



Islamabad POST

Friday, July 16, 2021

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Road to talks passes from Srinagar

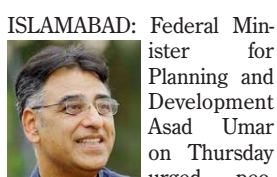
NEHAL MIRAJ



TASHKENT: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi has said that the road to talks with Delhi passes from Srinagar, with such an attitude towards Kashmir, how can there be talks with India. In a statement on Thursday, the Foreign Minister while talking about situation in Afghanistan said that Pakistan was playing a vital role in bringing peace. Pakistan will soon invite key members of the Afghan leadership to Islamabad so that we can work together to move the Afghan peace process forward. FM Qureshi said that Pakistan's role is of a conciliatory nature and the primary responsibility for peace in Afghanistan lies with the Afghans.

Asad urges people to get vaccinated

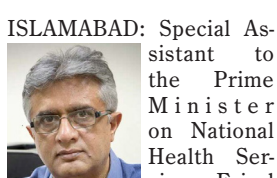
ZUBAIR AHMAD



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning and Development Asad Umar on Thursday urged people to get vaccinated against coronavirus and follow government issued guidelines against the disease. Asad Umar, in a tweet, warned that hospitalization of coronavirus patients as well as patients in critical care are seeing a sharp rise in the country. The federal minister further said that the Indian variant of coronavirus has caused devastation in countries in the region. The NCOC head asked people to follow SOPs, get vaccinated and do not risk their and others lives.

Faisal hints at ban on transport during Eid

DNA



ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on National Health Services Faisal Sultan on Thursday hinted at ban on public transport during Eid-ul-Adha holidays. Faisal Sultan has said that more restrictions will be imposed in most affected areas of the country. Cases of coronavirus are relatively low compared to other provinces, he added.

Pak, Uzbekistan pledge to further solidify relations

Uzbek president to visit Pakistan; both countries agree on a negotiated solution of the Afghan issue; express resolve to complete Termez-Mazar-i-Sharif – Kabul – Peshawar railway at the earliest; President Shavkat lauds opening of Centers for the Study of the heritage of Alisher Navoi and Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur



TASHKENT: Prime Minister Imran Khan and Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev shaking hands after signing joint declaration. – DNA

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI
IN TASHKENT

TASHKENT: Pakistan and Uzbekistan have reaffirmed their commitment to further solidify bilateral relations reaffirming their commitment to strengthening fraternal ties, based on religious, cultural and historical commonalities, the leaders expressed satisfaction at the continued progress in bilateral relations and announced the establishment of a strategic partnership for mutual benefit of the two countries and nations. The President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev and Prime of Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan expressed this resolve in a joint press briefing, on Thursday. The Pakistani prime minister underlined the importance of structured engagement between Pakistan and Uzbekistan under the five pillars of Pakistan's "Vision Central Asia" policy i.e. political, trade and investment, energy and connectivity, security and defence, and people-to-people contacts. Pakistan was among the first countries to recognize the independence of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 1991, the leaders congratulated each other on approaching the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two brotherly countries and agreed to celebrate it in a befitting manner. As

members of the UN Human Rights Council, the Parties expressed their readiness for joint action to suppress violations of human rights and counter Islamophobia, as well as strengthening interfaith harmony. The PM emphasized on the urgent need for peaceful resolution of all outstanding regional disputes and conflicts to fully utilize the enormous potential of connectivity between Central Asia and South Asia. The two sides noted with satisfaction that over the 20 years of its activity, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has taken a significant place in international and regional organizations, and contributed in promoting security, stability and sustainable development of the region. The leaders discussed the security situation in detail in Afghanistan and the ongoing peace process. The parties stressed the necessity to resolve the conflict through Afghan-led and Afghan-owned political process through peaceful and inclusive negotiations resulting in comprehensive political settlement. President of Uzbekistan highly appreciated the role of Pakistan in promoting the peace process in Afghanistan and Pakistan's contributions to socio-economic development of Afghanistan. Prime Minister of Pakistan hailed Uzbekistan's efforts for the socio-economic reconstruction of Afghanistan through the implementation of a number of



TASHKENT: PM Imran Khan leads delegation level talks between Pakistan and Uzbekistan. Uzbek President is leading the Uzbek delegation. – DNA

significant projects, the main one of which is the construction of the Termez-Mazar-i-Sharif – Kabul – Peshawar railway. The two leaders reiterated their support for the Termez-Mazar-i-Sharif – Kabul – Peshawar railway project as an important initiative to create a rail link from Central Asia to the Arabian Sea through Afghanistan and the Pakistani seaports of Karachi, Gwadar and Bin Qasim. The parties also welcomed the proposed expedition of representatives of the relevant ministries and departments of Uzbekistan and Pakistan along the route of the railway line in near future with appropriate security measures for the representatives of both sides. The Prime Minister expressed gratitude to the Uzbek side for the cordial and warm welcome extended to the Pakistan delegation in Uzbekistan and invited the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev to visit Pakistan at a convenient time. Uzbek side accepted the invitation with appreciation. The dates of the visit will be agreed through diplomatic channels. The leaders expressed their conviction that the agreements reached during the visit will contribute to the further deepening of the bilateral strategic partnership and development of cooperation within the framework of multilateral formats. They agreed to continue high-level political dialogue in the

future. President of Uzbekistan Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev thanked Prime Minister Imran Khan for participation in the International High-Level Conference "Central and South Asia: Regional Connectivity - Challenges and Opportunities (July 15-16 2021, Tashkent)." President Shavkat Mirziyoyev and Prime Minister Imran Khan noted long-standing cultural, historical, religious and spiritual ties between the two countries. The leaders decided to further expand cultural ties and people-to-people contacts and welcomed proposals to develop cooperation between leading universities, research institutes, libraries and museums of the two countries, as well as to conduct joint research on the legacy of the Baburids. The President of Uzbekistan highly appreciated the opening of Centers for the Study of the heritage of Alisher Navoi and Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur at the Punjab and Peshawar Universities of Pakistan and welcomed the establishment of cooperation with the Alisher Navoi and Babur Foundations in Uzbekistan. Earlier, the Prime Minister Imran Khan on Thursday was accorded a very warm welcome when he arrived here on a two-day official visit to Uzbekistan. The Prime Minister was given a guard of honour on his arrival at Uzbekistan's Koksaray

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Petrol price raised by Rs 5.4

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The government on Thursday raised petrol price by Rs 5.4 per liter effective from July 16 for next fortnight. The Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) had recommended Rs11.50 increase in per liter petrol, however the Prime Minister, considering to provide maximum relief to the public allowed only Rs5.4 liter increase, said a press statement issued by the Finance Ministry here. In this way, the government observed Rs6.10 price hike in the commodity, it added. Accordingly, petrol would be now sold at Rs118.09 per liter against its existing price of Rs112.69. Likewise, the prices of high speed diesel increased by Rs2.54 per liter, from Rs113.99 to Rs116.53; kerosene oil by Rs1.39 per liter, from Rs85.75 to Rs87.14 whereas the price of light diesel oil increased by Rs1.27, from Rs83.40 per liter to Rs84.67 per liter.

Investigation underway in Dasu bus incident

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Fawad Chaudhry on Thursday said that "terrorism cannot be ruled out" in the Dasu bus accident which resulted in the death of 12 people, including three Chinese nationals. "Initial investigations into Dasu incident have now confirmed traces of explosives," said Chaudhry. He said that Prime Minister Imran Khan is "personally supervising all developments in this regard" and that the government is closely coordinating with the Chinese embassy. "We are committed to fight the menace of terrorism together," the information minister said.

Security forces successfully recover abducted labourers

SHUJAAT HAMZA

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan security forces have successfully recovered the remaining five of the 16 abducted labourers. On 26 June 21, sixteen labourers working at a mobile tower site in Kurram Tribal District were abducted by unknown Terrorists. On 27 June, 10 out of 16 labourers were released and body of one labourer was found. To rescue the remaining 5 x abducted labourers, security forces launched series of Intelligence Based Operations in highly inhospitable

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Two Pak Army jawans martyred near Pasni

RAWALPINDI: A Pakistan Army captain and a sepoy embraced martyrdom in an IED attack in Balochistan, the military's media wing said Thursday. "Terrorists targeted Security Forces using an IED in Khuda Bux Bazar near Pasni. An officer Capt Affan Masood and Sepoy Babar Zaman embraced Shahadat," the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement. The ISPR said that a search operation is in progress to apprehend the perpetrators. "Such cowardly acts by inimical elements, backed by hostile intelligence agencies (HIAs) cannot sabotage the hard-earned peace and prosperity in Balochistan," it added. The military said that the security forces are determined to neutralise such nefarious designs at all costs. – DNA

Pakistan to host 2-day Afghan peace conference

FO spokesperson says spoilers should not be allowed to exploit any security vacuum in Afghanistan

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office Spokesperson Zahid Hafeez Chaudhry says a two-day Peace conference on Afghanistan is being held in Islamabad on Saturday. Responding to a host of questions during his weekly News briefing in Islamabad on Thursday afternoon, he said the delegations from Afghanistan will start arriving in Pakistan on Friday. The Spokesperson said peace in Afghanistan is in Pakistan's interest as any security situation in

Taliban puts ceasefire on table in exchange for prisoners' release

KABUL: The Taliban have demanded the release of 7,000 prisoners as a condition for a three-month ceasefire, revealed a member of the Afghan government negotiator Thursday. "It is a big demand," Nader Nadery said, adding that the Taliban have also demanded the removal of the Taliban's leaders from a United Nations blacklist. Nadery claimed that women were suffering in the districts that have been captured by the Taliban, adding that they were being threatened by the conservative group. He said in areas that the Taliban had captured, public buildings had been damaged on a large scale and that the group has halted work on all public development projects. The Friendship Gate at the Chaman border was closed a day earlier by Pakistan after the Taliban seized the Afghan side in the Spin Boldak district, continuing sweeping gains made by the group since foreign forces stepped up their withdrawal from Afghanistan. Spin Boldak was the latest in a string of border crossings and dry ports seized by the Taliban in recent weeks as they look to choke off revenues much-needed by Kabul while also filling their own coffers. Afghanistan's interior ministry has denied the Taliban have taken the area even as social media was flooded with pictures of the group's fighters relaxing in the frontier town. – DNA

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Australia helps Pakistan to strengthen covid-19 surveillance – Page 08

Briefs

Punjab law minister, others meet LHC CJ

LAHORE: Punjab Law Minister Raja Muhammad Basharat met Lahore High Court (LHC) Chief Justice Muhammad Ameer Bhatti, here on Thursday.

Chief Secretary Punjab Jawad Rafique Malik, Advocate General Punjab Ahmad Owais and Inspector General of Police Punjab Inam Ghani also accompanied the minister.

Registrar LHC Muhammad Yar Walana, Director General Directorate of District Judiciary Masood Arshad were also present.

They discussed matters of mutual interest during the meeting. LHC Chief Justice Muhammad Ameer Bhatti termed provision of justice to masses foremost priority. He said that all steps would be taken to ensure facilities and security for the litigants, lawyers and judges. He said that provision of the best infrastructure for courts was need of the hour.

The provincial minister and others congratulated the chief justice on assuming the office and appreciated his vision. They also endorsed the steps, taken by the Lahore High Court for provision of justice to masses and promised complete support. — APP

KP proposed Rs37,476 mln for 519 roads projects

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government has proposed Rs37,476 million for 519 roads projects including 69 new and 450 ongoing for current fiscal year to bolster regional connectivity and tourism in the province.

Works and Services Department officials told APP that a record amount of Rs37,476 million including Rs34,157,217 for 450 ongoing and Rs 3318.783 million for 69 new roads projects allocated in Annual Development Programme (ADP 2021-22) focusing on construction of new districts roads besides rehabilitation and repair of existing ones in various districts of KP. Under new projects, the official said Rs300 million including allocation of Rs10 million for current fiscal would be spent on rehabilitation and extension of three roads in Kalash valley in Chitral to provide better communication facilities besides promoting cultural and ecotourism.

Similarly, Rs2,000 million including an allocation of Rs50 million would be spent on purchase of land for construction Kalash Valley's roads in Lower Chitral. The improved roads infrastructure would help attract influx of tourists to Kalash valley being a culture hub of Chitral.

Similarly, feasibility studies, designs and construction of two new flyovers in DI Khan City flyover at Tank bus stand and vegetable markets would be constructed with an estimated cost of Rs1,500m including an allocation of Rs20 million for financial year 2021-22. KP Government has taken a principle decision to reconstruct and rehabilitate flood affected roads and bridges in remote Kohistan Lower district with an estimated cost of Rs108m whereas Rs900m for approach roads of Kalur Kot bridge on River Indus amounting Rs900m and Rs800m for feasibility studies. — APP



ISLAMABAD: Chief Minister GB Muhammad Khalid Khursheed Khan in a meeting with Saudi Ambassador Nawaf Bin Said Al-Maliki. — DNA

Tree planting is essential for environmental protection

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: On the directions of the Punjab government, 43,000 saplings have been planted in the division during the tree Planting Campaign under the Khidmat Aap Ki Dehleez Par program while it is committed to meet the set target. This was stated by Divisional Commissioner Saqib Manan while leading an awareness walk in connection with the tree planting campaign. Members of Assembly Sheikh Khurram Shehzad, Firdous Rai, Additional Deputy Commissioner Headquarters Muhammad Khalid, Divisional Forest Officer Wajihuddin, Divisional Forest Officer Extension Muhammad Ali Butt, CEO Education Ali Ahmad Sian, District Incharge Control Room Mohammad Sadiq, Mohammad Akhtar Butt, officers of Cooperative, Waste Management Company, PHA and other departments were also present in the walk. The walk started from District Council Chowk and culminated at Katchri bazar chowk after passing Khaliq Qureshi Road and in front of Press Club. The participants carried banners and placards prescribed on the importance of trees. The Divisional Commissioner

said that protection of environment tree planting is essential for this purpose and tree planting week is being celebrated under KAKDP as part of the program. The aim of the program is to spread the message of tree planting for every human being so that citizens can also plant trees and the environment can be refreshed.



FAISALABAD: Divisional Commissioner Saqib Manan led an awareness walk in connection with tree plantation week under Kidmat Aap ki Dehleez Par program. — DNA

He said that monsoon tree planting campaign is also being implemented in full swing and the target of planting 2.687 million trees by December 31 will be achieved. The Parliamentarians said that the Prime Minister's Ten Billion Tree Program was being successfully implemented and in this regard, the member assemblies were also involved in tree planting with the administration in the historic Clean and Green Campaign. They asked the citizen to participate in the campaign so that a clean and green Pakistan can be seen by planting as many trees as possible. Divisional Forest Officer said that the target is set and will be completed in the next two days.

18281 more people get vaccination

As many as 18281 more people and Health Care Worker administered the corona vaccine at designated 35 vaccination centers and mobile camps yesterday and till now 710140 people vaccinated. Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ali informed that 18040 general public and 241 health workers administered vaccine yesterday in which 14762 public had first and 3278 had second while 97 and 114 health workers had vaccinated first and second dose respectively. Deputy Commissioner appealed the citizen to vaccinate themselves against corona. He said that No Vaccination No Service Policy had been started in the govt. departments so to avoid any hurdles people should vaccinated otherwise no facility would be given to un vaccinated.

KP: Mass scale reforms underway in tax regime

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan on Thursday said that like other sectors, mass scale reforms were also underway in the tax regime of the province, which had resulted in significant increase in the annual revenue collection. He expressed these views while addressing an inaugural ceremony of upgradation Pensioners Facilitation Center and Information & Complaint Redressal Cell

at office of the Accountant General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Special Assistant to CM Kamran Bangash, Controller General Accounts Farrukh Ahmad Hamidi, Accountant General Murtaza Khan, Secretary Information Arshid Khan and other high ups attended the ceremony. The chief minister stated that when the incumbent provincial government came into power, the annual revenue collection of the provincial government was Rs 31 billion which now had been increased to Rs

56 billion adding that despite the difficult financial situation due to COVID-19, the provincial government made no increase in the provincial taxes rather it provided significant relief to people in the various provincial taxes. He said that credit for reforms in public sector entities went to Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf adding that in 2013, PTI provincial government had started reforms process from the scratches and today, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was at forefront in terms of reforms initiatives.



ISLAMABAD: Bernhard Schlagheck, ambassador of Germany call on federal minister for finance & revenue, Shaukat Tarin at the finance division. — DNA

Turkish embassy marks 5th anniversary of coup bid

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: The Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency in collaboration with the Turkey's Embassy in Pakistan on Thursday marked the fifth anniversary of the July 15, 2016 defeated coup in Turkey.

An event at the Fatime Jinnah Park in Islamabad was attended by Federal Minister for Law and Justice Barrister Dr Farogh Naseem and Turkish Ambassador to Pakistan Mustafa Yurdakul, Turkish people living in Pakistan, and local officials. Dr Farogh Naseem said that Pakistan always stood by Turkey in every difficult time and we will do the same in the future as well.

On the historical relationship between the two countries, the minister said that the people of Turkey and Pakistan are not only friends but "we love our Turkish brothers and sisters."

Pakistan was one of the first countries to condemn the coup attempt, and the entire Pakistani nation stood with their Turkish brethren while both houses of Pakistan's parliament unanimously passed resolutions expressing solidarity with Turkey and condemning the defeated coup. Turkey and Pakistan are partners in world peace, he added.

He said that he saluted the Supreme Court of Pakistan which took notice of the schools of the organization which attempted failed coup in Turkey and it also closed the schools run by the Turkish organization Fetullah Terrorist Organization (FETO) and these were handed over to Türkiye MAARIF Foundation. He said that the Turkish nation took to the streets for democracy.

He said that Turkish PM Tayyip Erdogan has visited Pakistan several times. Addressing the event, Ambassador

Yurdakul paid tribute to the July 15 martyrs and said Turkish people sacrificed to protect their democratic system. "The coup-plotters used Turkish Armed Forces tanks and jets against its own people, including shelling innocent civilians, and bombed vital government functions — including parliament and the intelligence and national police buildings," he said.

"I am very proud that the people, government, parliament, and every organization stood with us, and Pakistan was one of the first nations to stand with Turkey and its elected government," Yurdakul said. "When they saw the real face of FETO, our Pakistani brothers all stood against them and supported their Turkish brothers and government," he added.

On the occasion, Federal Minister for Law and Justice Barrister Dr. Farogh Naseem also planted a tree in memory of Turkish martyrs.

ویکسین لگوائیں زندگہ بچائیں

ویکسین لگوانا ضروری ہے، کیونکہ ویکسین سرٹیفکیٹ کے بغیر:

- آپ ہوٹلوں، ریستورانٹس، سینما گھروں اور سیاحتی مقامات پر نہیں جاسکیں گے۔
- کیلیم اگست سے اندرون ملک ہوائی سفر نہیں کر سکیں گے۔

این سی او سی کی ہدایات کے تحت تمام سرکاری وغیرہ سرکاری ملازمین ویکسین لگوائیں۔

وباء کے مکمل خاتمے تک احتیاطی تدابیر پر عمل درآمد یقینی بنائیں۔

رجسٹریشن کا طریقہ کار

18 سال اور زائد عمر کے افراد 1166 پر اپنا قومی شناختی کارڈ نمبر ایس ایم ایس کر کے یا **nims.nadra.gov.pk**

پران لائن رجسٹریشن کے بعد، بلا تاخیر، کسی بھی قریبی ویکسینیشن سینٹر سے ویکسین لگوائیں۔

مزید تفصیلات کیلئے **1166** پر کال کریں یا **ncoc.gov.pk** یا **covid.gov.pk** ملاحظہ کریں۔

PID(1369/21)

**آپ محفوظ
پاکستان محفوظ**

Briefs

NSU celebrates WYS Day 2021

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The World Youth Skills (WYS) Day 2021, globally observed on every year 15th July since 2014, was celebrated on Thursday at the National Skills University (NSU) Islamabad, to highlight the importance of skills learning among youth.

Dr. Shaista Sohail, Executive Director, Higher Education Commission (HEC) chaired this session. Prof. Dr. Habib Bokhari, Vice Chancellor, Kohsar University, Murree and Eng. Sajid Baloch, Executive Director of the NAVTTC, were the guests of honor.

Among the youth leaders, Ayesha Sheikh, Asim-Masoom Zubair, both recipients of the Diana Award 2021, and an eight-year-old Ibrahim Haider impressed the audience with their success stories through harnessing their extracurricular skills. Several students presented their technology inventions, including the low-cost cell phone & iPad chargers, homemade ventilators, and a robot.

PHA to reduce air pollution & make city green

RAWALPINDI: Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) Rawalpindi is striving to reduce air pollution and make the city green, said PHA Vice Chairman Malik Abid Hussain on Thursday. Talking to APP he said that the authority was trying to provide an attractive and healthier natural environment to the residents.

He urged the citizens to come forward and play a role to make the monsoon plantation campaign launched by PHA a success. He said, the PHA had come up with a tree planting plan on the banks of NullahLeh and SowanRiver. As many as 25,000 seed balls were thrown on the banks of Sowan River under monsoon tree planting campaign.

He said that all possible steps were being taken in the light of the directives of the Chief Minister Punjab to make the city green.

PHA had earlier tested seed balls in Murree area which was very successful and hoped that good results would be seen in Rawalpindi as well, he said adding, seeds had already sprouted in most of the seed balls during the preparation phase and it is hoped that these seeds would find a conducive environment on the banks of Sowan River and NullahLeh.

Seeds of locally grown plants in over 50,000 soil balls would be planted along the banks. The soil balls were being thrown over a 14 kms stretch and the tree-planting process was also extended to Soan River. This is a unique method of tree planting being practiced elsewhere in the world. – APP

Govt taking measures to increase IT exports

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication was taking imperative steps to increase IT exports.

According to Pakistan Software Export Board (PSEB), the attached department of Ministry of IT & Telecom, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) export remittances, including telecommunication, computer and information services have risen to \$1.908 billion at a growth rate of 47.1% during July-May of Financial Year 2020-21, in comparison to \$1.297 billion during July-May of FY 2019-20.

The official of the ministry said that every possible step was being taken to increase IT exports and at present Pakistan's IT industry was rapidly growing.

ICCI for revocation of 203B to 203I of finance act

President, ICCI said that the tax authority's main role is to collect taxes and this role should be performed in a congenial and friendly environment instead of making arrests of taxpayers who are very respectable persons of the society

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) has expressed great reservations over the introduction of Sections 203B to 203I in ITO 2001 through Finance Act 2021 that authorizes the arrest of a taxpayer on the pretext of concealment of income and called upon the government to revoke it as it would open new avenues of taxpayers' harassment and enhance the prospects of corrupt practices in tax matters.

Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry said that the tax

authority's main role is to collect taxes and this role should be performed in a congenial and friendly environment instead of making arrests of taxpayers who are very respectable persons of the society. He said that taxpayers are the persons who contribute to the national exchequer and play a key role in promoting the national economy. Therefore, taxpayers should be treated with great respect instead of introducing new sections in income tax law to arrest them. He said that introduction of such sections in tax laws would not serve the purpose of the country, rather it would shatter the confidence of taxpayers and discourage potential inves-



tors from investing in Pakistan. ICCI President said that at the one hand, the Prime Minister of Pakistan is giving assurances to the business community that his

government would minimize the direct interaction between the tax machinery and the taxpayers through automation, but on the other hand, new sections are being introduced in tax laws to give discretionary powers to tax collectors that would create an atmosphere of harassment in the business circles and discourage tax culture. He said that instead of introducing sections to arrest taxpayers, preference should be given to laws for providing attractive incentives and awards to high taxpayers that would help in broadening the tax base and motivating others to become tax filers. He urged that the government should withdraw Sections 203B to

203I introduced through Finance Act 2021 in the larger national interest of the country.

Fatma Azim Senior Vice President and Abdul Rehman Khan Vice President ICCI said that the prevailing tax system is very complicated and is considered a major hurdle in promoting tax culture in the country. They emphasized that instead of resorting to coercive tactics, the government in consultation with stakeholders should focus on simplifying the tax system and introduce new tax laws that should help in boosting the confidence of taxpayers and support the growth of business and investment activities in the country.



ISLAMABAD: The outgoing Ambassador of the Kyrgyz Republic in Pakistan, Mr. Erik Beishembiev, called on President Dr. Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. – DNA

Al-Shifa Trust eye hospital in Chakwal launched

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: President Al-Shifa Trust Maj. Gen. (Retd) Rehmat Khan has said that access to healthcare services is critical to good health and productivity yet rural residents face a variety of access barriers throughout the world. Many people in rural areas often encounter barriers to healthcare that limit their ability to obtain the care they need therefore the Al-Shifa Trust is trying its best to provide services to the needy at their doorstep.

President Al-Shifa Trust Maj. Gen. (Retd) Rehmat Khan said this while speaking at the launching ceremony of newly-established Al-Shifa Trust eye hospital Chakwal.

He said that with the help of Almighty Allah and the generous donors the trust has opened the doors of its new hospital in the district of Chakwal which is our 6th state-of-the-art hospital and we are aiming even high. The hospital will provide free treatment to the poor and underprivileged people of Chakwal and its adjoining areas, he said, adding that this region has been showing a high prevalence of eye diseases which were tackled through eye camps but it was realized that a proper and well-equipped hospital is urgently needed. The new facility adjacent to Mureed Airbase is built over an area of 60,000 square feet with a total cost of Rs 250 million features state-of-the-art facilities of OPD, Operation Theatre, Pharmacy, and an Optical shop, he informed.

The hospital has the capacity to serve 500 OPD patients and conduct 50 surgeries daily to tackle eye problems and cure preventable blindness.Earlier, the president of trust Maj Gen (Retd) Rehmat Khan, Executive Director Brig (Retd) Rizwan Ullah Asghar, and Chief Medical Services Dr. Wajid Ali Khan inspected the hospital and found everything satisfactory. – DNA

PAC examines audit paras MoPD 2020

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) on Thursday examined the highlighted audit paras Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives attached department for the year 2019-20. The committee met here at Parliament House under the chairmanship of MNA Rana Tanveer Hussain. The meeting was also attended by the leader of the House in the Senate Senator Dr. Shahzad Waseem, member of the committee.

Chairman PAC asked National Accountability Bureau (NAB) to brief the committee about the progress on the audit paras referred by PAC for investigation in the next meeting.

The committee also recommended an audit of the National Endowment of Scholarships for Talents (NEST). The committee said that endowment funds should be spent on the education of deserving students.

Minister vows to provide food at affordable prices

The Minister also desired to utilize expertise of SAPM to effectively control the prices

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Shaukat Tarin, held a meeting with Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Food Security Jamshed Iqbal Cheema at the Finance Division.

During the meeting, the over-toes in order to eliminate undue profit margins and to stabilize prices of the items of daily use.

The "Agriculture Transformation Plan" was also discussed which is being introduced to shift conventional agriculture to the next level i.e. commercial agriculture aimed at boosting agricultural productivity in the country.

The SAPM outlined that



tomatoes, onions and potatoes is order to eliminate undue profit margins and to stabilize prices of the items of daily use.

The "Agriculture Transformation Plan" was also discussed which is being introduced to shift conventional agriculture to the next level i.e. commercial agriculture aimed at boosting agricultural productivity in the country.

The SAPM outlined that

Agriculture Transformation Plan will promote agri-business, attract investment from private sector, reduce post-harvest losses, add value to local agricultural produce, develops rural infrastructure and enhance access to micro credit for farmers.

The Finance Minister stressed the need to involve all the relevant stakeholders for successful implementation of the proposed Agriculture Transformation Plan. He also assured his full support and facilitation on the occasion. The Finance Minister also desired to utilize expertise of SAPM on Food Security to effectively control the prices of essential food items on regular basis to provide maximum relief to general public.

Chairman reviews performance of NAB Rawalpindi

NAB Rawalpindi is flagship Regional Bureau of NAB which has always played excellent role in contributing towards the overall performance of NAB

KHAYYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Justice Javed Iqbal, Chairman NAB has chaired a high level meeting to review the performance of NAB Rawalpindi from 11th October, 2017 till to date at NAB Headquarters. Hussain Asghar, Deputy Chairman NAB, Syed Asghar Haider, Prosecutor General (PGA) NAB, Zahir Shah, DG Operations and Irfan Naeem-Mangi, DG NAB Rawalpindi and other senior officers of NAB were present at the meeting.

During the meeting, Irfan Naeem-Mangi, DG NAB Rawalpindi informed that under the dynamic leadership of Honorable Mr. Justice Javed Iqbal, Chairman NAB from 11th October, 2017 till to date received 24,087 complaints, out of which 23,169 complaints were disposed off while 1167 complaints are under process. He further informed that from 11th October, 2017 till to date,

NAB Rawalpindi authorized 458 Complaint Verifications (CVs), while 357 Complaint Verifications (CVs) had completed by NAB Rawalpindi while 145 Complaint Verifications are under process. He further more informed the meeting that from 11th October, 2017 till to date NAB Rawalpindi authorized 239 Inquiries, out of which 156 Inquiries were completed by NAB Rawalpindi while 156 Inquiries are under process. He

further informed that from 11th October, 2017 till to date NAB Rawalpindi authorized 98 Investigations, out of which 44 Investigations are under process.

Irfan NaeemMangi, DG NAB Rawalpindi informed the meeting that from 11th October, 2017 till to date NAB Rawalpindi filed 94 References in various Learned Accountability Courts, out of which 34 References were decided by the Learned Accountability

Courts, while 239 references are under trail in various Learned Accountability Courts. DG NAB Rawalpindi also informed that from 11th October, 2017 till to date, 44 accused persons have been convicted by the Learned Accountability Courts under section 10 of NAO-1999, while 62 accused persons were convicted by the Learned Accountability Courts under section 25 (B) of NAO-1999. Irfan NaeemMangi, DG NAB

Rawalpindi further informed that under the dynamic leadership of Justice Javed Iqbal, Chairman NAB from 11th October 2017 till to date NAB Rawalpindi recovered Rs. 26.438 Billion through direct recovery from 71 accused persons in 45 corruption cases while NAB Rawalpindi recovered Rs. 286.243 Billion through indirect recovery from 50 accused persons in 50 corruption cases. Total of Rs. 312.681 Billion (Direct & Indirect) was recovered by NAB Rawalpindi under the leadership of Honorable Mr. Justice Javed Iqbal, Chairman NAB.

Justice Javed Iqbal, Chairman NAB said that eradication of corruption is the top most Priority of NAB. NAB officers are performing their duties considering it as their national duty. He said that NAB Rawalpindi is the flagship Regional Bureau of NAB which has always played an excellent role in contributing towards the overall performance of NAB.



84 new variant cases reported

DNA

RAWALPINDI: As many as 84 patients were reported COVID positive during last 24 hours in the district with twenty-eight belonged to Rawal Town, nineteen from Pothohar town, twenty-four from Rawalpindi Cantt, three from Taxila,two from Kalarsyedan, two from Attock and one each from Gujar Khan,Chakwal,Is-lamabad, Sargodha, KPK and Lahore.

According to the daily situation report issued by the District Corona Management center on Thursday, 79 Coronavirus confirmed patients were admitted to various facilities of the city including 22 were admitted in Holy Family Hospital,17 in Benazir Bhutto Hospital,26 in Institute of Urology and 17 in Fauji Foundation Hospital.

The report updated that three patient were on a ventilator in critical condition,31 stable and 45 were in moderate condition.

IESCO notifies E-Katcharies schedule

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Thursday notified schedule for holding E-Katcharies across its five operational circles of the company for prompt redressal of consumers' complaints.

According to the schedule, the E-Katcharies would be held on Friday. SE IESCO Islamabad Circle would listen the consumer's complaints at telephone 051-9260194, SE Rawalpindi City Circle at 051-9292675, SE Rawalpindi Cantt Circle at 051-9293048, SE Attock Circle at 051-4950343, SE Chakwal circle at 0543-668500 and SE Jhelum Circle at 0544-9270377 from 10:30 AM to 12:30 PM.

The IESCO requested valued customers to participate in on line Katcharies for immediate solution to their complaints. IESCO Chief Ch. Abdul Razaq would personally monitor the online Katcharies.

Youth's role important for safe road environment

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) is endeavoring its best to ensure safe road environment in the city and involving youth especially students in its affairs to achieve disciplined traffic and equal implementation of law with zero tolerance against violation of rules.

It was stated by Inspector General of Police Islamabad Qazi Jamil ur Rehman here on Thursday while addressing at the conclusion of road safety quiz competition arranged by ITP in collaboration with Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI).

IGP Islamabad attended the event as Chief Guest while Director General Safe City, SSP (Traffic), SP (Traffic), President ICCI Sardar Yasir Ilyas, Senior Vice President ICCI Fatima Azeem, Vice President ICCI Abdul Rehman, teachers, heads of departments of various universities and students were also present on the occasion.

The quiz competition was participated by students of COMSATS University, Bahria University and Punjab Group of Colleges. The quiz competition had three stages and it continued for around one month.

During the first two stages, theory as well as practical tests regarding traffic rules and driving were conducted at ITP Headquarters in sector F-8. Out of 36 students, 12 qualified for the final stage and the formal ceremony was held at ICCI building in sector G-8. – APP

Briefs

Govt conducts 24 tests on release of CanSino

SHAHEEN HANIF

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to Prime Minister on National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination Dr. Faisal Sultan on Thursday said that a thorough testing procedure was adopted before the release of COVID-19 vaccine CanSino at the National Institute of Health (NIH). In a briefing to the members of the Senate Standing Committee on National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, chaired by Dr. Muhammad Humayun Mohmand, he said that as many as 24 tests were conducted to check all aspects of the vaccine to make it safe for people. He said that one trial of CanSino was also conducted in Pakistan and people had participated in this trial with their own choice. He said that the raw material of CanSino was obtained from China while the doses and packaging were prepared in Pakistan. He said that National Command and Operation Center (NCOC) has data of different variants of COVID-19. He added a detailed investigation was conducted to observe various variants at the laboratory.

Opposition not sincere with national cause

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Secretary for Commerce Aliya Hamza Malik Thursday said the opposition was busy to "save their so-called corrupt leaders" instead of showing their seriousness over the issues of public welfare and Kashmir cause. "The politics of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz and Pakistan People's Party was based only on lies and their leadership was not showing serious attitude to address the public related issues", she said this in PTV news talks show. She alleged that when these corrupt parties were in power, leaders of these parties looted national exchequer and purchased properties abroad. She said that the opposition would have to play a responsible role in national interest and they should discuss national issues in the parliament instead of creating hurdles in way of smooth functioning of the parliament. Aliya Hamza said the opposition could not deceive masses now, adding that people were standing behind their PM Imran Khan and the credibility of their leader was beyond any doubt. She said the PM Imran Khan was a sincere national leader who had taken several long-term initiatives for betterment of the future generations.

IRSA releases 304,700 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 304,700 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 431,400 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in the Indus River at Tarbela Dam was 1454.65 feet, which was 70.65 feet higher than its dead level 1386 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 239,400 and 155,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1162.80 feet, which was 124.80 feet higher than its dead level of 1040 feet whereas the inflow and outflow of water was recorded as 52,300 and 10,000 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from the Kabul River a total of 63,000 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 43,000 cusecs released from the Chenab River at Marala. — APP

Nigerian team visits Ehsaas Social Safety Division center

Dr. Sania highlighted Pakistan's social protection programmes particularly Ehsaas Emergency Cash, Ehsaas Kafaalat, Ehsaas Nashonuma and Ehsaas education stipends and how the government of Pakistan showed commitment to recast social protection amid COVID-19

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of senior officials from Nigeria was briefed on Ehsaas at the meeting hosted by Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Division. The delegation comprised of over 30 civilian and military officers enrolled in Senior Executive Course of the 'National Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies' in Nigeria. Dr. Sania Nishtar welcomed the delegation and briefed them on the multicomponent social protection strategy and widespread operations of Ehsaas. Mainly, the meeting discussed significance of social protection at both the country and global levels in the backdrop of COVID-19 pandemic and explored multilateral collaborative options to foster social protection experience sharing between Nigeria and Pakistan. From Ehsaas, Secretary Ismat Tahira and Additional Secretary Capt. Saeed Ahmad Nawaz also briefed the delegation. Briefing the Nigerian officials, Dr. Sania highlighted Pakistan's social protection programmes particularly Ehsaas Emergency Cash, Ehsaas Kafaalat, Ehsaas Nashonuma and Ehsaas education stipends and how the government of Pakistan showed commitment to recast social protection amid COVID-19. "Social protection centered on transparency is the top priority of the present government", stated Dr. Sania. Mentioning the success of high-level



side event on social protection led by Pakistan in New York at UN's high-level political forum on sustainable development last week, Dr. Sania reflected on the importance of social protection knowledge sharing at global level. She also invited Nigerian government to join a high-level global community of practice on social protection being led by Permanent Mission of Pakistan to United Nations in New York in collaboration

with the governments of Costa Rica and Finland, and the World Bank. "The COVID-19 crises has induced the need for interconnected solutions", said Dr. Sania. The delegation showed full willingness and interest to contribute to the global knowledge base to promote experience sharing and learning around social protection. They also lauded coherent social protection and poverty graduation approaches being followed under

Ehsaas. The presentation was followed by a detailed question-and-answer session. The Nigerian officials deeply acknowledged the multisectoral and multistakeholder character and transparency reforms premised in myriad Ehsaas programmes and initiatives. Later, they visited the first One Window Ehsaas Center in Sitara Market Islamabad to see all Ehsaas services and benefits being provided to

beneficiaries under one roof.

The Nigerian delegation comprised of policymakers, government officials, military personnel, and academicians. The delegation was led by a senior official of the Nigerian National Institute, Mr. Emmanuel S. Mamman. Nigerian officials are presently touring prominent policy institutes and government offices in Islamabad. This meeting was the part of their official study tour.

Female constables pass out from PTCS

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: A passing out ceremony of more than 300 ladies constables was held here on Thursday at Police Training College Sihala (PTCS). Additional Inspector General of Police, Training and Recruitment, Kanwar Shahrugh was chief guest at the ceremony. The Commandant Sihala Police Training College, Additional IG, Ghulam Rasool Zahid and Deputy Commandant, Ashfaq Alam also graced the occasion. The Course Commander SP, Umbreen Ali administered the oath from the passed out lady constables who also presented guard of honor to the chief guest. Additional IG inspected the parade and distributed cash prizes and shields to the lady constables who achieved prominent positions during the training. Addressing the participants, the Additional IG Training and Recruitment said that the passing out of Ladies Constables is part of Chief Minister Usman Buzdar's Police Reforms vision to transform the Police Station Culture in this manner.

HEC ED chairs World Youth Skills Day session

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The World Youth Skills Day 2021 was celebrated at the National Skills University Islamabad, Pakistan. Annually this day is globally observed on 15th July since 2014. Dr. Shaista Sohail, Executive Director, Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan chaired this session. Prof. Dr. Habib Bokhari, Vice Chancellor, Kohsar University, Murree and Eng. Sajid Baloch, Executive Director of the NAVTTC, were the guests of honor. Among the youth leaders, Ayesha Sheikh, Asim Masoom Zubair, both re-

cipients of the Diana Award 2021, and an eight-year-old Ibrahim Haider impressed the audience with their success stories through harnessing their extracurricular skills. Several students presented their technology inventions, including the low-cost cell phone & iPad chargers, homemade ventilators, and a robot. Students participating in the event voted robotics project by Muhammad Fozan Javed as the best one and was given a National Skills University technology shield. The Executive Director elaborated on the importance of skills and briefed about several upcoming projects for the youth, includ-

ing Prime Minister Kamyab Jawan's Program various components, addressing the empowerment of youth and specifically skills-based training. She advised the youth to work for the nation's benefit and be part of the upcoming green campus initiative. This program will harness the potentials of youths in saving energy, keeping campuses clean and green, and recycling initiatives. Dr. Sohail appreciated the recognition of the National Skills University as a member of the UNESCO-UNEVOC network, the only university in the country having such credentials. She appreciated the Vice

Chancellor's efforts in the continued upkeep of the campus in every domain. The Vice Chancellor, Kohsar University Murree highlighted the importance of skills and their role in socio-economic development. The NAVTTC Executive Director discussed the Prime Minister's Hunarmand Pakistan Program and the overall NAVTTC contributions in skills education. In his concluding remarks, the NSU Vice Chancellor offered a vote of thanks and appreciation to the entire management team, engineering technologists from the Islamabad region, and students participating in this session.

PMD forecasts scattered rains on Eid Day

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) here on Thursday forecast scattered rain spells on Eid-ul-Azha for different cities including Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Talking to APP, spokesman PMD Dr. Zaheer Babar said that the rain spell would start in different cities from next week and would persist for three days in upper and central Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, Kashmir and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He said these spells would subside the temperature turning it into pleasant weather. He said that water level would rise in the major rivers improving the water reservoirs. He said heavy rains may trigger land sliding in the vulnerable areas of Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan and Upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. — APP

Traders demand more security in markets

RAWALPINDI: The traders Rawalpindi on Tuesday appealed to the district administration to increase security around all markets for the protection of customers rushing for Eid shopping. "There should be policemen in plain clothes present at vulnerable areas and ready to converge on a single whistle in case of an emergency," said President Markazi Anjum-e-Tajran Sharjeel Mir. Talking to APP, he said there were a large number of beggars, who apparently seek aims but involved in criminal activities like pick-pocketing and snatching different items from the people visiting the markets. To a query, he said DC Rawalpindi Amir Aqil Khan in a meeting had assured him for construction of more parking plaza in the garrison city to resolve traffic jam issues. — APP

Clothing brands witnessing rush

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Retailers of famous clothing brand stores in various shopping malls and markets are witnessing huge rush of customers where people of all age groups scrambling to shop ahead of Eid-ul-Azha. Various major fashion brands and clothing boutiques have displayed an exquisite variety of fabrics offering 20 to 50% discount offer according to the affordability of the customers. According to clothing brand retailers, buyers specially women have been showing keen interest in ready to wear clothes near Eid, as most brands have displayed number of discount rate sales on Eid collections. A young customer talking to a private news channel said that due to summer heat-wave mostly girls were relying on ready to wear light weight clothes. Shopping outlets dealing in kids-wear, perfumes and footwear also saw brisk sales, said a retailer in shopping mall Islamabad. Attractive colours with the latest designs of famous designers on quality stuff lawn is a gorgeous combination for fashion lovers on this Eid, said another girl. "We are facing huge rush of customers. Women shoppers are more in number and children's quality products are also in high demand," said a seller of a cloth-shop.



ISLAMABAD: To commemorate martyrs and veterans of 15th July 2016 coup attempt in Turkey, the tree plantation ceremony of 15 July Martyrs Memorial Forest was held in Fatima Jinnah F-9 Park. Turkish ambassador to Pakistan Mustafa Yurdukul, Federal minister Farough Nasim and others were present at the occasion. (News on Page 2). — DNA

ANF seizes 1885 kgs drugs valuing US\$ 107m

Police Station ANF, Islamabad (ICT) intercepted a Honda Vezel Hybrid Car in front of Ghouri Town, Phase 4-B house No.515 Islamabad

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Anti-Narcotics Force Pakistan seized 1885.66 Kgs narcotics valuing US \$ 107.951 million internationally, arrested 30 culprits and impounded 15 vehicles while conducting 26 counter-narcotics strikes throughout the country. According to a spokesperson, the seized drugs comprised 18.72 Kgs Heroin, 1492.75 Kgs Hashish, 120 Kgs Opium, 1.040 Kgs Amphetamine (Ice), 6600 x Ecstasy Tabs (3.850 Kgs), 1.600 Kgs Suspected Powder, 5460 x Alparozlam Tabs (1.500 Kgs), 565320 x Xanax Tabs (134 Kgs), 264000 x Valium Diazepam Tabs

(78 Kgs), 83760 x Pinix Alprazolam Tabs (26.5 Kgs), 7.5 Kgs Methamphetamine (Ice) & 0.200 Kgs Ecstasy Powder. Police Station Regional Directorate ANF Balochistan recovered 6 Kgs Hashish near Bismillah Hotel Dasht area District Sibi from personal possession of arrested accused Shoukat Ali resident of Mastung. In another operation, Police Station ANF Balochistan, Quetta intercepted an Auto Rickshaw at Hazar Ganji Bus stop near Peyalah Hotel, Quetta and recovered 23 Kgs Hashish from personal possession of arrested accused Abdul Waheed, Muhammad Akhtar & Ali Mehdi residents of Quetta.

Police Station ANF Mianwali intercepted a Hino Mazda Truck near Hamza Cotton Factory MM road Mianwali and recovered 78 Kgs Hashish from secret cavity of seized truck. 2 x accused Bakhat Muhammad resident of Qilla Abdullah & Asad Khan resident of Pishin were arrested on the spot. In another operation, Police Station Regional Directorate ANF Punjab, Lahore intercepted a motorcycle near Mehmood Botti Orange Train Station, Lahore and recovered 48 Kgs Hashish from personal possession of arrested accused Muhammad Arshad resident of Lahore. Police Station ANF Lahore intercepted a Suzuki Cultus Car near Rescue 1122 Office, Singhpura

G.T road, Lahore and recovered 9.600 Kgs Hashish from secret cavities of seized car. 1 x accused Muhammad Islam resident of Attock was arrested on the spot. In eighth operation, Police Station ANF Faisalabad intercepted a Hino Truck near Faisalabad Motorway Toll Plaza Sargodha — Faisalabad road District Faisalabad and recovered 120 Kgs Opium & 408 Kgs Hashish from secret cavity of seized truck. 2 x accused Muhammad Wali & Sami Ullah residents of Qilla Abdullah were arrested on the spot. Police Station ANF, Islamabad arrested a person Shah Nawaz and recovered 1.600 Kgs suspected powder from his house located at Post Office Phul Garan House

No. 214, Islamabad. In another operation, Regional Directorate ANF Rawalpindi conducted a raid at 26 No. Chungi near Attock Petrol Pump GT road, Islamabad and recovered 2.170 Kgs Heroin from personal possession of arrested accused Tariq Mehmood resident of Gujranwala. Police Station ANF, Islamabad (ICT) intercepted a Honda Vezel Hybrid Car in front of Ghouri Town, Phase 4-B house No.515 Islamabad. During search of the car, recovered 7.300 Kgs Heroin which was concealed in shopping bags lying inside the said vehicle. 2 x accused Jan Agha and Nasir Ahmed residents of Peshawar were arrested on the spot.

Violence spillover

EARLIER this week, two security personnel, including an officer, embraced martyrdom while three others incurred injuries in clashes with militants in Zewa, Kurram district. The incident took place as paramilitary forces were conducting an operation to rescue five workers of a cellular company who were kidnapped by a commander affiliated with the Islamic State (IS). Details from the reports are concerning as a senior official from the area confirmed the presence of militant groups like IS in the central part of Kurram. What is even more worrisome is the fact that on the other end of the clash with the security personnel were members of the TTP. While a cordon and search operation is ongoing in the area to eliminate other militants, it is important to note that this area was de-notified as a conflict zone in 2011. Therefore, the re-emergence of militant outfits in the area is extremely concerning, especially that of the TTP. Since the start of the year, the TTP has claimed 32 attacks inside Pakistan. Pakistan has been warning the international community for a while that the situation in Afghanistan is emboldening militants residing along the border. Now, Pakistan is experiencing the fallout of violence more than any other country in the region. The existence of TTP bases inside Afghanistan is a known fact and Kabul has done little to weed out anti-Pakistan militants. Even a UN report last year stated that more than 6,000 TTP fighters had taken refuge in Afghanistan. As an eight-member delegation including Afghan peace official Abdullah Abdullah and former president Hamid Karzai prepare to meet the Taliban for talks in Doha this week, it is crucial some headway is made regarding the speeding up of peace talks. It is important for the stalled talks to resume between the Ghani administration and the Taliban as well because the status quo is only benefiting the cause of spoilers at the moment. Kabul must take more ownership of the process instead of pointing fingers in all directions while its neighbours are beginning to experience the fallout from the unrelenting violence.



Circular issues

SOMEHOW the government has been unable to tackle the circular debt problem despite promises to the IMF and to the people of Pakistan. Now reportedly the government is trying to get the power to impose more surcharges in the consumer tariff. While the government's economic managers negotiated with the IMF there was an understanding that the government would make efforts to contain the spiraling circular debt and also generate resources to fund future projects. The government is apparently unable to meet its financial obligations in the power sector and as a result the sector is marred by increasing circular debt and other problems. If the government imposes more surcharges, it is consumers who will be placed under ever more pressure. The circular debt has hiked to an enormous and unprecedented level of Rs2.4 trillion from just Rs0.7 trillion in June 2017. In two years, the circular debt jumped more than double to Rs1.6 trillion in June 2019, and after another two years now it stands at nearly Rs2.4 trillion. The point is that consumers should not be expected to pay any sovereign guaranteed loans such as Sukuks or principal amounts of loans including interest payments. If any surcharge becomes part of the tariff, it brings extra burden to the people, who are already reeling under the double whammy of the Covid-19 pandemic and reduced livelihood opportunities with surging inflation. Similarly, no surcharge is justified for funding any public-sector projects. Neither should the government transfer any financial obligation of the federal government regarding electric power services to the consumers. The 21-member standing committee on energy of the Power Division has suggested amendments to the Regulation of Generation, Transmission, and Distribution of Electric Power Act, 1997. There have rightly been concerns raised about this proposed amendment. All such alterations are the responsibility of the Council of Common Interests because all provinces will bear the brunt of any changes in such policies. It is a bad idea to go headlong into such major alterations in power sector tariffs; some way has to be found to contain the circular debt.

A pivotal moment for the Palestinian struggle

Mouin Rabbani



The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) for many years operated as a genuinely representative and overwhelmingly popular national movement. If this began to diminish in the aftermath of the PLO's 1982 forced departure from Lebanon and subsequent internal divisions, it was compensated for by the First Intifada which erupted in the occupied territories in 1987. That mass uprising reverberated so powerfully across the region that within weeks the Lebanese Amal movement

AS the ceasefire between Israel and Palestinian organisations in the Gaza Strip entered into force in the early hours of May 21, celebrations erupted throughout the Palestinian world. From their towns in Israel and the occupied territories to refugee camps in the surrounding Arab states, Palestinians took to the streets not to express relief at the end of Israel's latest rampage, but to affirm the recovered unity with which they had sabotaged Israel's war machine. It is a remarkable transformation that in the space of mere weeks has given their struggle for self-determination a new lease on life and resonated powerfully throughout – and well beyond – the Arab world. As recently as March, the Trump administration's Metternich-in-residence, Prince Jared of Kushner, triumphantly announced that “We are witnessing the last vestiges of what has been known as the Arab-Israeli conflict.” Casually dismissing the Question of Palestine as “nothing more than a real-estate dispute”, he ridiculed its centrality to the region as a “myth” that he had effortlessly punctured with a fistful of F-35s. Kushner was convinced that together with former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, he had solved the Question of Palestine with a formula that had been hiding in plain sight for over seven decades: pretend it does not exist, and it will fade away. At one level, reality – shaped by the events of the past three decades – did seem increasingly aligned with such hubris. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) for many years operated as a genuinely representative and overwhelmingly popular national movement. If this began to diminish in the aftermath of the PLO's 1982 forced departure from Lebanon and subsequent internal divisions, it was compensated for by the First Intifada which erupted in the occupied territories in 1987. That mass uprising reverberated so powerfully across the region that within weeks the Lebanese Amal movement and the Syrian government felt compelled to lift their murderous years-long siege of Beirut's Palestinian refugee camps. The 1993 Oslo agreement formed a turning point. The separatism implicit in Palestinian nationalism was formalised in an agreement that detached the Question of Palestine from the Arab-Israeli conflict. One could argue that Egypt's previous abandonment of Arab ranks, the preoccupation of Arab states with the Iran-Iraq war throughout the 1980s, the squeeze put upon the PLO by the Gulf states after the 1990-1991 Kuwait crisis and upon its dominant Fatah movement by the ascendancy of Hamas in the occupied territories, and then the preparedness of Syria – and therefore Lebanon – to negotiate a separate peace with Israel left PLO

leader Yasser Arafat with few alternatives. If so, he chose the worst of the bad options. With the stroke of a pen, the Palestinian diaspora and Palestinians in Israel – together constituting more than half the world's Palestinians – were shunted to the margins of Palestinian politics. As the centre of gravity shifted from the PLO to the newly-established Palestinian Authority (PA), these communities were explicitly excluded from participation in its institutions and elections. While Palestinians in Israel had their own political parties, the political significance of the diaspora, which had disproportionately led and sustained the national movement, dwindled away to little more than a demographic reality. Within the occupied territories a similar process was taking place. As Israel began to replace cheap labour from the occupied territories with foreign workers in the aftermath of the First Intifada and the transformation of its economy required less of them, successive governments worked to increasingly isolate the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza Strip from Israel and from each other. After the arrival of the PA in the mid-1990s, this process of geographic fragmentation accelerated exponentially, now also enforced within each of these territories. This policy is an essential ingredient of the 2007 Fatah-Hamas schism, and numerous analysts have noted that maintaining a divided Palestinian polity has since become an Israeli priority. The fruits of these efforts, ripened by Palestinian leaderships preoccupied with maintaining power and cultivating foreign support for their factional struggles rather than conflict with Israel, became increasingly visible. Akin to municipal governments, and with few exceptions, the leadership of each Palestinian community dealt with only local matters. Thus, Hamas's relationship with Israel was largely reduced to seeking relief from the punishing blockade of the Gaza Strip, Arab parties within Israel focused on the state's increasingly brazen racism towards their constituents, while in Ramallah, President Mahmoud Abbas became almost wholly devoted to dying in office. At the formal, institutional level national politics was increasingly a thing of the past. At the regional level, a similar trend emerged. Convinced by Abbas's paralysis and Israel's walls and fences that Kushner and Netanyahu had finally rid them of the troublesome Question of Palestine, Arab autocrats openly embraced Greater Israel in order to obtain special treatment from Washington. They gambled that Palestinians would no longer shame them with rebellion and martyrdom, and that their own peoples would obligingly leave it to the

courts to resolve what remained of this “real-estate dispute” and move on. Palestinians have a habit of rising up when they are at their weakest and most desperate and have been demonstrably abandoned to their dire fate. And that is what they did in 2021. The expulsions of Palestinians from their homes in Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of East Jerusalem and the repeated raids on Al-Aqsa Mosque, which in Israeli calculations would have pit the might of the state against the sequestered and pauperised residents of East Jerusalem, mobilised Palestinians inside the Green Line, first to the Holy City and then within Israel. In contrast to its previous confrontations with Israel, this time Hamas struck the first blow and did so for reasons that ostensibly had nothing to do with conditions in the Gaza Strip. Within days Palestinian demonstrators in Jordan and Lebanon, along with at least as many Jordanians and Lebanese, were massing on the borders while increasingly large demonstrations erupted throughout the West Bank and Arab world in support of the Palestinians. In Washington the top military officer, General Mark Milley, warned of the “risk [of] broader destabilization... [and] a whole series of negative consequences if the fighting continues”. The chief myth-makers, in other words, were revealed to be Kushner, Netanyahu, and their now invisible partners. Collectively, the mobilisation sent an unmistakable message that despite all efforts to the contrary, Palestine remains a national as well as an Arab cause. Perhaps it was on account of the powerful resonance of Al-Aqsa Mosque. More likely it was a confluence of dynamics that produced a collective realisation that if rights are not defended here and now, they will be lost forever. In any case, the municipal model of Palestinian politics has been shattered. In the recent past, the 1987-1993 Intifada led to Oslo, while the 2000-2004 Intifada concluded with Abbas in power and the Palestinians largely domesticated. Israel and its Western allies will now work hard to re-pacify the Palestinians, and revive a model that has focused Palestinian attentions primarily inward and functioned so well for their adversaries. For Palestinians, remaining mobilised is crucial. More importantly, they need to find a way to seize the moment and definitively consign fragmentation to the past in order to once again confront their existential challenges on a national basis. The alternative is a perpetuation of what is erroneously termed the status quo. Rather than being a static state of affairs, the status quo is in fact a dynamic reality characterised by a continuous process of dispossession that shows no signs of abating.

– Courtesy: Al Jazeera

Understanding American legacy in Afghanistan

Fawaz Turki

American troops began their mass withdrawal on July 2, from the one place that had been, from the outset, the epicentre of their war effort in Afghanistan: Bagram Air Base, rebuilt in 2006 at a cost of \$286 million, not just as a military facility but as home away from home for the 100,000-plus servicemembers who had at one time or another passed through its gates, where they enjoyed the same life of abundance that they had known in the US. The troops departed in stealth, in the dead of night, leaving a wasteland behind

THE drama finally reached its feeble denouement, not with a bang but a whisper, as the top US commander in Afghanistan, Gen. Scott Miller, relinquished his post at a ceremony in Kabul on Monday, close on the heels of his troops' near complete withdrawal from the country, bringing to an end the mother of all misadventures in the history of the United States. Oh, yes, the once brash nation-builder is home-bound. In a speech outside the White House on Thursday, President Biden, who prefers to talk about “happy things”, effectively told his fellow-Americans not to fret over whether the price they had paid in blood and treasure had all been in vain. And, no, Afghanistan is decidedly not spiralling toward civil war and headed for an inevitable Taliban takeover, as many – very many – doom-sayers in the media are predicting and as his own intelligence community had warned would happen. Less than 24 hours after the president's speech, Taliban forces, as if to interject, penetrated Kandahar, Afghanistan's second largest city, in a sweeping offensive that began weeks earlier, during which they were able to seize 160 of the country's 400 districts, often with little or no resistance from government troops, leaving the group with control of one-third to one-half of the country. American troops began their mass withdrawal on July 2, from the one place that had been, from the outset, the epicentre of their war effort in Afghanistan: Bagram Air Base, rebuilt in 2006 at a cost of \$286 million, not just as a military facility but as home away from home for the 100,000-plus servicemembers who

had at one time or another passed through its gates, where they enjoyed the same life of abundance that they had known in the US. The troops departed in stealth, in the dead of night, leaving a wasteland behind. Two decades of war had indeed exacted a heavy price in blood and treasure for Americans – as for Afghans. The war left roughly 2,400 servicemembers dead and 20,000 wounded. Well over 71,000 Afghan civilians were killed by crossfire, improvised explosive devices (IED's), assassinations and bombings, and 60,000 troops in battle. And those three trillion dollars American taxpayers had coughed up to pay for their government's intervention in that impoverished land? It was spent on a dizzying array of nation-building projects. In addition to the billions of dollars lavished on equipping and training the Afghan Army, still more were spent on infrastructure, from dams, canals and highways – which soon were left in disrepair – to hospitals, schools and community centers – which just as soon stood empty – with all that money either going to waste or breeding corruption. As we speak, Afghanistan is poised to return to the status quo ante that prevailed two decades earlier – with the Taliban ascendant. It is as if nothing had happened in the interim. All for naught. Zilch. Once upon a time, say before and for a time after the First World War, most Americans preferred to live the safe, isolated lives that the moat of two oceans gave them, where “America goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy”. The words are those of John Quincy Adams, the sixth president of the United States, who served

between 1825 and 1829 and whose astute ideas about the necessity of insinuating humanist into the public discourse as into the projection of America's power profile around the world continue to retain enduring relevance in our time among progressives, including progressives who currently serve as legislators on Capitol Hill. His body of thought was invoked – in a frenzy of where-is-John Quincy Adams-when-you-need-him moment – by progressives everywhere this month, for it was almost exactly two centuries ago, on July 4, 1821, when Adams, then secretary of state, delivered his iconic speech to Congress about the follies of a big power that “always thinks it has a great soul and vast views beyond the comprehension of the weak ... for were [America] to become the dictatress of the world, she would be no longer the ruler of her own spirit” and about how “American glory is not domination, [for] her march is the march of the mind”. Were John Quincy Adams alive today, he would no doubt look with puzzled contempt at how American foreign policy, certainly since the second half of the last century, had been made to perform tasks of ever increasing tawdriness. And intervening, not to mention regime-changing – especially when enacted stealthily by the boys from Langley – in other countries may be a norm for a big power, but both its means and meaning embody tawdriness in the extreme. I say the ideals that animate the inspiring vision of this eloquent American statesman still apply today and they need to have a leading positional value in American foreign policy as America seeks in the 21st century to continue being leader of what it calls the free world.

– Courtesy: Gulf News

Briefs

Swedish diplomat new UN envoy to Yemen

UNITED NATIONS: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has named Swedish diplomat Hans Grundberg as his new special envoy to conflict-racked Yemen, diplomats said Thursday. Guterres made his choice known to the UN Security Council's 15 member states, and Grundberg's formal nomination should be made public soon, the diplomats said on condition of anonymity. Grundberg – a Middle East specialist who has served as the European Union's ambassador to Yemen since 2019 – would replace Britain's Martin Griffiths, who was named in May to be the world body's under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs. In June, Griffiths told the Security Council his efforts to end years of war in Yemen had failed, expressing his “deep regret” not to have made more progress during his three years in the post. Conflict flared in Yemen in 2014 when Huthi insurgents seized the capital Sanaa, prompting a Saudi-led military intervention to prop up the government the following year. Some 80 percent of Yemenis are now dependent on aid, in what the UN calls the world's worst humanitarian crisis. The war has also displaced millions of people. – APP

Belarus crackdown ‘completely unacceptable’

GENEVA: The UN's human rights chief on Thursday slammed Belarus's escalating crackdown, condemning arrests and raids on the offices and homes of rights activists and journalists this week. “I am deeply alarmed at the latest developments in Belarus,” Michelle Bachelet said in a statement. Belarusian security services on Wednesday raided a dozen human rights and opposition groups as President Alexander Lukashenko's regime clamps down on civil society in a months-long crackdown on dissent. The long-serving authoritarian leader who sparked mass rallies by claiming a sixth presidential term last year, has drawn condemnation from the West whose leaders say the vote was not free or fair. Wednesday's raids came a day after Lukashenko vowed to “find and bring to justice” all of his country's “wretched NGOs” in a meeting with Russian leader and key ally Vladimir Putin. The notorious KGB targeted at least five independent human rights organisations – including the prominent Viasna group and the Belarusian Helsinki Committee – and detained several activists. Viasna has been monitoring mass arrests that followed huge anti-Lukashenko protests last year. The group said that at least nine rights activists were detained, including its chairman, Ales Belyatsky. – APP

Kerber drops out of Olympics

PARIS: Angelique Kerber became the latest star to pull out of the Tokyo Olympic tennis, saying on Thursday “my body needs rest”. “The thought of participating in the Olympics has been a constant motivation for me over the past few months,” wrote Kerber, who is the highest ranked German at 22. Kerber, 33, won silver in the women's singles in the last Olympics in Rio, losing to Monica Puig in three sets in the final. She reached the quarterfinals in 2012 in London. “London 2012 and Rio 2016 as part of the German team has always been one of my favorite memories,” she wrote on Twitter. “That makes it even more disappointing for me to accept the fact that my body needs rest after the intense few weeks that lie behind me and that I have to recover first before returning to competition later this summer!” Kerber wrote. She won the grass-court event at Bad Homburg on June 26 and then reached the semi-final at Wimbledon before losing to eventual champion Ashleigh Barty. – APP

Yerevan's statements incompatible with reality

Azerbaijan and Armenia resumed the second war after that latter started firing at Azerbaijani civilians and military positions starting September 27, 2020

DNA

BAKU: Baku has said that Yerevan's statements, which are incompatible with the new post-war regional reality, are directed against Armenia itself. Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Leyla Abdullayeva made the remarks on July 15 while commenting on Armenian Deputy Prime Minister Tigran Avinyan's statement that “there will not be a peace treaty [between Armenia and Azerbaijan] until the issue of the status of Karabakh is resolved”.

“Apparently, Avinyan has forgotten that the elections are over, and now is the time to do real things, not populism. In general, the statements of Armenian officials, which do not coincide with the new reality that has emerged in the region and try to condition peace with any baseless issues, are primarily directed against the country itself,” Abdullayeva said. She described the normalization of relations based on respect and the

observance of international law principles as the best means for achieving regional peace, security, and progress.

“This is the position always demonstrated by Azerbaijan,” she added. Abdullayeva said that after eliminating the factor of occupation of its territories, Azerbaijan stated that it was ready to normalize relations with Armenia, and supported the initiatives of a new cooperation.

“This is because Azerbaijan

is a supporter of constructiveness,” Abdullayeva

noted. As far as the references to the so-called

status of the Karabakh region are concerned,

Azerbaijan has declared its position repeatedly

and at a high level, she said. “In his speech on

July 14, the head of our

state once again stressed that there is no territorial unit called Nagorno-Karabakh on Azerbaijan's territory.

There is no Nagorno-Karabakh, there is Karabakh. On the basis of the decree I [President Aliyev] signed on July 7, the Karabakh economic zone was established. It unites the districts related to Karabakh,” the spokesperson said, quoting Aliyev.

Commenting on some foreign representatives' statements similar to those of the Armenian

deputy prime minister, Abdullayeva regretted that empty promises

and illusions voiced by the said people won't bring any

benefits to Armenia. “It must realize this and draw lessons from the

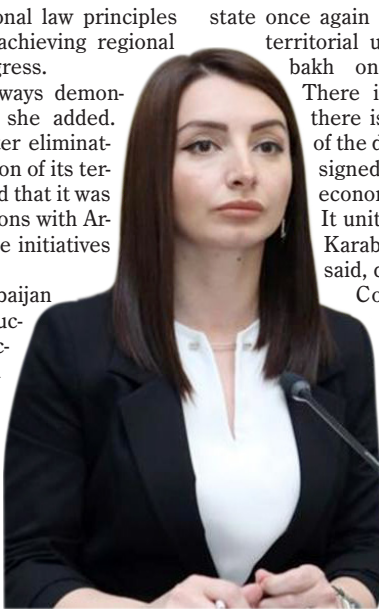
past and history,” she said.

Commenting on the recent escalation in Karabakh and the Azerbaijani-Armenian border, Azerbaijan earlier condemned Armenia's attempts to disrupt fragile

peace in the region.

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

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



Pakistan participates in famous Slavianski Bazaar

DNA

VITEBSK: The Embassy of Pakistan, Minsk in collaboration with the Museum of History of Private Collections held the opening ceremony of the Art/Photographic Exhibition “Treasures of Pakistan” by on 15 July at 1400 hours. Around 70 Art pieces and photographs by Pakistan's renowned Artist Jimmy Engineer and photographer Hamid Hussain are being showcased in the exhibition organized in the framework of XXX International Festival of Arts “Slavianski Bazar in Vitebsk” which will continue to be opened for the general public till 31 July 2021.

Around seventy guests hailing from different sectors including government officials, Vitebsk governorate, university faculty/ students and expatriate Pakistanis attended the inaugural ceremony held at the Museum. The exhibition is likely to be seen by a large number of visitors in the coming days, currently visiting Vitebsk in connection with the Slavianski Bazaar,



which is an important event held regularly every year in the month of July. The inaugural ceremony commenced with the speech of Piotr Podgursky, Head of the Cultural Division of the Vitebsk Regional Executive Committee. Ms Tatiana Starinskaya, Director of the Vitebsk Regional Ethnography

Museum and Prof. Anatoliy Shchastn, Rector of Vitebsk State Medical University also spoke on this occasion. The speakers appreciated the participation of Pakistan in the Slavianski Bazaar through this exhibition. Ambassador of Pakistan to Belarus Sajjad Haider Khan gave a comprehensive speech covering Pakistan's its rich Art and cultural heritage developed over several civilizations including that of Mehrgarh, Indus Valley, Harappa and Gandhara. The diversity of art and culture, contemporary art scene and tourism potential of Pakistan were also extensively covered during the event. Subsequently, the Ambassador interacted with the media personnel including TV, Radio and print media. The exhibition is part of the Cultural Diplomacy efforts launched by the Embassy to create better awareness about Pakistan among the friendly people of Belarus. Earlier, in April a three week long exhibition was held at the University of Culture and Arts, Minsk. Another exhibition is being held in Minsk in August 2021 as part of Independence of Pakistan Day celebrations.

WI T20Is important ahead of WC: Hafeez

SPORTS DESK

NOTTINGHAM: Veteran batter Mohammad Hafeez thinks that the upcoming T20I series against England and West Indies is important for the side to gain confidence ahead of the all-important T20 World Cup in UAE later this year. The 40-year-old Hafeez, who is out of the ODI side, will be back in action in T20Is when Pakistan take on England at Trent Bridge in series opener. Hafeez opined that performing well on away tours describes team's ability. “The series is crucial for us as it will help us understand where we are placed as a team for this year's ICC Men's T20 World Cup. Good performance against a top ranked side will give players and team management great confidence going into the mega event,” Hafeez told pcb.com.pk. “By adopting conditions and winning on away tours is always vital as it extracts team's mental toughness. It helps you to come out as a better side,” he added. Meanwhile, Hafeez was pleased with his performances in white-ball cricket in England and looks forward to play strong England team. “I am happy to be back in England again as I have great memories of playing in this country. The T20I series against England will be a treat to watch for the fans and good display of skills and talent is expected from both sides.



Marsh paces Australia in first win over WI

AGENCIES

SAINT LUCIA: An outstanding all-round performance by Mitchell Marsh earned Australia their first victory of the five-match T20 International series as the visitors hung on for a four-run victory over the West Indies in the fourth match at the Daren Sammy Stadium in St Lucia on Wednesday. With half-centuries already in the first two matches of the series, Marsh played the Caribbean bowlers for 75 off 44 balls with six sixes and four fours to pace his team to a challenging total of 189 for six after choosing to bat first. He put on 114 for the second wicket with Aaron Finch, the Australian captain contributing 53 as leg-spinner Hayden Walsh once again led the West Indies bowling effort with figures of three for 27. Lendl Simmons led off the West Indies chase with a boisterous innings of 72 at the top of the order but when he fell to Marsh, one of three wickets for the experienced all-rounder, the balance of the match began to tilt in favour of an Australian side seeking to avoid an unprecedented four consecutive defeats in the same T20 series. Spectacular hitting by Fabian Allen and Andre Russell gave the West Indies hope going into the final over after they combined to take 25 runs off the penultimate over bowled by Riley Meredith. But needing 11 runs to win in the last over with Russell on strike Mitchell Starc was right on target to earn the tourists a measure of consolation after already surrendering the series. For Marsh, whose contributions of 75 and three for 24 were both personal bests in T20 Internationals, the pitch conditions on a night when light showers twice interrupted his innings suited him perfectly. “I'm from WA (Western Australia), so a bit of pace off the pitch suited me nicely and really allowed me to get away,” he explained after receiving the Man of the Match award. “We knew it was always going to be a challenge to contain the West Indies big-hitters, whatever total we got, and I'm just grateful to be able to make useful contributions with bat and ball.”

PCB offers NZ to play five T20Is

SPORTS DESK

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has offered New Zealand Cricket (NZC) to play two additional T20Is on the tour of Pakistan. New Zealand will tour Pakistan for the first time in 18 years where they are scheduled to play three ODIs and as many T20Is.

Donnarumma joins PSG

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain said on Wednesday that they had completed the signing of Italy's Euro 2020 goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma on a five-year deal. The 22-year-old, who saved two penalties in the Euro 2020 final and was named player of the tournament, heads to France on a free transfer from AC Milan. Donnarumma will be in competition with the experienced Keylor Navas for the goalkeeper's jersey. “I am delighted to be part of this huge club,” said Donnarumma in a statement released by PSG. “I feel ready to take on this new challenge and continue to grow here. “With Paris, I want to win as much as possible and to bring joy to the supporters.” During his six seasons with the Rossoneri, the Naples-born goalkeeper made 215 appearances in Serie A along with 16 in Europa League matches and 12 in the Italian Cup (including the 2016 and 2018 finals). He is the third player to sign for PSG on a free transfer this summer following Spanish defender Sergio Ramos, who was out of contract at Real Madrid, and Dutch midfielder Georginio Wijnaldum from Liverpool. PSG coach Mauricio Pochettino will have the luxury of choosing between the two experienced shot-stoppers as he looks to lead the club to a long elusive European Cup. – Agencies



SAINT LUCIA: Australian players celebrating after winning first T20I against West Indies. – DNA

Pak, Uzbekistan pledge to further solidify relations

FROM PAGE 01

presidential palace by a smartly turned out contingent of its armed forces. Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev received the prime minister at the official welcome ceremony, where contingents of Uzbek forces presented a static salute to the visiting dignitary. Uzbek President Mirziyoyev and Prime Minister Imran Khan introduced their delegations to each other before proceeding to the official talks. Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Information Minister Chaudhry Fawad Hussain, Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed, Minister for Maritime Affairs Ali Haider Zaidi, National Security Adviser Dr Moeed Yusuf and Khyber Pukhtunkhwa Minister for Information Technology Atif Khan were present. Earlier, Prime Minister Imran Khan arrived in Uzbekistan on a two-day official visit at the invitation of Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev. Prime Minister of Uzbekistan Abdulla Aripov received PM Imran Khan on his arrival at the Tashkent International Airport. The Prime Minister was accompanied by Information Minister Chaudhry Fawad Hussain, Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed, Minister for Maritime Affairs Ali

Haider Zaidi, National Security Adviser Dr Moeed Yusuf and Khyber Pukhtunkhwa Minister for Information Technology Atif Khan. Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi joined from Tajikistan after concluding his official visit. “The Prime Minister's visit to Uzbekistan is important in terms of coopera-

tion on matters relating to regional and bilateral trade, international relations and security,” the PM Office said.

Prime Minister Imran Khan was received by his Uzbek counterpart Abdulla Aripov at the Tashkent International Airport. During the visit,

several agreements and Memoranda of

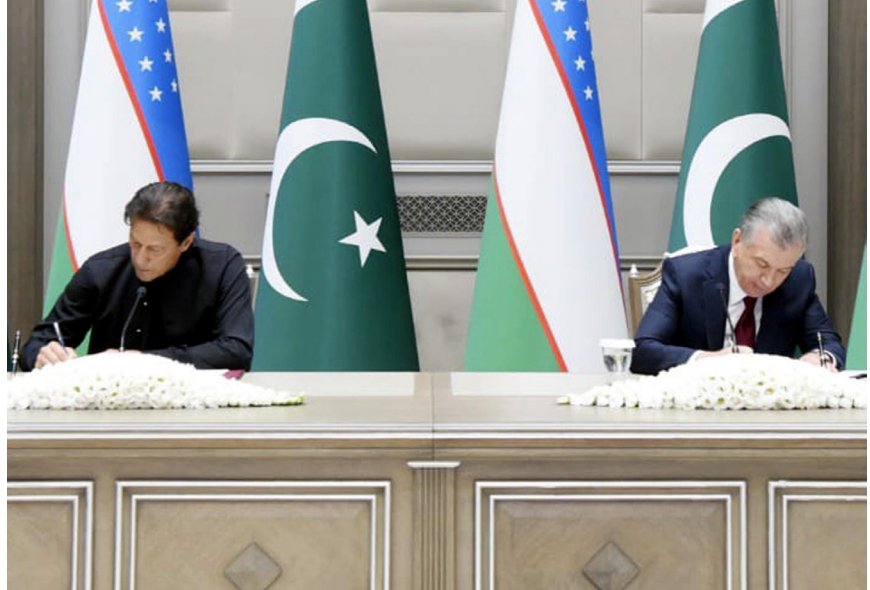
Understanding will be signed between the two countries on various issues of common interest.

These include the areas such as transportation of goods, cooperation between the two chambers of commerce,

trade, education, culture, and tourism. Soon after his arrival, the prime minister visited the national monument of Uzbekistan and laid a wreath. Prime Minister Imran Khan lays wreath at the national monument of Uzbekistan.

The Prime Minister will also participate in the International Conference on “Central and South Asia Regional Connectivity: Challenges and Opportunities.” The Conference will be attended by ministers and high-level representatives from Central and South Asia as well as other important countries, international organizations, international financial institutions, think tanks and scholars.

In his interactions during the visit, the Prime Minister will highlight his vision of ‘Naya Pakistan,’ Pakistan's positive contribution to peace and security at the regional and international level, and the shift from geopolitics to geo-economics. The Foreign Office said Pakistan and Uzbekistan enjoy historic fraternal relations, marked by mutual respect and rooted in common culture and similar traditions.



Security forces successfully recover...

FROM PAGE 01

terrain under extreme weather conditions. Terrorists were continuously tracked and pursued. In an Intelligence Based Operation on 13 July 21, 3 terrorists were killed and Captain Basit Ali and Sepoy Hazrat Bilal sacrificed their lives for this honourable cause of rescuing the innocent labourers.

With determination, Security Forces continued the pursuit of Terrorists and on 15 July 21 during another exchange of fire, successfully rescued 5 x abducted labourers.

The operation is still under way to apprehend / eliminate the remaining Terrorists. Security Forces are consistently endeavouring to ensure the security and well being of our innocent civilians who have been wholeheartedly supporting the security forces in fighting the menace of terrorism.

Pakistan to host 2-day Afghan peace...

FROM PAGE 01

the neighbouring country has direct impact on our own security. He said spoilers should not be allowed to exploit any security vacuum in Afghanistan.

Zahid Hafeez Chaudhry said that Pakistan has been hosting over three million Afghan refugees for decades and now it is not possible to accept more refugees. He said regional economic activity and connectivity are vital for peace and prosperity of the region, which is directly linked with tranquility in Afghanistan.

Replying to a question, he said Pakistan wants to reopen Chaman-Spin Boldak border crossing with Afghanistan to facilitate cross border movement of the people. Answering a question regarding killing of Chinese nationals in a bus incident in Pakistan, the Spokesperson said investigations are underway and nothing can be ruled out at the moment. He said the security of Chinese nationals always remains a key priority for Pakistan.

Police target Tour team Bahrain Victorious

PAU, FRANCE: French police searched the hotel rooms and team bus of the Bahrain Victorious cycling team taking part at the Tour de France in an anti-doping raid that went on for several hours overnight.

The raid took place late Wednesday and carried on until around 2a.m., sources close to the dossier told AFP in Pau on Thursday. Bahrain Victorious has won two stages on the 2021 edition: Slovenian rider Matej Mohoric claimed stage seven and Dylan Teuns triumphed on stage eight.

The team's climb specialist climber, Wout Poels of the Netherlands, wore a grim smile as he lined up on the front row of stage 18 on Thursday wearing the polka dot king-of-the-mountains jersey. The team's press officer said his team had complied with all that was requested of them, and that they were now expecting an explanation for the raid.

The Movistar team were at the same hotel as Bahrain Victorious but no searches were carried out of the Spanish team in the overnight operation in the southern Basque town of Pau, which is a gateway to the Pyrenees and known for its French Top 14 rugby union team. The police unit concerned confirmed the raids and said files on the riders had been confiscated.

The sports director of the team, Croatian Vladimir Miholjevic, said his riders were shaken. “Following stage 17, we were greeted by several French police officers. We were not given a warrant to read through, but the team complied with all the officers' requests,” he said. “The process had impacted our riders' recovery and meal planning,” he said after access to team facilities was temporarily denied overnight.

The outfit, which leads the Teams standings and may be in line for two awards on the final Tour de France ceremony in Paris on Sunday, said they had fully cooperated with the police. – APP

AGENCIES

MONITORING DESK

BEIJING: China supports Pakistan and Saudi Arabia to develop photovoltaic power, according to a report published by Gwadar Pro.

Energy China Group signed a contract for the 300 megawatt EPC photovoltaic power generation (PV) project in Ragbi, Saudi Arabia. The report says, combination with the PV projects under CPCC, China is effectively supporting PV development in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. The project in Saudi is expected to create 900 local jobs and provide green electricity to 45,300 homes. After completion, the project will generate an average of 2,240 kWh of electricity per year, with a total power generation of 894 million kWh in the first year and a CO2 emission reduction of 779,900 tons. It is estimated that the total electricity generation in 25 years will be about 21.4 billion kWh, and the translated CO2 emission reduction will be nearly 18.62 million tons, which will effectively optimize the energy structure of Saudi.

Pakistan and Saudi have similar conditions and demand to develop PV energy. Shen Lei, the executive secretary of China Society of Natural Resources (CSNR), a scholar of the Chinese Academy of Science (CAS), said in a previous interview that several BRI countries with rich resources to develop photovoltaic power generation need to increase the proportion of PV in their energy mix. — APP

ANSAR M BHATTI IN TASHKENT

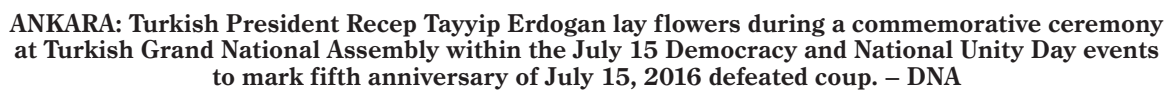
TASHKENT: Prime Minister Imran Khan inaugurated the Uzbekistan-Pakistan Business Forum on 15 July 2021. The event was organized by Pakistan in coordination with Uzbek authorities in Tashkent with a view to boosting bilateral trade and economic relations. The Prime Minister of Uzbekistan, Mr Abdulla Aripov, participated in the inauguration ceremony and delivered remarks. In his address, the Prime Minister highlighted Pakistan's historical, cultural and spiritual connections with Uzbekistan. The Prime Minister underlined the importance attached by Pakistan to deeper engagement with Central Asia and with Uzbekistan as the biggest economy in the region. The Prime Minister underscored that both countries must comprehensively upgrade trade and economic ties. Noting the participation of over 100 top Pakistani businessmen, the Prime Minister stressed that it presented a huge opportunity to forge stronger partnership with Uzbek counterparts. The Prime Minister welcomed the conclusion of a large number of business contracts and deals between various companies on the two sides. The Prime Minister emphasised in particular the primary importance of promoting connectivity and highlighted in this regard Pakistan's readiness to provide access through Pakistani seaports. The Prime Minister also highlighted the importance of Teens-Afghan railway project, connecting Termez-Mazar-e-Sharif-Kabul-Peshawar. The Prime Minister underscored that peace in Afghanistan was of pivotal importance in advancing the connectivity agenda. The Prime Minister highlight-

ed Pakistan's efforts in support of the peace process. The Forum was attended by more than 100 top Pakistani businessmen and in-

vestors representing major export sectors and logistic services and Uzbek businessmen from corresponding sectors. The Forum envisions enhancing

and diversifying the volume of trade between the two sides, exchanges of business delegations, identifying new avenues of trade and investment, and

involving private sector in the business ventures.
The Prime Minister is on a two-day visit to Uzbekistan.



Death toll in Germany storms rises to 21

BERLIN: The death toll in Germany from the worst flooding in over 200 years rose to at least 21 as dozens of people are still missing, police said Thursday. The extent of the damage and the overall situation in two of Germany's most affected flood-stricken states - Rhineland-Palatinate and North Rhine-Westphalia - remains unclear as rescue workers had to cope with torrential rainstorms which brought down 148 liters of rain per square meter within 48 hours.

At least 13 people have died in Germany's populous state North Rhine-Westphalia when they were surprised by the flash floods. — **Agencies**

SCCI, UCCI sign agreement to boost up Pak-Uzbek trade relations

DNA

TASHKENT: The Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) and Uzbekistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (UCCI) have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to further cement bilateral trade and economic trade relations.

The agreement was signed by SCCI president Sherbaz Bilour and UCCI president Ulug Beg during a high-level businessmen delegation meeting from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to Uzbekistan, according to a press release issued here on Thursday.

The delegation of businessmen from KP was led by

SCCI president Sherbaz Bilour. Senior vice president Engineer Manzoor Elahi and Vice president Junaid Altaf, former presidents Faiz Muhammad Faizi, Adeel Rauf, Zahidul-ah Shinwari, Industrialist Association Peshawar president Malik Imran Ishaq, former executive member Sohail Javed, Hasmnain Khurshid, Muhammad Asif and Shahbaz Anjum were along

among the delegation. According to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that was signed between SCCI and UCCI, both chambers would make concerted efforts to further en-

hance mutual trade volume between the two countries, besides bringing business community further near each other and full tap the investment potentials and take benefits from each other experiences as well. Sherbaz Bilour while speaking on the occasion stressed the need of cementing trade between Pakistan and Central Asian Republic countries, which would help to stabilize the economy of the both countries as well as create new investment opportunities to overcome unemployment issues in the country. He said that huge opportunities were available to enhance cooperation between Pakistan and Uzbekistan.



NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: The Hungary-Pakistan Trade & Economic Window (HPTWE), which is an initiative of the All Pakistan Business Forum, has started yielding results, as a number of Hungarian companies have shown their keen interest to import high quality rice from Pakistan.

During an online meeting with the Pakistan rice exporters, the Hungarian businessmen discussed investment and trade partnership in details with Pakistani food and rice companies.

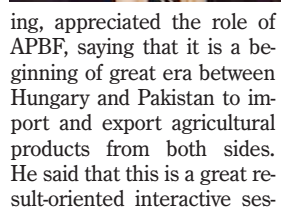
The meeting was arranged by the APBF with collaboration of Pakistan Embassy in Hungary and Agriculture Ministry of Hungary. Besides Pakistan rice exporters and Hungarian importers, the

meeting was attended by Ambassador of Pakistan to Hungary Mohammed Aejaaz, APBF President Syed Maaz Mahmood, General Secretary Khurram Niaz and APBF Lahore Board President Amir Munir while Hungarian Deputy State Secretary of Ministry of Agriculture Dr. David Bencsik represented his country.

Dr. David Bencsik, during the meeting, observed that Pakistan rice and food products offer a huge potential for exports, as a large segment of this industry is well-organized and has achieved international efficiency levels.

The Hungarian companies' representatives intended to visit Pakistan and study its food sector's market for partnerships and investment and to strengthen the bilateral trade relations.

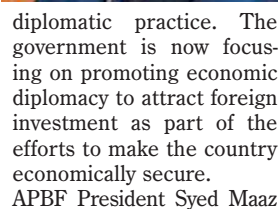
with Pakistan. Their prime interest was the rice import from Pakistan where they were interested to develop JVs with local counterparts. Ambassador of Pakistan to Hungary Mohemmed Aejaz, while addressing the meet-



sion, leading to enhancement in bilateral trade of the both countries. The Ambassador also applauded Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi's Economic Diplomacy as an essential part of Pakistan's modern



diplomatic practice. The government is now focusing on promoting economic diplomacy to attract foreign investment as part of the efforts to make the country economically secure. APBF President Syed Maaz



Mahmood, during the meeting, applauded the efforts of Ambassador of Pakistan to Hungary Mohammed Aejaz, as due to his efforts several Hungarian companies had already visited Pakistan and held B2B meetings with Pakistani companies for JVs in their respective sectors following the launch of HPTWE. Syed Maaz Mahmood said that the HPTWE was launched in an effort to fully utilize the bilateral trade potential of Pakistan and Hungary from current volume of meager \$44.3 million, engaging the Embassy of Hungary in Islamabad and the Pakistan Embassy in Budapest fully in this regard. He said that the European Union is Pakistan's largest export market representing over 30 percent of exports, with Hungary accounting for below 1 percent of the

total EU imports from Pakistan, which needs to be enhanced. He said that the slogan of Foreign Minister's Economic Diplomacy to broaden mutually beneficial trade and economic partnerships with European countries, have been yielding positive results, as Pakistan's exports to European Union has been increasing. Discussing the issues of Pakistan agri sector, he said the government should enhance the areas of research to encourage indigenous technological innovations and modernize its agriculture sector, as this has the potential source of employment. He said that Pakistan needs to move from traditional to modern agriculture to overcome its trade deficit and meet its socio-economic targets.

Azerbaijan's foreign trade turnover hits \$11.9bn

FOREIGN DESK

BAKU: The volume of Azerbaijan's foreign trade turnover amounted to \$11.9 billion in the first five months of 2021, the State Statistics Committee has reported.

Out of the total turnover, export amounted to \$7.5 billion or 63.3 percent, while imports amounted to \$4.3 billion or 36.7 percent.

Overall, the country's foreign trade turnover resulted in a surplus of \$3.1 billion.

Compared to the corresponding period in 2020, the country's foreign trade turnover increased by 21.3 percent in actual prices and decreased by 10.2 percent in real terms.

Moreover, legal entities and individual entrepreneurs in the country carried out trade operations with partners in 169 countries. Goods were exported to 100 countries and imported from 156 countries.

Furthermore, during the reported period, exports of non-oil and gas products increased by 25.8 percent in an actual term, and by 11.9 percent in real terms, compared to the same months of 2020, and amounted to \$907.6 million.

‘Will not
take part in
October vote’

WEB DESK

BAGHDAD: Shia leader Muqtada al-Sadr has announced he will not take part in Iraq's upcoming election in October, saying he is withdrawing his support from the current government and the one that will be elected to replace it.

One of the most influential figures in Iraq, al-Sadr led a political bloc that emerged as the biggest in the 2018 parliamentary election, with 54 seats in the 329-seat legislature. "To preserve what is left of the country and to save the country ... I inform you that I will not take part in this election," al-Sadr said on Thursday. Addressing the "great Iraqi people", he said in a televised speech: "Do not sell your homeland [to the corrupt] at any price, it is more valuable than anything else."

Al-Sadr, a longtime adversary of the United States in Iraq who has also opposed Iranian influence in the country, has millions of followers in Iraq and controls a large paramilitary group. The effect of al-Sadr's announcement was difficult to assess immediately.

Briefs

NAM lauds PM Imran's support to Palestine

NEW YORK: Over India's strong objections, a Non-Aligned Movement's ministerial conference has commended the role of Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan and four other leaders for their full support to the Palestinians cause, according to conference sources.

The prime minister's name was mentioned in a political declaration along with those of Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan, Iranian President Hassan Rohani and South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, citing their strong backing to the Palestinians' struggle for their inalienable rights.

The comprehensive declaration was unanimously adopted by the July 13-14 conference, hosted by Azerbaijan, the current Chairman of the 120-member movement. Azerbaijani Deputy Foreign Minister Araz Beyukaga Oglu Azimov presided. The declaration also incorporated Pakistan's positions on the right to self-determination, addressing root causes of terrorism and measures to address the new and emerging threats posed by terrorist attacks on the basis of xenophobia, racism and other form of intolerance. In his video statement, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi underscored the NAM's important role in promoting peace and development and presented concrete proposals to respond to current global challenges, including the coronavirus pandemic. — APP

65 more cases of Delta detected in Karachi

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Another 65 cases of the Delta variant of the coronavirus have been detected in Karachi, taking the total to 100, after 35 cases were confirmed earlier.

The National Institute of Virology (NIV) at the University of Karachi, which tested 2,062 samples sent by the Sindh Health Department on July 12 and 13, said in a statement on Thursday that 163 results came back positive. Of these, genotyping of "randomly selected 94 positive samples of Covid-19 revealed 65 cases of Delta variant, which makes 69 per cent of total samples tested," it said. Director of the International Centre for Chemical and Biological Sciences (ICCBS) at KU, Professor Dr Mohammad Iqbal Choudhary, while sharing the results, said that besides the Delta variant, two cases of the Beta (South African) variant, two cases of a wild-type variant and 25 cases of unidentified variants were also confirmed.

"The 25 [cases] may be Delta Plus variant or a new variant," the statement quoted Choudhary as saying. "The presence of Sars-CoV-2 Delta variant has already been confirmed in the Sindh province and its local transmission is evident from the recently identified cluster," he added.

CJCSC attends golden jubilee event at HIT

DNA

TAXILLA: Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC) General Nadeem Raza on Thursday has participated in the event related to Heavy Industries Taxila (HIT) Golden Jubilee commemoration as the chief guest. According to Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the ceremony was attended by the ambassador of Ukraine and Defence Attaché of the Peoples Republic of China in Pakistan along with key officials of their state companies.

On the occasion, CJCSC congratulated Heavy Industries Taxila, NORINCO and UKRSPEXEXPORT (USE) in achieving hallmarks of excellence besides establishing exemplary relations of mutual cooperation in Tank Technologies during the last five decades.

Australia helps Pakistan to strengthen covid-19 surveillance

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The Australian High Commission on Thursday launched an initiative with the National Institute of Health (NIH) to help double COVID-19 testing capacity across Islamabad and the four provincial capitals of Pakistan. The Australian grant will be administered by the Asian Development Bank through the National Disaster Risk Management Fund (NDRMF).

Australia's assistance aims to enhance genomic sequencing capacity for the early detection of new variants. This includes training 500 healthcare workers to use new lab equipment safely and effectively.

To support the Pakistan Preparedness and Response Plan for COVID-19 Pandemic and protect the vulnerable, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and NDRMF are fast tracking the project's implementation.



"Australia stands with the people and government of Pakistan in the battle against COVID-19. Strengthening the capacity



of laboratories is critical to preventing transmission of the virus, especially as new variants emerge," Australia's High

Commissioner Dr Geoffrey Shaw said. The initiative with NIH is the latest in a range of COVID-19 response projects by Australia in Pakistan. Australia has also contributed AUD130 million to the COVAX Facility to ensure equitable access of the vaccines to 92 countries, including Pakistan.

"While we have entered the vaccination stage of the pandemic, lessons from around the world continue to highlight the importance of public health preparedness. Australia is pleased to support Pakistan to undertake COVID-19 surveillance and vaccination, simultaneously," High Commissioner Shaw added.

The Executive Director of NIH, Major General Aamer Ikram said, "NIH deeply appreciates Australia's grant for pandemic management. This project is designed to upgrade NIH equipment and improve our diagnostic capabilities."

Australia's support will be put to immediate use in Pakistan's drive to combat COVID-19.

Pakistan closes Chaman Border

DNA

CHAMAN: Pakistan on Thursday temporarily closed down its border crossing with Afghanistan in Balochistan province due to the worsening security situation in the neighbouring country.

According to sources, Friendship Gate crossing at the Chaman border with Afghanistan has been closed by the Interior Ministry following reports of the Afghan Taliban taking control of an important border crossing point Spin Boldak in Afghanistan. The Chaman border has been closed for all commercial activities and pedestrian traffic, said sources. In an effort to accelerate the intra-Afghan peace process following the hasty withdrawal of US troops from the war-torn country, the Pakistan government has decided to host prominent Afghan leaders for peace talks.

According to a report by the Voice of America, Pakistan has taken the diplomatic step to avoid an expected civil war and violence in the neighboring country after sudden withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan. Islamabad wanted to end the prevailing uncertain situation in the country.

Helicopter service for tourists on cards: CAA

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) director general Khaqan Murtaza informed the Senate's Aviation Committee on Thursday that a plan to introduce helicopter service for tourists is on the anvil.

PPP Senator Sherry Rehman, a member of the committee, asked him why a helicopter facility was not being introduced to promote tourism, to which the latter replied that a plan in this regard is in the pipeline.

Khaqan Murtaza informed that flights to Swat's Saidu Sharif airport were suspended due to lack of the required number of passengers. He said a mere six passengers traveled on a flight to Swat, due to which the flight operation was suspended.

To a question about the fake pilot licence scam, he said licences of 82 pilots out of 262 were declared to be bogus. The aviation committee asked him to furnish a report on the matter in next meeting.

Senator Aun Abbas was of the view that the people responsible for issuance of fake licences should have been booked under murder charges. He asked if nobody knew about pilots' bogus licences before Ghulam Sarwar being appointed as aviation minister. He lauded the minister for holding an inquiry into the matter.

Conspiracy hatched to assassinate Nawaz in jail: Maryam

DNA

PALLANDRI: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) vice president Maryam Nawaz on Thursday alleged that a conspiracy was hatched to assassinate her father and former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in jail. Addressing a rally in Pallandri on Thursday, she said that the enemies did everything with the former prime minister, adding that all state institutions oppressed him and punished also the

people for supporting him. Taking a dig at Prime Minister Imran Khan, Maryam said he [Imran Khan] handed over Kashmir to Indian PM and now he has eyes on Azad Kashmir. Earlier, the PML-N vice president said that supporters of former prime minister Nawaz Sharif can be found in every corner of the Kashmir.

"Let me tell you that electoral reforms are not a machine. These are the manifestation of people's power," she commented.

President Alvi briefed at ISI HQ

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: President Islamic Republic of Pakistan Dr Arif Alvi visited Headquarter Inter-Services Intelligence Islamabad. Lieutenant General Faiz Hamid, Director General Inter-Services Intelligence welcomed the President on arrival.

President was briefed on national security dynamics including situation in Afghanistan. President, being keenly interested in the subject, was also briefed on cyber security. President of Pakistan appreciated the efforts of Inter-Services Intel-

ligence for national security and expressed his satisfaction over professional preparedness.

Last month, Prime Minister Imran Khan presided over a special meeting of National Intelligence Coordination Committee (NICC) at Inter-Services Intelligence headquarters.

A comprehensive briefing followed by discussion on enhanced intelligence cooperation was held.

The prime minister appreciated the ongoing efforts and expressed satisfaction over the performance of the National Intelligence Coordination Committee.



ISLAMABAD: Lt Gen Faiz Hamid, Director General Inter-Services Intelligence welcomes the President on arrival at ISI HQ. — DNA

Tarin invites German enterprises to invest in Pak

In a meeting with Ambassador of Germany, Bernhard Schlagheck, Shaukat Tarin assured all possible support

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Shaukat Tarin, said Thursday invited German enterprises to make investment in Pakistan in different fields including health, education, agriculture and power sectors. In a meeting with Ambassador of Germany, Bernhard Schlagheck, who called on him here, Shaukat Tarin assured all possible support and facilitation in improving the trade and economic relations between the countries.

He said Pakistan and Germany enjoy close, amicable and multidimensional relations over the years, adding both the countries were keen to

further strengthen business and economic linkages as well as people-to-people contacts. The minister informed the ambassador that the government was firmly committed to putting the country on a trajectory of all-inclusive and sustainable economic growth. For attaining this growth, the government has revived the long-term planning process under the umbrella of Economic Advisory Council (EAC).

Special Assistant to Prime Minister (SAPM) on Finance and Revenue Dr. Waqar Masood was also present during the meeting, according to press statement issued by the Finance Ministry here.

The federal minister said the EAC would formulate short,

medium and long term plans to spur growth in key priority areas, he said adding the focus would be on reducing poverty. The government also stands committed to revive the business and industry that has been hit hard amid COVID-19. The ultimate focus of the government was employment generation, efficient resource mobilization and industrial growth, he added. He further underlined that the government was vigorously pursuing pro-people agenda to promote economic empowerment of the underprivileged women through Ehsaas safety net.

Ehsaas, he said, provides direct cash support for socio-economic uplift and financial inclusion of women

from marginalized sections of the society. The government would also offer loans to young entrepreneurs for self-employment schemes under Kamyab Pakistan Program which would be launched soon.

He said, it would also extend credit facility to young farmers to promote youth engagement and to boost agricultural productivity, adding this would usher in a new era of agro-based industrial progress in the country, he added. On the occasion, the Ambassador congratulated the Finance Minister on presenting a growth-oriented and business friendly Federal Budget 2021-22 after taking all stakeholders on board.

International Institute of Central Asia launched

ANSAR M BHATTI IN TASHKENT

TASHKENT: Tashkent hosted the opening ceremony of the International Institute for Central Asia, created on the initiative of the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev, within the framework of the International Conference "Central and South Asia: Regional Connectivity. Challenges and Opportunities".

The ceremony was attended by the Chairperson of the Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan Tanzila Narbayaeva, Head of the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA) Natalia Gherman, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan Mukhtar Tileuberdi, Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers – Minister of Economy and Finance of the Kyrgyz Republic Akybek Japarov, Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan Rashid Meredov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan Sirojiddin Muhridin, Uzbekistan's FM Abdulaziz Kamilov, as well as ambassadors of Central Asian countries in Uzbekistan.

The honorary guests of the event were the Chairman of the Executive Committee – Executive Secretary of the CIS Sergey Lebedev, SCO Secretary-General Vladimir Norov, Secretary General of the Turkic Council Baghdad Amreyev, Executive Director of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia Kairat Sarybay.

Chairperson of the Senate Tanzila Narbayaeva read out the welcoming

message of the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev to the partici-

pants of the event. The President noted that the crea-

tion of the Institute is in demand by life itself, by the realities of regional development and a historical moment. This is another confirmation of Uzbekistan's firm intentions to continue the foreign policy course towards deepening regional cooperation.

In a short period, thanks to the political will and joint efforts of the leaders of the Central Asian states, it was possible to radically change the atmosphere in the region, giving the relations a completely new dynamic, open and constructive character.

Undoubtedly, the activities of the International Institute for Central Asia, the development of its scientific ties with foreign analytical and academic institutions, primarily neighboring states, will contribute to the development of specific proposals and projects to strengthen regional partnership in the name of ensuring peace and prosperity of the countries and peoples.

The guests got acquainted with the new building of the Institute, the working conditions created for the employees and expressed confidence that IICA will serve as a platform for expert discussion of the prospects for regional cooperation, development of concrete and scientifically substantiated proposals for multilateral projects in trade, transport and communication, energy, water, environmental, humanitarian and security spheres.

Following the event, several meetings of IICA were held with the delegations of the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia and the Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies.

