorted by anti-scientific minds, and we have to admit that we are in dark ages. Our global impression is no more spelled out by our scientific work rather something else.

The above premises builds up the need to connect Muslim societies with science, and that is what science communication does. Science communication must be on the top agenda for rebuilding image of Islam. We have to invest our resources; will, energies, finances, to encourage our masses toward scientific reasoning. Only uttering out words won't make a difference. Therefore Besides relying on developing alliances with Christians, Buddhists, atheists, Hindus, Jews and others who believe in the sanctity of life and who are willing to confront their own to seek dignity for every human being. There is another way and that is of Science Communication.

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Terrorism has no religion

Wajeaha Bilal



People are not born extremists; humans are just people who all want to be valued and respected. There are many reasons that could be causing an excuse for a hateful outlet. The biggest reason for an extremist attitude cultivates through an extremist ideology that spurs the idea of us AGAINST others

sionable stories from childhood, that huff and puff in our brains and are never forgotten. The human mind has an incredible and voracious desire to understand one's ideology through its past. History of religion and culture have long played a role in understanding our individual differences and collective similarities. At the same time, our existence with other cultures and religions, challenges pretty much every preconceived notion of our cultural and religious superiority. The world is a canvas of different religions and their influences, which is big enough for everyone, yet some people feel threatened by the idea of coexisting with those whom they do not understand. This can lead to a sense of fear amongst a few that goes on to develop the basis of excluding others and an extremist attitude in any society.

People are not born extremists; humans are just people who all want to be valued and respected. There are many reasons that could be causing an excuse for a hateful outlet. The biggest reason for an extremist attitude cultivates through an extremist ideology that spurs the idea of us AGAINST others. It develops between two races or religions either because one feels superior to or victimized by the other. This type of emotion breeds fear and insecurities that results in an offensive behavior. Another major reason that develops an extremist attitude is politics and poverty when people are frustrated by injustice and discrimination. Biases develop due to fraudulent governments and unequal rights of citizens. Whatever the reason, extremist minds are tuned by frustrated messages that look for excuses to develop hate.

In an exclusive interview with CBC's political correspondent Rosemary Barton, our Prime Minister, discussed Islamophobia and called

on the Western countries to take strict actions against hate crimes towards the Muslim community. He had stressed that terrorism has no religion as extremists are found in every society. The prime minister said the use of the term "Islamic radicals" indicates there is something wrong with the religion which makes people radical, and the Muslims have suffered due to Islamophobia, he called for closing the gap by improving understanding; 'Islamophobia needs to be countered holistically'.

In fact, terrorism and extremism have no religion, race, or culture. Humanity is one race that descended from the same ancestors so what is it that has turned them against each other over time. All the atrocious developments make us wonder if we could ever go back in time and erase the moment or the events that lead to the rising of hate in humanity. Despite its global connection and advancement in technology there is a global platform for the execution of extremist ideology. The whole world is connected virtually through the network of technology bridging the physical gaps through planes yet there is a vast emptiness and loneliness that people experience around others. This strange, isolated existence marks the reality of the present world, people feel helpless and angry with life in general and others in particular. The message of hate that was found in cultural and historical teachings of the societies is now visible on social media and global platforms. Everyone feels the need to do something, but they are not able to understand what. This gap between emotional and perceived differences can only be solved through a change in education. This does not mean the compromise of education rather a change of its message. What does it mean to live with so many people in this

world- we all need to look back on the historical idea of why so many races have come to exist here? You have come to follow a tradition or religion merely because you were born into it. The miracle of human birth is more than just an accident when this life is used to make a difference. You are the most advanced species and being in a position of power you have the duty to elevate your fellow beings. Respect for others is that one bridge that serves strangers in foreign lands; this is the kind of education that is bound to leave a deep impact in one's life.

The essence of life is not that one race survives on the ashes of the other, but its essence is that we are all together here. Our history has always revealed the differences of human culture, religion, and behavior, yet each human is individually unique. What it genuinely wants us to understand is the gift of life, that we have come to share here in our own way. Each of our experiences of life is unique in its own way.

Our ideology serves the purpose of dignifying our unique entity and our co-existence teaches us to value this uniqueness. With this message we learn where our place in this world is, which is in alliance with the lives of others. It is our center of the world that we choose to share with others through our words and actions. In the end we all have come to inherit this fabulous legacy of unique behavior and identity. It is embedded in our very existence that we call humanity, despite all differences. We may not be able to wipe out all the hateful differences but what we can do is give our own message of hope and unity in our own unique way so that no one cares how many racial and religious differences have developed over time.

(Wajeaha is the author of "The Conscious Ego", "The Beautiful Present")

GROWING up and high with the passage of time, we develop a powerful sense of who we are and where we have come from. Our memories are built with impres-

Briefs

England
beat Czech
Republic to
top group

SPORTS DESK

LONDON: England clinched the top spot of Group D at Euro 2020 with a 1-0 win over the Czech Republic on Tuesday, while Luka Modric saved Croatia with a sensational goal and an assist in their 3-1 victory over Scotland. Thus Croatia also reached the last 16 as the runners-up of the group and the Czech Republic, despite the defeat to England, still advanced to the knock-out stages as one of the four best third-placed teams. The clash between England and the Czechs was to decide the winners of the group as both teams have already assured a place in the last 16 into the match. Aston Villa playmaker Jack Grealish and Arsenal teenager Bukayo Saka started for England and Manchester United defender Harry Maguire was back to the starting line-up after recovering from injury. The Three Lions dominated the pitch since the start with Raheem Sterling hit the woodwork after two minutes. Ten minutes later, Grealish shot a fine cross into the box with Sterling jumping behind Saka to head home from close range.

New Zealand
beats India to
win inaugural
ITC

SOUTHAMPTON: Kane Williamson (52, 89b) and Ross Taylor (47, 100b) guided New Zealand to the inaugural World Test Championship (WTC) title with an eight-wicket win over India in Southampton on Friday. Needing 139 to win, New Zealand lost openers Devon Conway and Tom Latham cheaply to R. Ashwin before Williamson and Taylor soaked up the pressure with an unbeaten 96-run stand. Taylor, who was dropped on 26 by Cheteshwar Pujara at first slip, hit the winning runs. Earlier, Rishabh Pant made an entertaining 41 but India still fell well short of the 200-mark in its second innings. Kyle Jamieson had been the wrecker-in-chief in India's first innings and the towering seamer returned to haunt the opposition again on the sixth morning. The 6' 8" (2.03m) bowler dismissed Virat Kohli (13) and Cheteshwar Pujara (15) in successive overs to jolt India. The bowler was denied a third wicket when Tim Southee dropped Pant at second slip when the batsman was on five. The left-hander decided to counter-attack, stepping out repeatedly against Neil Wagner injecting excitement into the contest. Pant attempted the scoop shot, played the reverse-pull and nearly ran himself out in his eventual knock which came to an end after an inspired bowling change by New Zealand captain Kane Williamson. Trent Boult (3-39) dismissed Pant and Ravichandran Ashwin in the same over before Southee (4-48) polished off the tail dismissing Mohammed Shami and Jasprit Bumrah in a space of five balls. This was the first sixth day of Test cricket since the drawn match between India and West Indies in Kanpur in 1979. - APP

Germany
approves
next phase
of fighter jet

BERLIN: German lawmakers on Wednesday approved the next phase of a project to build a joint European fighter jet with France and Spain, brushing aside domestic scepticism over the plan. The budget committee in the Bundestag lower house of parliament gave the green light for the project, known as the Future Combat Air System (FCAS), to progress to research and development phases 1B and 2 between 2021 and 2027. According to a government document seen by AFP, the next steps in the project are set to cost Germany a total of almost 4.5 billion euros (\$5.3 billion). France and Germany announced plans to build a common fighter in 2017, with Spain joining later. - APP

Enhanced Pakistan-Turk co-op
vital for regional peace: COAS

The dignitaries appreciated Pakistan's positive role for regional peace and stability, especially the Afghan peace process and pledged to continue working for better relations between two brotherly countries

DNA

ANKARA: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General QamarJavedBajwa reiterated that enhanced Pakistan-Turk cooperation will have positive impact on regional peace and stability. The army chief expressed it during a meeting with General HulusiAkcar (Retired), Minister of National Defence of the Republic of Turkey during a daylong official visit to the country. General Yasar Guler, Commander Turkish General Staff and General Umit Dundar, Commander of the Turkish Land Forces were also present in the meeting, said ISPR in a statement. During the meeting, matters of mutual interests, regional security situation including recent developments in Afghan Peace Process and bilateral defence and security cooperation in various fields were discussed. COAS also acknowledged the Turkish engagements with Pakistan especially the ongoing efforts for continuing the positivity



for peace in the region. The dignitaries appreciated Pakistan's positive role for regional peace and stability, especially the Afghan peace process and pledged to continue working for better relations between two brotherly countries. Earlier on arrival, COAS was also presented with a Guard of Honour by a smartly turned out military contingent.

Pak minister attends MILEX
2021 Exhibition in Minsk

MILEX 2021 is featuring over 300 samples of cutting-edge weapons, military hardware, and special hardware of Belarusian make alone. As many as 177 of them are showcased for the first time

DNA

MINSK: Ms. Zobaida Jalal, Federal Minister for Defence Production of Pakistan attended the opening ceremony of International Defense Technology Expo (MILEX-2021) in Minsk. Ambassador of Pakistan to Belarus Sajjad Haider Khan accompanied the Minister. The event was opened by the Prime Minister of Belarus Mr. Roman Golovchenko, which will continue till 26 June. Subsequent to the opening ceremony, the honorable Minister visited a few stalls in the expo pavilion and received briefings on the displayed products. She also held bilateral meetings with Mr. Andrei Zhuk, Acting Minister of Defense



of the Republic of Belarus, and Mr. Anatoli Akaronka, Director General of "Beltechexport" Company at the expo venue. During these interactions, the Minister appreciated the quality of products on display at the exhibition and also expressed Pakistan's desire to promote mutually beneficial friendly ties with Belarus in all domains including economic, trade, and defence sectors. MILEX 2021 is featuring over 300 samples of cutting-edge weapons, military hardware, and special hardware of Belarusian make alone. As many as 177 of them are showcased for the first time while eighty-eight products are upgraded versions.

Turkey pumps oxygen
into Marmara sea

WEB DESK

ANKARA: Five devices will release oxygen into the sea-snot covered Marmara to help marine life impacted by the mucilage off the coasts of Istanbul and northwestern Kocaeli province. Turkey has placed devices to release oxygen into the sea-snot covered Marmara to help marine life impacted by the mucilage off the coasts of Istanbul and northwestern Kocaeli province. The devices were placed at five different points in the Gulf of Izmit and off Pendik to contain the mucilage. Mucilage has increased around the coast of historical Gallipoli peninsula in northwestern Canakkale province since Monday. Mucilage prevents oxygen transfer by covering the area from the sea surface to 30 metres deep in the Marmara, killing non-motile or immobile organisms such as mussels, oysters, and pines, particularly sponges and corals. Mucilage has spread in the area between Gallipoli and Eceabat in Canakkale. Sea snot has also observed in areas of fishery production. Although there have been reports of mucilage reaching the Black Sea and the Aegean, which are connected by the Marmara, experts do not expect a large expansion there due to differences in condition and geography. Mucilage is an overgrowth of microscopic algae called phytoplankton caused by rising seawater temperatures due to global warming, stagnant water, and pollution.



LONDON: England's Bukayo Saka passes the ball over the defense of Czech Republic's Vladimir Darida during the Group D match between England and the Czech Republic at the UEFA EURO 2020 in London. - DNA

'Israel delaying aid could reignite fighting'

"Soldiers are in exchange for Palestinian prisoners," said Abu Zarifa. In a separate statement, Hamas's leader in Gaza Yahya Sinwar said: "The enemy will not succeed in its policy of blackmail and arm-twisting, and we will not accept pressure on our people or attempts to link files"

WEB DESK

GAZA CITY: Palestinian factions in the Gaza Strip have warned Israel against delays in lifting restrictions imposed on the Hamas-ruled coastal enclave and impeding reconstruction after last month's devastating attacks. The warning was issued after leaders of various factions in the Gaza Strip met in a Hamas office to discuss the latest developments surrounding a ceasefire reached in May between Israel and Hamas, which ended the 11-day Israeli assault on Gaza. The Palestinian factions presented a list of demands to Israel that included the reopening of border crossings, allowing the transfer

of financial aid from Qatar, and the reopening of Gaza's fishing zone. The factions warned if Israel refuses to comply with their demands, they would resume launching incendiary balloons into Israel and organise rallies at the fence with Israel. The groups also issued a veiled threat to renew rocket fire. Palestinian factions said they rejected attempts to link reconstruction efforts in Gaza to a prisoner swap. "We will not accept pressure on our people or any attempt to link files with each other," the factions said in a statement. Israel has demanded that Hamas hand over two Israeli civilians and the bodies of two soldiers held by the group. Israeli media also reported that United Nations and

Egyptian mediators told Hamas the rebuilding of Gaza should be linked to a prisoner-exchange agreement with Israel. "Our people are ready to challenge and impose more equations. Our great people will never be silent and the enemy will see that we are ready for all options, and we will resist it by all popular and other means," the factions added. Talal Abu Zarifa, a senior member of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, told Anadolu news agency while Israel wants to link the reconstruction of Gaza and the opening of its crossings to the exchange of Israeli soldiers, Palestinians will not agree to it. "Soldiers are in exchange for Palestinian prisoners," said Abu Zarifa. In a separate statement,

Hamas's leader in Gaza Yahya Sinwar said: "The enemy will not succeed in its policy of blackmail and arm-twisting, and we will not accept pressure on our people or attempts to link files." Reporting from Gaza, Al Jazeera correspondent Wael al-Dahdouh said the Palestinian factions agreed to give mediators a chance to find a solution, but they added "the resistance" was ready for all options, in reference to a possible renewal of attacks. The meeting came a day after Hamas said its talks with the United Nations over the humanitarian situation in the besieged Gaza Strip had failed. Sinwar said a meeting in Gaza City with a senior UN delegation - including the UN special coordinator for the Middle East

peace process, Tor Wennesland - was "completely negative" and accused Israel of "blackmailing the Palestinian factions including Hamas" over solving the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza. The latest developments come less than a month after Israel and Hamas agreed to a ceasefire that ended an 11-day Israeli assault on Gaza on May 21. The Israeli onslaught killed at least 256 Palestinians, including 66 children. Thirteen people were killed in Israel, including two children. The Israeli attacks also destroyed 1,148 housing and commercial units in Gaza and partially damaged 15,000 others, leaving more than 100,000 civilians displaced in UN-run schools and other hosting communities.

Russia
ship fires
shots at UK
warship

FOREIGN DESK

MOSCOW: The Russian military said one of its warships in the Black Sea fired warning shots and a warplane dropped bombs Wednesday to force a British destroyer away from an area near Crimea that Moscow claims as its territorial waters, but Britain denied that account and insisted its ship wasn't fired upon. It was the first time since the Cold War that Moscow acknowledged using live ammunition to deter a NATO warship, reflecting the growing risk of military incidents amid soaring tensions between Russia and the West. The Russian Defense Ministry said a patrol ship fired warning shots after the British destroyer HMS Defender had ignored a notice against intrusion and sailed 3 kilometers (1.6 nautical miles) into Russia's territorial waters near Sevastopol, the main Russian naval base in Crimea. It said a Russian Su-24 bomber also dropped four bombs ahead of the British ship's path to persuade it to change course. Minutes later, the British warship left the Russian waters, the ministry said.

Afghan
peace must
be SCO's
top priority

FROM PAGE 01

He stressed the need to counter pandemic's negative economic impact and highlighted Prime Minister Imran Khan's efforts to champion the Global Initiative for Debt Relief. Dr. Yusuf said that the vision of the transformed Pakistan was centered on economic security, adding that the country's emphasis had shifted from geo-politics to geo-economics. As a country historically most affected by developments within Afghanistan, Pakistan is fully committed to supporting a stable, peaceful, sovereign, and united Afghanistan at peace with itself and with the neighbors. "It is our firm view that a negotiated political settlement that is Afghan led and Afghan owned is the only way to achieve this desired outcome", he added. He cautioned against spoilers, both within and outside Afghanistan, adding that unfortunately, not everyone in the region who professes to prefer peace in Afghanistan does so in reality. He added that Pakistan cannot allow Afghan soil to be used against it. Dr. Yusuf said that Pakistan condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including state terrorism against people under illegal occupation. Pakistan has been a victim of terrorism planned, supported and sponsored from across our borders which unfortunately remains a reality even today and has at its roots actors who may present themselves as advocates of global cooperation against terrorism but in reality perpetuate it to create instability in our country and the region, he added.

Qatar slams
UAE produced
Hollywood film

AGENCIES

DOHA: A Hollywood film co-produced by an Emirati film company has been condemned as "immoral" and "absurd" for portraying Qatar as a "terrorist state". The Misfits, co-produced, filmed, and financed by the UAE-based FilmGate Production in partnership with Paramount Pictures and Highland Film Group, tells the story of savvy thief Richard Pace, played by Pierce Brosnan, who escapes from a high-security US prison and goes on to steal millions from the world's most secure facilities. In the film, the director refers to Qatar as "Jazeeraistan" and accuses its citizens of supporting "terrorist organisations" while Abu Dhabi's mercenaries are depicted as heroes, Doha News reported. It added that the film portrays Qatar-based Egyptian Muslim scholar Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi as "the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood and the sponsor of global terrorism". The report cited Egyptian journalist, Mohamed Nasser, as saying in a video posted online that The Misfits is nothing more than an attempt by the UAE to "destroy Qatar's reputation".

Briefs

Uzbekistan, Russia sign MoU on agri products

DNA

TASHKENT: Agrological operator UzAgroLogistics Centers, Russian Railways Logistics and Russian Export Center (REC) signed an agreement on cooperation in the development of the Russia-Uzbekistan logistics corridor and transportation of agricultural export and import cargo in the accelerated refrigerated container trains "Agroexpress". This will allow bringing the services for the delivery of export products of the agro-industrial complex of Uzbekistan and the acceptance of oncoming import goods from Russia to a new quality level.

The first test "Agroexpress" (about 40 wagons) from Uzbekistan to Russia is planned to be launched in the fall of 2021. The same train will ensure the counter flow of imports from Russia to Uzbekistan. The memorandum was signed by the general directors of UzAgroLogistics Centers LLC, REC JSC, RZD Logistics JSC Noufalbek Sabirov, Veronika Nikishina and Dmitry Murev.

"The project was worked out by the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Uzbekistan, JSC Russian Export Center and JSC Russian Railways Logistics, which during the negotiations determined the need for bilateral assistance in the development of direct supplies of agro-food products and reducing re-export through third countries," said Noufalbek Sabirov.

Former Mauritanian president jailed

FOREIGN DESK

NOUAKCHOTT: Mauritania's former President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz has been jailed after a judge in charge of a corruption probe ordered his incarceration. The ex-leader says he is being persecuted in a bid to keep him out of politics but has vowed he would not go into exile.

A prosecutor speaking on condition of anonymity and the spokesman of the former president's party, Djibril Ould Bilal, confirmed his detention on Tuesday without citing the reason. Aziz has twice gone before a magistrate investigating the case since the charges, including money laundering, were brought in March. The move comes days after the former leader refused to continue reporting to police after being put under house arrest.

Aziz ruled the conservative West African state from 2008 to mid-2019, when he was succeeded by his former right-hand man and ex-defence minister Mohamed Ould Cheikh El Ghazouani.

HK first trial under new law starts

WEB DESK

HONG KONG: Hong Kong's first trial under its harsh national security law began on Wednesday in a trial without a jury. Tong Ying-kit faces life in jail but has pleaded not guilty to inciting secession and terrorism, as well as a charge of dangerous driving. He is accused of riding a motorbike into several police, flying a flag about the "liberation" of Hong Kong. Beijing says the national security law criminalises "subversive" acts but critics say it silences dissent. The law came into force after a series of mass pro-democracy protests in 2019, some of which turned violent. Beijing and Hong Kong authorities say the law - widely criticised internationally - was needed to bring stability. Mr Tong was arrested on 1 July 2020, accused of riding his motorbike into a group of police and injuring some of them. The 24-year old is also alleged to have been carrying a flag that read "Liberate Hong Kong, revolution of our times".

Pak to continue to stand with Palestinian brethren: Envoy

He reiterated Pakistan's commitment to continue to stand in solidarity with its Palestinian brethren until the fruition of their just struggle



DNA

LONDON: High Commissioner Moazzam Ahmad Khan received a delegation of the leaders of British-Palestinian/Muslim communities, led by Mr. Zaher Birawi at

the High Commission on 22 June 2021. On behalf of the Palestinian Forum in Britain, the delegation expressed its gratitude to the leadership, government and people of Pakistan for their principled stance and support to the cause of Palestine, and stated that Pakistan's unwaver-



ing commitment to the Palestinian issue was greatly appreciated. The High Commissioner reaffirmed Pakistan's long-standing position that an independent, viable and contiguous Palestinian State, with pre-1967 borders and Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, was the

only just, comprehensive and lasting solution of the Palestine issue. High Commissioner Moazzam Ahmad Khan reiterated Pakistan's commitment to continue to stand in solidarity with its Palestinian brethren until the fruition of their just struggle.

Battle for Yemen's Marib flares up as 90 fighters killed

MARIB: Fighting between Yemeni loyalists and Houthi rebels seeking to take the strategic northern city of Marib has killed 90 fighters in two days, pro-government military sources said. The Iran-allied insurgents escalated their efforts to seize Marib, the government's last stronghold in northern Yemen, in February, and the fighting has killed hundreds on both sides. Control of the oil-rich region would strengthen the Houthis' bargaining position in peace talks, but the battle has also raised fears of a humanitarian catastrophe, as many Yemenis had fled to the area to escape fighting in other parts of the country.

On Tuesday, loyalist officials said that pro-government forces had repelled Houthi attacks north of the city in clashes that left 63 rebel and 27 loyalist fighters dead since Monday. That came despite relative calm in recent weeks amid efforts by the United Nations and Washington to reach a ceasefire. One loyalist official said that Houthi attacks had hit a "high rate" since Monday. Yemen's conflict flared in 2014 when the Houthis seized the capital Sanaa, prompting a Saudi-led military intervention to prop up the government the following year. The fighting has killed tens of thousands and left some 80 percent of Yemenis dependent on aid, in what the UN calls the world's worst humanitarian crisis. The war has also displaced millions of people and left the country on the brink of famine. On #WorldRefugeeDay, let's not forget +300k #refugees & migrants and 4 million IDPs living in dire need of humanitarian & protection assistance in #Yemen. While the UN and Washington are pushing for an end to the war, the Houthis have demanded the re-opening of Sanaa airport, closed under a Saudi blockade since 2016, before any ceasefire or negotiations. On Tuesday, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan said Riyadh was determined to "stop the war and move to the political track" - but that this "has sadly not met with agreement from the Houthi side". - Agencies

'Sabotage attack' on Iranian nuclear building foiled

Iran has accused Israel of several attacks on facilities linked to its nuclear program and killing its nuclear scientists over the past years. Israel has neither denied nor confirmed

FOREIGN DESK

TEHRAN: A sabotage attempt against a building belonging to the Iranian Atomic Energy Organization has been foiled, Iranian media reported.

An Iranian news site close to security services said authorities thwarted a "sabotage attack" on the country's civilian nuclear programme on Wednesday, without providing further information. Social media channels linked to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) said a drone tried to attack the building. Another report said no "loss of life or property damage" was inflicted. Nournews, a website believed to be close to Iran's Supreme National Security Council, reported the attack was halted "before causing any damage to the building".

"Investigations are ongoing to identify the perpetrators and determine the facts surrounding the incident," said Nournews.

When asked for comment, an Iranian official referred to the Nournews report. The official spoke on condition of anonymity as they did not have authorisation to discuss the matter with the media.

No further details on the nature of the sabotage attempt or how it was averted were given. Iran's English-Language Press TV reported "the hostile attempt occurred on early Wednesday, but did not result in any casualties or damage owing to tight security precautions adopted following similar acts of sabotage against Iranian nuclear sites and scientists". Iran has accused Israel of several attacks on facilities

linked to its nuclear program and killing its nuclear scientists over the past years. Israel has neither denied nor confirmed the allegations.

Iran's semi-official ISNA news agency said the building under attack was located near Karaj City, 40km (25 miles) west of the capital Tehran. The website of state-owned IRAN newspaper published the same report without offering the location or other details.

Iran's Atomic Energy Organization describes the Karaj city facility as a centre founded in 1974 that deals with the improvement of the "quality of soil, water, agricultural and livestock production using nuclear technology".

The reports come after a series of suspected sabotage attacks targeting Iran's nuclear programme in recent months. In April,

Iran's underground Natanz nuclear facility experienced a mysterious blackout that damaged some of its centrifuges.

Iran described the blackout as an act of "nuclear terrorism", raising regional tensions as world powers and Tehran negotiated a return to its tattered 2015 nuclear deal with world powers.

Israel is widely believed to have carried out the sabotage that caused the outage, though it has not claimed it. Last year, Natanz suffered a mysterious explosion at its advanced centrifuge assembly plant that authorities later described as sabotage. Iran now is rebuilding that facility deep inside a nearby mountain.

Iran also blamed Israel for the November killing of a scientist who began the country's military nuclear programme decades earlier.



KABUL: Pakistan ambassador to Afghanistan Mansoor Ahmad Khan calls on Turkish ambassador to Afghanistan Cihad Erginay and discussed our collective efforts for lasting peace, stability and progress in Afghanistan. - DNA

EU threatens action against Hungary's LGBT+ bill

AGENCIES

BRUSSELS: The European Union's chief executive on Wednesday threatened legal action against Hungary for legislation that restricts young people's access to information about LGBT+ issues. Last week, the Hungarian parliament approved the controversial bill, which has to be signed by the president to take effect. "This Hungarian bill is a shame," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said in a news conference.

"This bill clearly discriminates against people based on their sexual orientation. It goes against the fundamental values of the European Union: human dignity, equality and respect for human rights," von der Leyen said. "I will use all the powers of the Commission to ensure that the rights of all EU citizens are guaranteed. Whoever they are and wherever they live within the European Union."

Hungary's right-wing Prime Minister Viktor Orban said in an interview with German news agency dpa that the bill was aimed at protecting children.

'Iranian disinformation': US seizes 3 dozen websites

FOREIGN DESK

WASHINGTON: US Justice Department seized 33 Iranian government-affiliated media websites, as well as three of the Iraqi group Kataeb Hezbollah, which it said were hosted on US-owned domains in violation of sanctions. The websites were held by the Iranian Islamic Radio and Television Union (IRTVU), which is reportedly run by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corp's Quds Force (IRGC). "Components of the government of Iran ... disguised as news organisations or media outlets targeted the United States with disinformation campaigns and malign influence operations," the Justice Department said in a statement. Iran's foreign ministry on Wednesday called the seizure an example of a "systematic effort to distort freedom of speech on a global level and silence independent voices in media". Spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh in a statement said the "shameful" move by Washington shows that the Biden

administration is continuing former President Donald Trump's path, and vowed Iran will pursue the issue through legal channels.

Both IRTVU and IRGC have been placed on the US sanctions blacklist, making it illegal for Americans, US companies, and foreign or non-American companies with US subsidiaries to have business with them or their subsidiaries.

Visitors to leading Iranian media sites such as Press TV and Al-Alam, the country's main English language and Arabic language broadcasters, as well as the Al-Masirah TV channel of Yemen's Houthis, were met with single-page statements on Wednesday, declaring the website "has been seized by the United States Government" accompanied by the seals of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the US Commerce Department. Kataeb Hezbollah, the Iraqi group which owned three sites that were seized, is a military faction with close ties to Tehran that Washington has formally designated a terror

group. The US government also took over the domain name of the news website Palestine Today, which reflects the viewpoints of Gaza-based groups Hamas and Islamic Jihad, redirecting the site to the same notice. Bahrain's LuaLua TV, a channel run by opposition

allies in the region". IRIB said it will not let the media of the so-called "resistance axis" be silenced. On the website of their political wing, Yemen's Houthi rebels branded the action "American piracy and copyright confiscation". "The government of the Unit-



groups with offices in London and Beirut, was also seized by the US. State-run Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) accused the United States of repressing freedom of expression and joining forces with Israel and Saudi Arabia "to block pro-resistance media outlets exposing the crimes of US

States of America is banning the Al-Masirah website without any justification or even prior notice," they said. A-Masirah quickly established a new website, using its name but swapping the .net domain for .com. Meanwhile LuaLua and Al-Masirah continued to broadcast new programmes.

Last October, the Department of Justice announced it had taken down nearly 100 websites linked to Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guard. The US said the sites, operating under the guise of genuine news outlets, were waging a "global disinformation campaign" to influence US policy and push Iranian propaganda around the world.

The move came just days after the election victory of Iran's hardline judiciary chief, Ebrahim Raisi, known for his hostility to western countries. Raisi's election is seen as a blow to efforts to resurrect Tehran's tattered 2015 nuclear deal, from which former US President Donald Trump withdrew in 2017.

Raisi took a hardline position in his first news conference. He ruled out the possibilities of meeting US President Joe Biden or negotiating over Tehran's ballistic missile programme and support for regional militias - concerns the Biden administration wants to address in future talks. Relations between Iran and the US have deteriorated for

years following Trump's unilateral withdrawal from the nuclear deal and reimposition of devastating US sanctions. That decision has seen Iran, over time, gradually abandon the agreed limit on uranium enrichment even as it continued negotiations with European nations attempting to salvage the deal. The country is now enriching uranium to 60 percent, its highest level ever, although still short of weapons-grade levels. The US and EU partners have attended six rounds of informal talks in Vienna in recent weeks. Iranian and US officials have not met face-to-face. Diplomats said on June 20 the talks had made progress and a decision was now up to the governments involved.

Press TV, launched in June 2007, is perhaps the most well known of the seized sites. It is the state-run Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting's (IRIB) English-language service. There are no private television or radio stations in Iran. Satellite dishes, while widespread, also are illegal. That leaves IRIB with a monopoly on domestic airwaves.

Air strike in Tigray kills dozens of people

WEB DESK

ADDIS ABABA: Blitz on a busy market comes amid some of the fiercest fighting in Tigray since the conflict began as Ethiopian forces supported by those from neighbouring Eritrea pursue Tigray's former leaders. An air strike hit a busy market in Ethiopia's northern Tigray village of Togoga, health workers have reported, saying soldiers blocked medical teams from travelling to the scene.

Dozens of people were killed, the health workers and a former resident said on Wednesday, citing witnesses.

Two doctors and a nurse in Tigray's regional capital, Mekele, said they were unable to confirm how many people were killed, but one doctor said health workers at the scene reported "more than 80 civilian deaths." The health workers spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of retaliation. The alleged airstrike comes amid some of the fiercest fighting in the Tigray region since the conflict began in November as Ethiopian forces supported by those from neighbouring Eritrea pursue Tigray's former leaders. A spokeswoman for Ethiopia's prime minister did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Wounded patients being treated at Mekele's Ayder hospital told health workers that a plane dropped a bomb on Togoga's marketplace. The six patients included a 2-year-old child with "abdominal trauma" and a 6-year-old, the nurse said. An ambulance carrying a wounded baby to Mekele was blocked for two hours and the baby died on the way, the nurse added.

Azerbaijan boosts electric exports to Georgia

DNA

BAKU: Azerbaijan increased electricity exports to neighbouring Georgia by 21 percent, brining the volume of exports to 503.4 million kWh in January-May 2021, Azertag has reported.

Imports of diesel fuel from Azerbaijan to Georgia also saw 10.2 percent increase, reaching 72,000 tons during the reported period. Overall, Georgia imported 428,500 tons of gasoline and diesel fuel in January-May this year. Thus, Azerbaijan met 16.8 percent of Georgia's diesel fuel needs. Romania became the main supplier of gasoline and diesel fuel to Georgia in the first five months of the year. In the meantime, Georgia imported 678,190 tons of gas worth \$100.7 million from Azerbaijan. The value of imports decreased by 19.8 percent, while the volume by 22.7 percent, compared to the same period of last year.

Azerbaijan, Egypt hold political consultations

WEB DESK

CAIRO: Azerbaijan and Egypt have discussed ways to develop bilateral relations in political, economic, humanitarian and other fields, the Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry's press service reported on June 22. The discussion took place during the next round of consultations between the two countries' foreign ministries in Cairo on June 20. The parties also exchanged views on regional and global issues of mutual interest.

The Azerbaijani side provided information on the post-conflict situation in the region, including the restoration, construction and reintegration work in the territories liberated from the Armenian occupation in last year's war. It should be noted that 50 documents on cooperation in various fields have been signed between Azerbaijan and Egypt since the establishment of political ties between the two countries in 1992.

Briefs

Revenue to be generate through sukuk market

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Farrukh Habib on Wednesday

expressed that the government was taking various steps to generate maximum revenue through domestic sukuk market. Talking to a private news channel, he said that incumbent regime had paid around

Rs 2900 billion in the shape of interest on foreign loan which was taken by previous regimes, adding that the former governments took the loans with 18% mark-up. Farrukh said that due to the failure of past governments, a ruined national economy was handed over to the government of Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf (PTI). Domestic bonds were issued by the current regime to enhance investment in the development sector, he added.

He said the government was committed to open new ways for local and foreign investment to reduce the pressure of unemployment. The minister said that chief of PML-N was living abroad and not coming back due to the corruption charges.

Former Prim Minister Nawaz Sharif would face corruption charges after his return to the country, he said, adding that there was nobody above the law. Farrukh said that Nawaz Sharif was enjoying healthy and luxurious life in UK, but due to grafting charges, he was not willing to return to the country. — APP

Swiss opens the doors despite Delta concerns

GENEVA: Switzerland will scrap most of its remaining coronavirus restrictions this weekend, the government announced Wednesday, including for entry into the country, despite concerns about the Delta variant. Remaining outdoor mask-wearing rules will be dropped from Saturday and the requirement to work from home will be downgraded to a recommendation. Shops will be able to open at full capacity, while the limit on the numbers of people at restaurant tables will be lifted.

"The situation allows us to take an important step forward," Health Minister Alain Berset told a news conference in the capital Bern. "We have a good epidemiological situation, new infections are down sharply and in parallel, of course, vaccination continues to advance at a very sustained rate," he said, estimating that 50 percent of adults will be fully vaccinated before July. He said the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines used in Switzerland give good protection against the Delta variant. — APP

Maryam slams PM Imran's remarks

DNA

ISLAMABAD: PML-N Vice-President Maryam Nawaz said on Wednesday that Prime Minister Imran Khan had no right to comment on Pakistan's nuclear programme.

"I don't know how to construe this statement," said Maryam, when asked to share her views on the statement. She added: "He [the prime minister] is not [an elected] representative of the people of Pakistan. He has been selected and has no right to comment on Pakistan's nuclear status."

Maryam went on to say that the premier was not the custodian of the country's nuclear programme.

Pak, Azerbaijan vow to face challenges together

DNA

BAKU: General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) on an official visit of Republic of Azerbaijan called on His Excellency Colonel General Eyyazov Vilayat Suleyman oglu, Minister of Internal Affairs of Azerbaijan, His Excellency Colonel General Elchin Guliyev, Chief of State Border Service (SBS) of Azerbaijan and His Excellency Colonel General Ali Naghi Oglu Naghiyev, Chief of State Security Service at Baku. During the meeting, matters of mutual interest, bilateral defence & security cooperation, regional peace & stability and co-operation in energy, trade & connectivity projects between both brotherly countries were discussed. General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff said the emerging geo-strategic paradigm in the region necessitates our close cooperation



and collective response against common challenges. COAS also reiterated for increased mutually beneficial engagements at all levels and forums. The dignitaries also acknowledged high standards of professionalism of the Pakistan Army and contributions for conflict prevention in the region especially efforts for bringing peace in Afghanistan.

Pakistan, UK pledge to boost bilateral co-op

Lord Ahmad launched a new programme in Lahore to promote cleaner brick production practices which will help improve air quality, reduce smog and fight climate change



ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed presenting a souvenir to Lord Tariq Ahmad, UK Minister for South Asia and Commonwealth who called on him. British High Commissioner Christian Turner also present. — APP

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Lord Tariq Ahmad, The Minister of State for South Asia and the Commonwealth and the Prime Minister's Special Representative on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict, has completed a two day visit to Pakistan. During his visit, Lord Ahmad met with the Prime Minis-

ter Imran Khan and other government Ministers and Provincial leaders, including the Interior Minister Sheikh Rasheed, the Human Rights Minister Shireen Mazari, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Chief Minister Punjab Usman Buzdar and Governor Punjab Chaudhry Muhammad Sarwar. The visit covered Islamabad and Lahore and was focused on the UK and Pakistan's

friendship to build back greener to protect our world against climate change, build back better with more prosperity for both countries, build back safer to protect communities from COVID-19, and to build back for all ensuring that girls get the education they deserve. During his visit, Lord Ahmad launched a new programme in Lahore to promote cleaner brick production practices

No justification to keep Pak in FATF's grey list

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi on Wednesday said there was no longer any justification to keep Pakistan on the grey list as the country had fulfilled 26 out of 27 action items of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

In a statement — two days after FATF's five-day virtual meeting began in Paris — the foreign minister said that Pakistan had fulfilled the anti-money laundering watchdog's maximum technical requirements. FATF will make its findings public on June 25. Qureshi said India is making attempts to misuse the forum for political purposes, as it has indulged in continuous anti-Pakistan propaganda. "Pakistan has taken concrete steps to curb money-laundering and terrorist financing." He pointed out that Pakistan "inherited" the problem of the FATF grey-listing from the previous regime, however, the incumbent government has done its best to bring the country out of it. The foreign minister said the world was acknowledging Pakistan's efforts in the implementation of the FATF Action Plan. The steps taken by Paki-



stan include the promulgation of strict laws against money laundering, freezing of assets, and filing of cases against banned organisations. Resultantly, the Asia Pacific Group on Money Laundering improved Pakistan's rating against money laundering and terror financing. Moreover, the Pakistan European Union Joint Commission had also welcomed the country's progress in the implementation of FATF points. On June 18, Foreign Office spokesman Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri had reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to further strengthening its AML/CFT regime without prejudging the outcome of the upcoming plenary meeting of the FATF. "As you are aware, Pakistan has made significant strides during the implementation of the Action Plan through concerted national efforts.

Iran says US has agreed to lift oil sanctions

MONITORING DESK

TEHRAN: Iran said on Wednesday that Washington had agreed to remove all sanctions on Iran's oil and shipping, and take some senior figures off a blacklist, at talks to revive Tehran's 2015 nuclear deal with global powers which are now on a pause. The remarks, by outgoing president Hassan Rouhani's chief of staff, were

consistent with previous assertions by officials in Rouhani's pragmatist camp that Washington is prepared to make major concessions at the talks, under way since April in Vienna. The talks adjourned on Sunday for a break, two days after Iran held a presidential election won by hard-liner Ebrahim Raisi, the head of Iran's judiciary who is on the US blacklist. Raisi is due to replace Rouhani in August.

UK Defence Ministry denies Russian warning shots claims

FOREIGN DESK

LONDON: Britain has denied Russian reports that its military fired warning shots at a UK destroyer in the Black Sea. Moscow's defence ministry was quoted as saying that HMS Defender entered Russian territorial waters near Crimea while a patrol ship fired warning shots and a jet dropped bombs in its path. But Britain's Ministry of Defence (MoD) said no bombs

were dropped, or warning shots fired at HMS Defender. It added that the ship was sailing in Ukrainian waters. "HMS Defender was taking the most direct and internationally recognised route between Ukraine and Georgia," a Downing Street spokesman said. He added that Russia had given pre-warning to the UK that it was carrying out gunnery exercises in the Black Sea near to where HMS Defender was sailing. British Defence Secretary

Ben Wallace said in a statement that HMS Defender was carrying out a "routine transit" when it entered the internationally recognised traffic corridor. A British naval warship became embroiled in a confrontation with Russian forces off the coast of the disputed territory of Crimea on Wednesday. Russia says one of its warplanes dropped bombs and a patrol boat fired warning shots to turn back a British destroyer it claims entered into its territorial waters in

the Black Sea. A BBC reporter on the ship said he witnessed Russian warplanes and naval vessels buzzing the destroyer. Russia said the ship went three kilometers (1.9 miles) inside Russian territory off Cape Violent in Crimea just before noon local time on Wednesday. A nation's territorial waters extend 12 nautical miles (22.2 kilometers) from its coastline. Any foreign warship going past that limit would need permission of the country to do so.

CNS stresses need to boost Pak-Kenya ties

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chief of Defence Forces Kenya, General Robert Kariuki Kibochi visited Naval Headquarters, Islamabad and called on Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi. Upon arrival at Naval Headquarters, the visiting dignitary was received by Chief of the Naval Staff. A smartly turned out contingent of Pakistan Navy presented the Guard of Honour. Thereafter, the dignitary was introduced to the Principal Staff Officers at Naval Headquarters. Later, General Robert Kariuki Kibochi called on Chief of the Naval Staff in his office. During the meeting, various matters of



maritime security, stability and mutual interest including bilateral collaboration were discussed. Chief of the Naval Staff highlighted Pakistan's commitment in fight against terrorism and Pakistan Navy's contributions for ensuring maritime security and peace in the region. The Naval Chief thanked the visiting dignitary for the hospitality afforded to Pakistan Navy Ship NASR on its recent goodwill visit to Mombasa. Both the dignitaries agreed on further enhancing mutual interactions in diversified military domains. It is expected that the visit of Chief of Defence Forces Kenya shall further promote the existing bilateral cooperation between the two countries in general and the navies in particular.

Saudi FM to 'visit' Pakistan next month

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud is expected to visit Pakistan in the middle of July. Quoting sources, a private television channel reported that a high-level delegation would also accompany the visiting dignitary.

The sources added that matters pertaining to the visit of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Salman to Pakistan would come under discussion at meetings between leaders of the two sides. The Saudi FM will hold meetings with his counterpart Shah Mehmood Qureshi and Prime Minister Imran Khan during the visit. Ways to further strengthen Pak-Saudi Arabia ties, restoration of peace in Afghanistan and other matters of mutual interest would come under discussion at these meetings, sources concluded.

HK pro-democracy paper closed

FOREIGN DESK

HONG KONG: Hong Kong's largest pro-democracy paper Apple Daily has announced its closure, in a blow to media freedom in the city. The tabloid's offices were raided last week over allegations that several reports had breached a controversial national security law.

Police detained the chief editor and five other executives, and company-linked assets were frozen. The publication had become a leading critic of the Hong Kong and Chinese leadership. The Apple Daily management said that "in view of staff members' safety", it had decided "to cease operation immediately after midnight" - making Thursday's publication the final printed edition.

UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said the paper's closure was a "chilling blow to freedom of expression in Hong Kong". The digital version of the 26-year old paper will no longer be updated after midnight. A separate announcement by publisher Next Digital thanked the readers for their "loyal support" as well as its journalists, staff and advertisers.

Khawaja Asif gets bail in assets case

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Wednesday granted post-arrest bail to Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) MNA Khawaja Asif in an assets beyond means case.

A two-judge bench, headed by Justice Aliya Neelum, approved the bail after hearing arguments of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) prosecutor and the PML-N leader's lawyer. The NAB prosecutor contended before the court that the accused neither provided money trail of funds transferred to him from the UAE nor disclosed the sources through which these were transferred. The corruption watchdog contacted the Dubai firm that employed him but didn't receive any response, he said. It is even not clear whether the PML-N leader used to get his salary in cash or through a bank, he added.

The bench observed that NAB had made the documents that supports its case part of the record while those in favour of Khawaja Asif were not made part of it. The bureau accepts a work permit but not its conditions, the court said. NAB itself changed its stance by submitting two reports to the court, the LHC judges said. Khawaja Asif through his counsel Barrister Haidar Rasool Mirza filed the petition which stated that the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) had arrested him from Islamabad last year on December 29.