



Islamabad POST

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EU rules out Taliban govt recognition, political talks

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Govt ready to change PMDA draft: Fawad

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Pacquiao eyes Philippine presidency

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GWADAR BLAST

China calls for real punishment for perpetrators

The Chinese embassy demanded Pakistan to properly treat the wounded and conduct a thorough investigation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Fawad condemns Gwadar attack

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Husain on Friday said that the Gwadar attack was aimed to sabotage the economic vision of the great China, Pakistan leaderships. "Attack in Gwadar is just another expression of game of sabotage against economic vision of the great leaderships of China and Pakistan," he tweeted. He said, the enemy cannot undermine our resolve and we will spare no effort to bring the culprits to justice. On Friday, two boys were killed and various others, including a Chinese national, injured when a suicide bomber blew himself up targeting a vehicle carrying Chinese nationals in Gwadar on Friday evening. Banned Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), Majeed Brigade, claimed responsibility for the attack.



road near a fishermen's colony, the statement had added. Noting the quick response of Pakistani authorities, the Chinese mission said that after the incident, the Pakistani side sent the wounded to the hospital in Gwadar for treatment immediately. "The Chinese Embassy in Pakistan strongly condemns this act of terrorism, extends its sincere sympathies to the injured of both countries, and expresses its deep condolences to the innocent victims in Pakistan," it said. Following the attack on the convoy, the embassy said, it launched an emergency plan immediately. The embassy demanded Pakistan to properly treat the wounded, conduct a thorough investigation and severely punish the perpetrators. The incident comes less than two weeks after a motorcycle bomb blast took place at Quetta's Hali Road roundabout, near Balochistan Assembly and the High Court, leaving two policemen martyred and 21 others, including 12 policemen, injured. China is heavily involved in the development of the Gwadar port on the Arabian Sea as part of the \$60 billion CPEC, which is itself part of China's BRI project.



KARACHI: A shipment of anti-Covid vaccines through the COVAX initiative being unloaded. - DNA

US assists Pakistan against Covid

STAFF REPORT

KARACHI: U.S. support has benefited more than 2.5 million Pakistanis, providing life-saving treatments, strengthening case-finding and surveillance, and mobilizing innovative financing to bolster emergency preparedness. A statement from US embassy read, "We delivered 200 U.S.-made ventilators, provided personal protective equipment, trained more than 600 health care professionals, and strengthened surveillance and response teams." In Sindh we inaugurated a state-of-the-art Command and Control Center. In Sindh and Balochistan, #exchangealumni supported the pandemic response as medical providers, essential workers, and educators in their communities. A consulate-supported U.S. university partnership with University of Karachi found common ground in fighting the pandemic.

PDM rejects EVM, electoral reforms

Opp. alliance plans to present a white paper on the government's three years performance

SHUJAAT HAMZA

Disintegrated PDM to never get NRO: Farrukh

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: PML-N leader and former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi on Saturday rejected the government's proposed electoral reforms, including the use of electronic voting machine (EVM), calling such measures "unilateral" and "in contradiction with the Constitution and laws". Speaking to the media after the meeting of Pakistan Democratic Alliance (PDM) - an alliance of opposition parties - in Islamabad, Abbasi accused the government of

ISLAMABAD: Jeering at the opposition parties over disintegration of its so-called alliance-PDM, Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Farrukh Habib on Saturday said they just wanted an NRO like concession to escape accountability process launched by Prime Minister Imran Khan against their corruption. The group of unemployed politicians will never get a NRO, he reiterated in a tweet. The minister said the PDM had completely disintegrated as its all the conspiracies against the government such as en masse resignation, vote of no-confidence and long marches got failed. Commenting on the use of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), he said the opposition parties that used to single out rigging in the polls, had no reason to oppose electoral reforms.

Continued on Page 06

Mullah Baradar in Kabul for talks to set up govt

The Taliban have said they want this iteration of their government to be "inclusive"

AGENCIES

KABUL: Taliban co-founder Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar arrived in Kabul on Saturday for talks on establishing a new "inclusive" government in Afghanistan which the Pakistani envoy has termed a "complex and difficult" process. Other senior Taliban leaders seen in the capital in recent days include Khalil Haqqani - one of America's most wanted terrorists with a \$5 million bounty on his head. Pro-Taliban social media feeds showed Haqqani meeting Gulbuddin Hekmatyar



- a former bitter rival during the brutal civil war of the early 1990s, but still influential in Afghan politics. A senior Taliban official told AFP that Baradar will meet "jihad leaders and politicians for an inclusive government set-up".

Continued on Page 06

Complaint lodged to probe assault on Dr Aafia

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has lodged a formal complaint with the authorities in the United States to investigate the assault on Dr Aafia Siddiqui in prison, the Foreign Office Spokesperson said on Saturday. "We lodged a formal complaint with the relevant U.S. authorities to thoroughly investigate the matter and ensure the safety and well-being of Dr Siddiqui," Spokesperson Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri said in response to media queries. The Spokesperson said, "We learnt of an assault on Dr Aafia Siddiqui by a fellow inmate at FMC Carswell on 30 July, 2021." "Our embassy in Washington DC as well as our Consulate General in Houston immediately took up the matter with the concerned US authorities," he said.

Briefs

Covid-19, economy top priorities

DNA

TEHRAN: Iran's ultra-conservative President Ebrahim Raisi said Saturday his government will prioritise tackling Covid and accelerating vaccinations ahead of an economic revival, as he defended his cabinet choices before parliament. The conservative-dominated parliament began debating the male-only, largely conservative lineup in the morning ahead of a vote of confidence expected later this week. "The government's first priority is controlling the coronavirus, improving the health situation and widespread vaccination," Raisi said. "The economy and the livelihood situation is the second" priority, he added, noting that his lineup is meant to bring about "justice and progress".

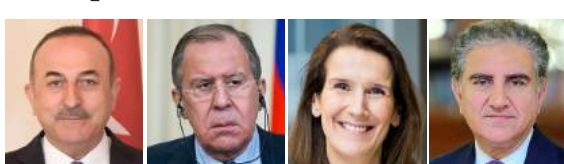
Peaceful Afghanistan crucial

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Education and Professional Training Shafqat Mahmood Saturday said the peaceful and stable Afghanistan was imperative for the whole region especially Pakistan. "Pakistan is well-wisher of Afghanistan and always desired to see it as a peaceful and sovereign state," he said while talking to a private news channel. He said Prime Minister Imran Khan had always insisted for political settlement of Afghanistan's prevailing situation as war was not solution of the issue. The prime minister had already told that Pakistan would be partner in peace but not in conflict against Afghanistan, he added.

FM discusses Afghan crisis with Turkish, Russian, Belgian FMs

Qureshi underlined the importance of an inclusive political solution as the best way forward



KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi Saturday called Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu wherein they exchanged views on bilateral relations and reviewed the latest situation in Afghanistan. Reiterating Pakistan's support for a peaceful, stable and prosperous Afghanistan, Qureshi underlined the importance of an inclusive political solution as the best way forward. He added that Pakistan's National Security Committee (NSC) had underscored the importance of peace and stability in Afghanistan for Pakistan and the region. The foreign minister expressed the hope that the Afghan leaders would work together to achieve inclusive political settlement. He added that the current situation in Afghanistan required sustained international engagement to ensure stability and long-term economic development. Qureshi also apprised his Turkish counterpart of Pakistan's facilitative role in evacuation of personnel of embassies, international organizations, media entities and others.

Continued on Page 06

OIC convenes session

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has decided to convene an extraordinary session of the OIC Executive Meeting in Saudi Arabia's city Jeddah on Sunday to discuss the evolving situation in Afghanistan, the OIC secretary general informed Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi on Saturday. OIC Secretary General Yousef bin Ahmad Al-Othaimen, in a telephonic conversation, apprised FM Qureshi that the meeting would

Continued on Page 06

No foreign nationals kidnapped: Taliban

The Taliban have disowned responsibility for the disorder at Kabul airport, and have said the West could have had a better plan to evacuate

MONITORING DESK

KABUL: Desperation deepened around Kabul's airport on Saturday with evacuation operations in chaos and US President Joe Biden warning he could not predict the outcome of one of the "most difficult airlifts in history". Six days after the Taliban took back power in Afghanistan, the flow of people trying to flee continued to overwhelm Kabul. Families hoping for a miracle escape crowded between the barbed-wire surrounds separating the Taliban from US troops and remnants of Afghan forces amid chaos and reports of violence by the group. "Our fighters will continue to demonstrate restraint," a Taliban official told Reuters on condition of anonymity. He ruled out incidents of reported kidnappings of foreigners, but added, "We are questioning some of them before they exit the country." Reports of targeted killings in areas overrun by the Taliban have mounted, fuelling fears it will

Romania evacuates 14 citizens, 4 Bulgarians

DNA

KABUL: Romania's foreign ministry says that a military aircraft has evacuated 14 Romanian citizens and four Bulgarians from Kabul airport to Islamabad. Authorities said the evacuees were assisted on arrival by Romanian Embassy staff in Pakistan. It was Romania's third evacuation flight this week using a C-130 Hercules military aircraft. The ministry also said that it has "validated and contacted" a number of Afghan citizens who collaborated with its troops during their mission in Afghanistan who have expressed a wish to be evacuated to Romania.

Pakistan temporarily halts flight operation

SHAHEEN HANIF

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan International Airlines has temporarily suspended its flight operation to Afghanistan due to unavailability of necessary facilities at Kabul airport. This was stated by PIA spokesperson Abdullah Hafeez while exclusively talking to News and Current Affairs Channel of Radio Pakistan. He said flight operation will remain closed for a couple of days. The Spokesperson said we have talked with Afghan Civil Aviation Authority to resume all required facilities at Kabul airport as soon as possible so that PIA could restore its flight operation. He said PIA has evacuated fifteen hundred people in five flights so far.

return the country to the repressive rule imposed when the armed group was last in power from 1996 to 2001.

US troops exited Kabul airport US troops briefly exited Kabul airport at one point during ongoing evacuation operations to retrieve 169 people from inside the city, Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said Friday. "They were very close to the perimeter of the airport. Very close. And in a short amount of time, with a short amount of distance, some of our troops were able to go out there and retrieve them and bring them in," said Kirby, who did not give the people's nationalities. Kirby was elaborating on earlier comments by US President Joe Biden, who referred to US troops going "over the wall" to bring "169 Americans" into Kabul airport. Meanwhile, Pakistan envoy to Afghanistan Mansoor Ahmed Khan has said that the process of formation of an inclusive government in Afghanistan is a "difficult and complex" process.

Welfare of people top priority: CM Buzdar

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Usman Buzdar says welfare of people is top priority of PTI govt and negligence in this regard will not be tolerated. He was talking to a delegation of Special Monitoring Unit, headed by Fazeel Asif, which presented him the third-year performance report of provincial government in Lahore Saturday. The report contains detailed performance of provincial departments and institutions. The Chief Minister said performance of the provincial departments will be evaluated on a regular basis.

Briefs

Govt candidate prematurely rigged projects

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader and candidate from constituency VIII Farrukh Pervez Butt has said that after the announcement of the election schedule, the monitoring of development projects by the government candidate was prematurely rigged. The PTI candidate, who has been building assets for five years instead of constituency issues, is clearly losing the seat. Those who violate party discipline and rebel against the decisions of the party have nothing to do with the PML-N but are bent on harming the party at the behest of someone else. Talking to media in his office, Farrukh Pervez Butt said that cleanliness is our top priority. Piles of dirt, stinking drains are blowing the mouth of the elected representative. He said that the people of this constituency of workers would not be deceived by PTI. The property builders have nothing to do with the working class and the poor of the constituency.

MU presents performance report to CM Punjab

LAHORE: Head of Special Monitoring Unit (SMU) Fazeel Asif along team members called on Punjab Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar here Saturday and presented government's third year's performance report. A brief review of performance of provincial departments and institutions was presented. The Chief Minister praised the work of the SMU for preparing the performance report. Fazeel Asif briefed the CM about the performance and issues of the departments. The CM issued instructions to the SMU for future's targets achievements and reforms. He said that performance of the departments would be reviewed in detail as authentic data was very important in determining the performance of the departments. Usman Buzdar directed to devise foolproof mechanism in this regard. He urged the need to focus on monitoring system to evaluate the performance. He said that officers and personnel showing good performance would be appreciated and those committing negligence in duties would not be tolerated.

203 Corona patients under treatment in LRH, KTH

PESHAWAR: A total of 203 corona patients are being treated in two major hospitals of Peshawar including Lady Reading and Khyber Teaching Hospitals, a spokesman of the hospital Muhammad Asim told media men here on Saturday. He said that in Lady Reading Hospital, they have 130 corona patients under treatment with a total of 68 ventilators and out of which 38 ventilators have been allocated for coronavirus patients. He said, there are 28 patients on ventilators, 9 new coronavirus patients admitted and 10 coronavirus patients discharged after recovery. However, spokesman of the Khyber Teaching Hospital Sajjad Ahmad disclosed that Khyber Teaching Hospital has 116 beds for Corona patients and Corona patients are admitted on 103 beds in Peshawar. Sajjad Ahmad said that the hospital has 28 ventilators reserved for Corona patients and they have 17 patients in intensive care. He reported that currently 60 patients are being treated at HDU and 25 corona patients are being treated for Low Oxygen levels while 4 more corona patients have been admitted on Saturday and also confirmed the deaths of 3 corona patients. He said only 13 beds are left vacant in the hospital. — APP

Pakistan being transformed into clean & green country: Dr Ishrat

He said that maximum trees were vital for environmental protection and the government would leave no stone unturned to control the environmental pollution through different preventative measures including tree plantation

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Advisor to Prime Minister on Institutional Reforms & Austerity Dr Ishrat Hussain said that all available resources have been mobilized to transform Pakistan into a clean and green country. Speaking at a tree plantation ceremony at DC Complex here on Saturday, he highlighted the benefits of planting trees and said that it was the only way to provide a pollution free environment to the coming generations. He said that maximum trees were vital for environmental protection and the government would leave no stone unturned to control the environmental pollution through different preventative measures including tree plantation.

Dr Ishrat urged the people to realize the importance of tree plantation and play their active role in making 'Plant for Pakistan Programme' a total success. He said that only planting a tree was not enough as optimum care was also imperative for ensuring survival of a planted sapling. He also directed the officers of the district government to plant maximum trees at available spaces in their offices. Earlier, Dr Ishrat Hussain had a meeting with officers of local administration in DC Office and discussed various matters and issues for institutional reforms. Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ali, Additional Deputy Commissioner Afifa Shajia and other officers of district administration were also present on the occasion.



FAISALABAD: Advisor to Prime Minister on Institutional Reforms & Austerity Dr Ishrat Hussain offering dua after planting a sapling at DC Complex under Plant for Pakistan Programme. — DNA



ISLAMABAD: Syed Saeed ul Hassan Shah, Provincial Minister of Punjab for Aqaf and Religious Affairs calls on Nassar Abdulrahman J. Al-Mutairi, ambassador of Kuwait to Pakistan. — DNA

Video of another woman being assaulted emerges

Lahore police said that the video had been traced to a user in Mirpur, Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The incident took place at a park in Mirpur

DNA

LAHORE: Amid multiple incidents of harassment against women surfacing, all of which seem to have taken place around the time of Independence Day, another horrific video of a woman being assaulted has emerged. The incident appears from the video footage to have taken place in a park. Lahore police later said they had found this to be the Jarikas family park in Mirpur, where a citizen recorded the video and uploaded it to TikTok. The video shows a large mob beating up a woman, dressed

in a white shalwar kameez and green dupatta. Another young woman, who is accompanied by an elderly woman, can be seen trying to pull her away from the crowd. The woman is eventually wrestled free from the mob, albeit with great difficulty. She can be seen struggling to catch her breath, her hair strewn about. Lahore police said that the video had been traced to a user in Mirpur, Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The incident took place at a park in Mirpur, said police, adding that a citizen named Hasnain had uploaded it on TikTok. The superintendent of police

of the Criminal Record Office (CRO) contacted Hasnain, who told police that he recorded the video at Jarikas family park in Mirpur. The police said that a row between two families erupted in the park, on August 14, at around 6pm. Quoting Hasnain, the police said that the man "recorded the video and uploaded it, but deleted it soon after". The police said that the AJK police have launched an investigation into the incident. Earlier in the day, Lahore police said that a probe to ascertain the identity of the victim is underway, with police also trying to deter-

mine where the incident took place. Inspector General of Police Punjab Inam Ghani took notice of the incident and ordered Capital City Police Officer (CCPO) Ghulam Mahmood Dogar to analyse the footage and submit a report. Ghani also requested the public to come forward with any information they might have regarding the incident. He vowed to arrest the perpetrators soon and launch a thorough probe into the incident. "Those who misbehave and act violently with women deserve no concessions," he said.

KP launches door-to-door vaccination drive

The Divisional Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner carried out door-to-door campaign

PESHAWAR: The government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Saturday launched a door-to-door Corona vaccination campaign in Peshawar division. In this connection, Commissioner Peshawar Division Riaz Khan Mesud and Deputy Commissioner (DC) Peshawar Khalid Mahmood visited a smart lockdown locality on Warsak Road and carried door-to-door campaign along with teams of health department and administered Corona vaccines

to the people. Other officers of the district administration including Additional Deputy Commissioner (Finance & Planning) Shama Niamat, ADC (Relief) Mohammad Imran Khan, Assistant Commissioners (ACs) Syed Nauman Ali Shah, Omar Owais Kiyani and other officers were also accompanied by the Divisional Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner. The Divisional Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner carried out door-to-door

campaign at Darmongi Garden locality and persuade people for administering Corona vaccines. Similarly, the administrative officers along with the teams of Revenue and Health departments are carrying door-to-door Corona vaccination campaign. The Divisional Commissioner has requested the general public to administer Corona vaccines themselves and to their families to arrest the spread of Coronavirus. — APP

Hundreds of Saplings planted in Faisalabad

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: Hundreds of saplings of more than eight varieties were planted in Canal Road green belt near Chak 204 here on Saturday. Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ali, Acting RPO/CPO Sohail Chaudhry, Lieutenant Colonel Usman Minhas, Major Junaid Cheema, Assistant Commissioners Umar Maqbool, Syed Ayub Bukhari, Director Horticulture PHA

Abdullah Nisar Cheema planted saplings while 200 Army personnel along with district and police administration officers also participated in the plantation campaign. Speaking on the occasion, Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ali said that under 'Ten Billion Trees Tsunami Programme' tree planting was in full swing in the district and in this connection 70,000 saplings had been planted during the current season.



Plan launched to improve govt depts' performance

He said that the scientists and researchers must mould themselves in accordance with the new system so that Pakistan could regain its repute as an agricultural country

DNA

FAISALABAD: Special Assistant to Prime Minister (SAPM) on Food Security and Agriculture Jamsheed Iqbal Cheema has said that the government has launched a restructuring plan for the government organisations and institutions in order to further improve their performance. Addressing a press conference at Ayub Agricultural Research Institute (AARI) during his visit to Faisalabad on Saturday, he rejected rumours about privatization of the institutes and said that the government had no intention to render jobless highly educated researchers and scientists. However, their salaries are linked with performance system. "The best performers will get more incentives under this system," he said, adding that the research fund was also being regulated so that the researchers could get necessary funding easily without running from pillar to post. He said the government was trying its best to enhance agriculture yield by strengthening linkages between government, researchers and farmers. He said that the scientists and researchers must mould themselves in accordance with the new system so that Pakistan could regain its repute as an agricultural country. He said the government might hire the services of near retirement scientists and agriculture experts on the basis of their performance. He urged scientists to play their productive role and develop new technologies and products to strengthen the national econo-

my. He said that commercialization of their innovations could bring repute along with financial benefits for the researchers and agriculture scientists. He said the government strictly believes in merit and best salary packages would be offered to the "right person for right job". The promotion, facilities and perks would also be linked with the performance, he added. He said he was visiting Faisalabad along with Dr Ishrat Hussain, adviser to prime minister on institutional reforms and austerity, to have detailed discussions and seek recommendations from the officials of AARI, NIAB (National Institute for Agriculture & Biology), PARS (Postgraduate Agriculture Research Station), NIEBGE

(National Institute for Biotechnology & Genetic Engineering) and other departments regarding the transformation. He said the media should also focus on positivity instead of presenting negative view of the government policies. He said that as a result of institutional reforms, the performance and income of the growers have increased substantially. He said that an average increase of 90% was recorded in the prices of food and energy while prices of wheat and rice witnessed 34% increase, maize 51%, edible oil 60-70%, poultry 54%, beef 10% fertilizers 34-154%, Urea 95%, PSD 120% and DPA price 122% increase. He said that corona responsible of inflation

and price-hike and said that Pakistan was the 3rd country after Hong Kong and New Zealand which effectively controlled the pandemic. He said that during corona only 5 countries recorded growth including China, Vietnam, Egypt and Pakistan. He said that economy of 188 countries went into negative from -3 to -28. He said that the government, under the vision of Prime Minister Imran Khan, intended to develop food processing industry as 2nd largest sector after textile. He said that most of the commodities commonly imported would be available in Pakistan in abundance within a next couple of years as the government was focusing on enhancing its domestic production. He said that we have carved out a policy to enhance production of fruits and vegetables up to 30% and wheat up to 80%. He said that government intends to make Pakistan a net food exporting country and in order to ensure food security, the government has allocated Rs 62 billion for agriculture sector and this amount would be increased next year. He said the previous government had allocated Rs 1.6 billion for this purpose, he added. He further said that steps are also being taken for speedy growth of livestock sector and in this connection; best breeds of animals and birds are being promoted. He said that the government had allocated Rs10 billion for research work on improvement of breeds. Earlier, SAPM Jamsheed Iqbal Cheema also visited NIEBGE and discussed various issues with the scientists and officials.



1.589mln people vaccinated in Faisalabad

FAISALABAD: As many as 1,589,545 people have so far been vaccinated against COVID-19 in the district. District Health Officer Dr. Ataul Mun'im said on Saturday that 1,281,311 citizens had been given the first dose while 260,434 were administered the second dose of vaccine. He further said that 28,573 health workers were also given the first dose while 19,227 received the second dose of vaccine. He said that sufficient stock of anti-coronavirus vaccine was available in the district. As of now 165,662 first doses and 110,441 second doses were in the stock at Faisalabad. He said that 37 vaccination centers and 20 mobile vaccination camps were operational in the district where registered persons were also getting anti-coronavirus vaccine doses. To facilitate the people these centers had been established in various areas of the city including Allied Hospital, District Head Quarters Hospital, Government General Hospital G.M. Abad, Faisalabad Institute of Cardiology, Government General Hospital Samanabad, Children Hospital, Sports Complex Samanabad, Tehsil Head Quarters Hospital Jaranwala, Samundri, Tandianwala, Chak Jhumra, Sports Complex Chak Jhumra, Sports Complex Jaranwala, Government General Hospital Chak 224-RB, New Building RHC Khurrianwala, New Building THQ Samundri, New Building THQ Tandianwala, Social Security Hospital Madina Town, Wapda Hospital, Rural Health Centers Mureed Wala, Chak 174-JB, Chak 134-JB, Chak 229-RB, Chak 65-GB, RHC Lundianwala Jaranwala, RHC Khurrianwala Jaranwala, Pindi Sheikh Musa, Kanjwani, Mamukanjan, RHC Chak 400-GB, RHC Chak 153-RB, RHC Chak 374-GB and Chak 469-GB, he added. — APP

BoG meeting approves annual budget of ETEA

PESHAWAR: A meeting of Board of Governors (BoG) Education Testing and Evaluation Agency (ETE) chaired by Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Mahmood Khan here Saturday approved in principle annual budget of ETEA for the year 2021-22. The meeting also reviewed progress on the implementation of decisions taken in last board meeting. The meeting was also attended by Provincial Minister for Finance Taimur Saleem Jhagra, Special Assistant to Chief Minister on Information and Higher Education Kamran Bangash, concerned administrative secretaries, Vice Chancellor University of Engineering and Technology Peshawar, Executive Director ETEA and other senior officials. The board approved proposed ETEA Service Rules 2021 and Financial Rules 2021. The concerned authorities were also directed to present these rules to provincial cabinet for final approval. The board also approved new SOPs for ability tests to be conducted under ETEA. — APP

Health Minister reviews facilities

PESHAWAR: Health Minister Taimur Khan Jhagra on Saturday chaired a high-level meeting to review health facilities in hospitals of Kohat district. The meeting was attended by Chairman District Development Advisory Committee (DDAC) Kohat, MPA Ziaullah Bangash, Special Assistant for Information, Kamran Bangash, Additional Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah, MPA Fakhr Jahan, Special Secretary Health Jameel Khan and other officials of the Health Department. The meeting discussed in detail to give status of medical teaching institutes (MTI) to District Headquarters Hospital KDA and Liaqat Memorial Hospital Kohat. The meeting was informed that after MTI, the board of directors of both hospitals would take decisions locally which would expedite work as well as benefit the people at large. — APP

SERVICES



Namaz Timings

Fajr.....	04:05 am
Zohr.....	12:11 pm
Asr.....	04:53 pm
Maghrib.....	06:47 pm
Isha.....	08:16 pm



Hotels & Restaurants

Serena Hotel.....	111 133 133
Marriott.....	051-2826121
Monal.....	0334-5421812



Airlines

Turkish Airlines.....	8494949
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Emergency

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G-9, G-10, G-11, G-12, H-8.....	9266316
Wapda Islamabad.....	9217579
Wapda Rawalpindi.....	111-309-309

Islamabad Metropolitan

Corporation.....	9209224
Potohar Town.....	9209224
Rawal Town.....	5773343

Wasa Water Tank

Rawalpindi.....	0331-5022125
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Decolonization needs narratives free of West

Complicating the secular perceptions of 19th century Islam, Tareen termed these debates as 'competing political theologies' that cannot be understood through the Western Eurocentric binaries

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islam is as liberal to discuss and debate differences objectively as secularism claims to be, and questioning secularism as the only way to inclusiveness, peaceful coexistence and tolerance means the decolonization of thoughts and society. This was the spirit of a discussion at a webinar titled 'Decolonial Muslim Studies & Defending Muhammad (PBUH) in Modernity', organized by the Institute of Policy Studies, Islamabad (IPS) in collaboration with the international network of scholars 'Decolonial Dialogue.' The webinar was part of the Book Discussion series, a joint effort by the two organizations in bringing international scholarly debates to Pakistani academia. Sher Ali Tareen, a professor at Franklin and Marshall College, USA, put forth the key themes of his book 'Defending Muhammad in Modernity.' Discussants included Dr. HumairAlqtdar of King's College London, Dr. NaumanFaizi of LUMS, and Dr. Anis Ahmed,



vice-chancellor, Riphah International University (RIU), Islamabad. Nazeer Mahar from The Research Initiative and Zaigham Sarfaraz from Royal Holloway University London also took part in the discussion. Summarizing the key points of his book, Professor Tareen meticulously analyzed the Deobandi-Barelvi polemics and de-

bates in the aftermath of the fall of Mughal Empire and the Muslims, and the rise of the British colonial empire. Complicating the secular perceptions of 19th century Islam, Tareen termed these debates as 'competing political theologies' that cannot be understood through the Western Eurocentric binaries. Using the

Deobandi and Barelvi theological assertions primarily, he challenged the binaries of traditional/moderate, progressive/conservative, and legal/mystical embedded often in secular perceptions of Islamic tradition. He reflected on how the concepts of Divine sovereignty, prophetic authority of the Prophet (PBUH), and ritual practices gave birth to two intellectual streams in the Subcontinent in the 18th and 19th centuries. He regarded the understanding of modern constructions of religion and particularly the study of Islam through Eurocentric epistemology and world view in contradiction with decolonization. Secularizing or westernizing religious concepts does not consider epistemological and ontological frames of thought of a particular religion, he added. Dr.HumairAlqtdar noted that much is lost in translation from the vernacular to the Western epistemes. She particularly highlighted the notion of 'sovereign' and 'sovereignty' that scholars borrow from the West to use as a synonym of 'hukum' or 'hakimiyat' in Islam.

210,396 women pass out from PBM's WECs

ISLAMABAD: A total of 210,396 women of low income group have so far completed their vocational training from 160 Women Empowerment Centres (WECs) being run by Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal while 13,231 trainees were currently getting training from these centres. According to official document, WECs were providing free training to widows, orphans, poor girls in different skill including drafting, cutting, sewing, knitting, hand & machine embroidery, interior decoration, beautician, cooking, tie & dye, glass painting, computers, photocopyers, printers, and use of office equipment according to the requirement. Training emphasized on income generating activities. Low-income group of women/girls were being trained in two shifts. PBM has planned to have at least one Vocational Dastkari School in each district. - APP



ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi chairing a meeting of Managing Body of Pakistan Red Crescent Society, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. - DNA

Up in the Clouds

Flying was my true passion,
I cherished it like any celebration,
Had no such joy in anything more,
It was embedded in my soul.

I soared deep in the skies,
Waving my wings truly high,
There was no hurdle or any fear,
It was all my fervor with no gear.

The wish I inspired, was of martyrdom.
If I could die for country in devotion,
My wish fulfilled and my Lord heard it.
I was crowned as the Martyr, I loved it!

The moment of departure was real,
When I close my eyes in a feat of ideal,
I adored my feelings for Motherland then,
Everything was accomplished in a chain.

I am still up here in the clouds. All elated!
Rashid Minhas is my name. All decorated

*A Tribute to Rashid Minhas
Shaheed by Asma Ishaq*

Date for submission of tax returns should be extended

The fourth wave of Corona is causing problems for the business community

ISLAMABAD: Former Vice President of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Ahsan Bakhtawari has said that the country has been suffering from the fourth wave of corona for the last several months due to which business has come to a standstill. Businesses and offices are unable to fully resume operations due to the month of Eid ul Azha and Maharram so the business community across the country appeals to Finance Minister Shaukat Tareen to extend the date for filing income tax returns for the current financial year from September 31 to December 31. He hoped that this move would bring peace and contentment to the business community and they would focus on doing business in a better way and submitting more income tax. Ahsan Bakhtawari further said that due to one month lockdown in Karachi, 50% attendance at offices and rising wave of corona, the business community is suffering from instability and dissatisfaction while environment and tranquility are of primary importance for submitting returns. He further said that the Finance Minister belongs to the private sector and since he became the Minister, the business community has been moving towards a business friendly environment and his move would further deepen this impression. He also appealed to Asim Ahmed, chairman FBR, to take serious note of the proposal and send his recommendations to the finance minister. - DNA



Efforts of US, EU to isolate Afghanistan slated

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) on Saturday said the US and European Union are not engaging the Taliban in dialogue but pressurizing them which is condemnable. The efforts of the US and

EU to cripple Afghanistan economically and isolate it are aimed at destabilizing the new government which will also damage all regional countries, it said. The attitude of China and Russia is praiseworthy at this critical juncture who are extending cooperation to the new government which enjoys the support of the people.

Taliban's government has saved the western borders of Pakistan and enabled it to focus extensively on threats from the eastern border which is a big relief, Dr. Murtaza Mughal, President PEW. It has also paved

the way for Pakistani goods to reach Central Asian and Russian markets while it will bring all regional countries closer, he added. Change in Afghanistan will also help China extend CPEC to boost regional economies while it has wasted Indian investment worth billions of dollars and New Delhi will continue to lick its wounds for decades, he observed. Dr. Murtaza Mughal said that the positive attitude of Taliban has averted a civil war which has disappointed their enemies while the US reputation has been damaged due to a historic defeat.

RPO visits DHQ to see injured traffic warden

ZUBAIR AHMAD

RAWALPINDI:Regional Police Officer (RPO) Rawalpindi Imran Ahmar along with City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi Muhammad Ahsan Younis, Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Rai Mazhar Iqbal and other police officers on Saturday visited District Headquarters (DHQ) Hospital and inquired after the health of the injured traffic warden. On the occasion, RPO directed the authorities concerned to provide best medical facilities to the injured traffic warden. He said that traffic wardens try to facilitate the citizens

and ensure smooth flow of traffic on city roads day and night in severe weather conditions. CPO said that the accused involved in the traffic accident would be sent behind the bars soon. According to details, a Shahzor ran over the on-duty traffic warden Shaqqaat, injuring him severely, on old Airport Road on Friday night and the driver managed to escape from the scene. The traffic warden was rushed to Benazir Bhutto Hospital in critical condition and later following the advice of the doctors, he was shifted to district Headquarters hospital where he was operated in emergency. According to the doctors,

the brain surgery of the injured traffic warden was successful but his condition is critical due to severe injuries and excessive bleeding. The injured traffic warden is from Gujjar Khan Area and has been working as a traffic warden for the last 14 years. CTO said that traffic wardens are the backbone of traffic force and informed that CTP officers were in contact with the family members of the injured traffic warden and all possible assistance would be provided to the injured warden. He said that the accused involved in the accident would be arrested and sent behind the bars soon.

MR PRIME MINISTER

THE PROPOSED LAW BY THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION HAS BEEN REJECTED BY ALL MEDIA STAKEHOLDERS.

PMDA is the most harsh attempt to muzzle the media/Press. Pakistan ranks as low as 145 on the World Press Freedom Index according to the report issued by *Reporters Without Borders*. This law will acutely damage Pakistan's image in the eyes of the international community.

1. The draft PMDA law seeks to wipeout all critical voices from the media through a system of coercive censorship.

2. In the manifesto of PTI you have committed yourself and your Govt to freedom of expression and a free media. A back tracking on this promise would damage Pakistan's claim of being a free democracy.

3. Mr Prime Minister under no circumstances should you be misled by the Ministry of Information. Please do not implement this black law.

4. Damaging the constitutional basis of democracy will irrevocably damage a free Pakistan.

Briefs

PAL to
organize
seminar

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Academy of Letters (PAL) would organize a seminar on "Punjabi Adab mein Pakistaniat ka Izhar" (Expression of Pakistaniat in Punjabi Literature) on August 23.

Eminent scholar Ilyas Guman will preside over the seminar, senior official of PAL Masood Hashmi told APP.

He said that famous writer Dr Nabila Rehman would be guest of honour on the occasion.

PAL Chairman Dr Yousaf Khushk and eminent scholars including Zahid, Khalid Farhad Dariwal, Amir Zaheer Bhatti, Asim Chaudhry and Mushtaq Ahmed will spoke on various aspects of Punjabi literature. — APP

Miniature art
workshop in
full swing

ISLAMABAD: Hunerkada College of Visual and Performing Arts month-long miniature art workshop is in full swing registration was underway for the workshop, said an announcement issued here.

The classes will be held four days a week from Monday to Thursday 2 pm to 5 pm.

The course includes an introduction to miniature painting, techniques of painting, line practice pencil material handling, basic pencil practice, and traditional replica.

Director Hunerkada Amna Shah told APP that highly skilled professional teachers would supervise this month-long course.

She said that on completion of the course, certificates would be issued to the participants.

Miniature painting is a traditional style of art that is very detailed, often referred to as painting or working "in miniature".

Hunerkada starts registration College of Visual and Performing Arts has started registration process for the graphic design 3 months and 6 months courses.

According to Hunerkada, graphic design is a craft where professionals create visual content to communicate messages.

The participants would be trained about the graphic design elements, principles of design, typography, logos, posters and brochures.

Head of Hunerkada Amna Shah said that highly professional designers would impart training to the participants. She said that graphic design classes would commence after completion of registration process.

She said that common uses of graphic design include corporate design (logos and branding), editorial design (magazines, newspapers and books), way finding or environmental design, advertising, web design, communication design, product packaging and signage.

She said that Hunerkada has scheduled a series art classes.

Gunjmandi
police arrest
man on charge
of extortion

RAWALPINDI: Gunjmandi Police have arrested an extortionist for demanding Rs 1 million as extortion from a citizen.

According to a police spokesman, a case on the complaint of the victim's brother namely Nofal Wasif was registered and police started investigation to net the extortionist.

The victim's brother informed the Ganjmandi police that an unidentified person sent a letter to his brother namely Furqan asking him to pay Rs 1 million and threatened to kill him if the amount is not paid.

SHO Ganjmandi police through latest technology traced the accused namely Saqib Ali who had demanded money and threatened to kill. The accused has been sent behind the bars.

SP Rawal appreciated the performance of police team and said that operations against extortion mafia and criminal elements would continue.

CPO Rawalpindi Muhammad Ahsan Younis also accompanied SP Rawal, SHO Ganjmandi and the police team on arrest of the extortionist. — APP

Our 'forest heroes' saving
Green Pakistan, says PM

Everyone is waking up and starting to plant," lawyer and environmentalist Hazrat Maaz told The Washington Post at the time

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Saturday paid tribute to an employee of Forest Department, who had laid his life while saving the forests from fires. He termed forester Jamshid Iqbal of Forest Department Chitral a "hero", who embraced Shahadat in the line of duty while fighting a forest fire in Chumrukun-Gole Protected Forest Compartment No.01, on August 19.

"These are our heroes protecting our forests for a Green Pakistan," the prime minister tweeted.

August marks the beginning of monsoon season in Pakistan, and with the rain

comes another busy stretch for the country's ambitious tree-planting programme. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, residents of all stripes, from government officials to Boy Scouts, fan out along the hills. They bring with them chinar tree saplings — which can grow to nearly 100 feet tall — along with other varieties, and they begin digging, the Washington Post said in its recent report.

The report mentions that it's all part of an effort that started in 2015, when Imran Khan — then a provincial politician and now Pakistan's prime minister — backed a programme 'Billion Tree Tsunami'. The initiative reached its province-wide target in 2018 and was so successful that federal officials expanded the drive nationally in

2019 with a new goal of 10 billion trees — or, the "Ten Billion Tree Tsunami."

"Everyone is waking up and starting to plant," lawyer and environmentalist Hazrat Maaz told The Washington Post at the time. The programme addresses Pakistan's history of deforestation as the country confronts the realities of climate change in the form of hotter temperatures, melting Himalayan glaciers and intensifying monsoon rains.

"It makes us very vulnerable," Malik Amin Aslam, federal minister for climate change, said in a recent phone call. He has overseen both the provincial and national planting campaigns. "The cheapest, most effective and quickest way to fight climate change is to plant trees," he said.

Direct planting, Aslam explained, accounts for about 40 percent of the program's new trees.

Hundreds of thousands of people across Pakistan are working to nurture and plant 21 species, from the Chir pine to the deodar — the national tree.

The other 60 percent come from assisted regeneration, in which community members are paid to protect existing forests so that trees can propagate and thrive. Protectors are known as "nighabaan," and 11 individuals lost their lives fighting the "timber mafia" between 2016 and 2018, according to Aslam.

Aslam says the initiative is engaging the next generation in the country's battle against climate change.

PTCL invites
applications for
MTO Program

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Covid-19 pandemic is far from over, but life is already returning to normalcy in Pakistan and other parts of the world. The normal hustle and bustle of life can be witnessed as schools, colleges, markets and businesses have opened and people finally uniting with their friends and colleagues. While the glad tidings are rolling, PTCL Group is also back at its long-term ambition of enabling and empowering the youth.

PTCL Group including PTCL & Ufone are launching their flagship Management Trainee Officer (MTO) program, called The Summit Program

2021, to train and provide hands-on experience to fresh talent in the country. The program focuses on skill development and enhancement of business and engineering graduates from all over the country, besides equipping them with the right knowledge, tools and skillset to help them put the right foot ahead for growth in their professional careers.

PTCL Groups MTO program is one of the most sought-after management trainee programs in the country, as it provides real-time learning to young graduates, besides familiarizing them with the ins and outs of Pakistan's tech industry and life skills that can propel them far ahead in their professional careers.



RAWALPINDI: A street vendor displaying and arranging different kind of seasonal fruits to attract the customers. —APP

Kanwal for full
implementation
of women legislation

She said PTI-led government has done a lot on the agenda of women empowerment. "We have enacted laws to safeguard women's property rights

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Secretary for Planning, Development and Reforms Kanwal Shauzab Saturday stressed upon full implementation of protection of women bills in parliament along with providing them a safe and better working environment at workplace.

Talking to PTV news, she said that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government under the party manifesto is vigorously working to ensure implementation of laws regarding women rights, adding, there is dire need to work jointly for the rights of women to fight against ignorance and poverty.

She said PTI-led government has done a lot on the agenda of women empowerment. "We have enacted laws to safeguard women's property rights.



Kanwal said protecting the rights of vulnerable segments of society and their empowerment was one of main agenda item of her party leadership.

Replying to a Query, she stressed that women lawmakers in National Assembly needs to work jointly for the full implementation of women related pending legislation, adding, there

is need to have an environment that could keep women safe and empowered in public and private spaces.

To another Query, she said Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf wanted to make Pakistan an Islamic welfare state on the pattern of the State of Madinah based on compassion and justice, adding, PML-N and PPP rulers in past only focused on their personal welfare instead of working for betterment of people.

"There is huge difference in today's Pakistan and that of 2018, when the country was on the brink of economic collapse", adding, no comparison of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf government's 3-years with past corrupt government's of 30 years as we had performed much better with full sincerity. — APP

12 outlaws
arrested
during last
48 hours

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Senior Superintendent of Police (Operations) Islamabad, Dr Syed Mustafa Tanweer has said that Islamabad police is trying its best to secure the capital and to ensure the safety of its citizens.

He told that, despite Muharram ul Haram security duties, police also accelerated its all-out efforts to curb the crime in the city and during the last 48 hours, he said, 12 criminals were arrested from different areas of the city.

According to the details, Golra police arrested accused Akeel Ahmed and recovered one 30 bore pistol. Aabpara police arrested accused Asghar Ali and recovered one iron punch.

Likewise, Sabzi Mandi police arrested two accused Abdul Razaq and Dad Khan and recovered two pistols along with ammunition from their possession.

Lohibher police arrested an impersonator namely Naeem Durani. Margala police arrested two accused Sulmana and Roshan and recovered stolen valuables from their possession.

CDA cracks
down on illegal
encroachments

DNA

ISLAMABAD: On the directions of management of CDA, Enforcement Department, with the help of district administration and Islamabad Police has launched several operations against illegal encroachments and constructions in different areas of Islamabad.

According to details, the operations were launched from Saidpur area of Islamabad where an illegal room, 3 four walls and a gate were demolished with the help of heavy machinery.

Furthermore, while taking action in Ameer Market in

Sector I-10/4 of Islamabad, a plaza whose basement was illegally accessed through a sidewalk with illegal gates, the illegal parts of which were demolished by the Enforcement Department using heavy machinery. In addition, the owners of the plaza under construction at Zia Masjid in Shakriah area of Islamabad, who were constructing on government land beyond their limits, were also demolished and construction materials were seized.

Later, three new under-construction DPCs were demolished on the hilly area of Chajal in Bari Imam area on the outskirts of Islamabad.

PNCA to
resume
online weekly
talent hunt

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) is planning to resume online weekly talent hunt singing and music edition.

The arts council has started this special program for the promotion of classical and semi-classical folk music, modern and pop singing among the younger generation and to groom hidden talent at National Art Gallery, an official of Pakistan National Council of the Arts told APP.

Since its inception, the talent hunt program had conducted more than 32 talent hunt online open competitions.

Renowned artists in different specialized music fields were taking auditions of registered participants at Pakistan National Council of the Arts's official social media online group.

The program was postponed due to the fatal accident of DG PNCA Dr. Fouzia Saeed. — APP

Hunerkada
to organize
classes of
short courses

ISLAMABAD: Hunerkada College of Visual and Performing Arts on Saturday announced to organize classes of textile and fashion designing short courses aiming at promoting arts and fashion skills in the field of traditional culture.

According to Hunerkada officials, the registration process was started for 3 months, 6 months, and one year program.

Head of Hunerkada Amna Shah told APP, that highly professional faculty would impart training to the participants about textile advanced skills and new fashion.

She said that registered participants would be imparted training about a wide variety of techniques and topics, including vector pattern design, block-printing, texture mapping, creating watercolor fabric, and more.

She said that there were so many topics to explore and with the support of experienced artists students would learn advanced skills in the textile & fashion fields.

Amna said that Textile and Fashion designers play a vital role in the fashion industry.

She said that Hunerkada short courses were perfect for beginners, or those already working in fashion textile fields and wanted to expand their skills. — APP

MoU signed for developing indigenous
ICT resources in Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Islamabad and Inovatian-Asia (Private) Limited, a sister concern of international technology firm Inovatian Inc. with offices in Canada, UK, USA and Egypt, which was founded by renowned scientist and innovator Dr Hatim Zaghoul.

Zaghoul is known for his inventions, along with his friend Dr Michel Fatouche, of WiFi, WiMax and LTE's

WOFDM and the complex randomization of CDMA2000 and MCDSSS protocols widely used in telecom sector across the world.

The company also specialized in 6G telephony solutions, cyber security, and data solutions.

Naufil Shahrukh, general manager operations of IPS, and Farzana Yaqoob, CEO, Inovatian-Asia signed the MoU during the ceremony. Khalid Rahman, chairman, IPS, Kashif Siddiqui, director, Inovatian-Asia, Professor Dr Adeel Akram, department of telecommunications, University of Engineering & Technology (UET), Taxila,

Shafaq Sarfraz, manager outreach and IPS-LEAD (Learning, Excellence, and Development Program), and other officials of both the organizations were also present.

The MoU aims to foster cooperation between the two organizations to carry out joint capacity-building programs, disseminate research and analysis, foster dialogue among scholars, experts, scientists, and policymakers, and develop indigenous, state-of-the-art ICT (Information and Communication Technology) resources and solutions in Pakistan and the Muslim world.

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For further information please contact the following.

Maj (r) Sabih Ur Rehman
Mobile: 0300 8553342

PMDA ordinance

REFORMING the media sector in Pakistan is essential. However, the way the government is going about it, trying to bulldoze through legislation that puts more curbs on all kinds of media without getting stakeholders and the opposition on board, is not the way to do it. The establishment of the proposed Pakistan Media Development Authority (PMDA) has been a controversial issue for some time now. The idea of stricter regulation in the form of a PMDA-type body was first suggested when the PTI government assumed power in August 2018 when then-Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry proposed the merger of PEMRA and the Press Council of Pakistan into one authority which would also look after social media. The government then considered the idea of "media courts" that would work under the country's superior courts for speedy disposal of cases related to media workers and owners. Now the debate about the PMDA Ordinance has resurfaced again, with the government urging its importance and the need to expedite its passing. It should be noted that all such efforts by the government to pass laws on media have been opposed by stakeholders; yet every new proposal is still as strict and adherent. The PMDA Ordinance aims to be an overarching set of laws that apply to all sectors of media; previously each branch of media had its own regulators, with PEMRA being confined to broadcast media, and PECA applying to online content. The print industry remained relatively unregulated. The government should take notice that all these regulators, particularly PECA, have been criticised by journalists and human rights groups for being restrictive and arbitrary. A separate all-comprehensive body will only further the confusion that exists. Content regulation cannot be so broad-based and journalists need a free environment to fulfil their responsibility to citizens. The PDMA will only be viable if the opposition and journalists accept it and the government must make changes where necessary to the bill if it is really serious about reforming the media landscape to such a large extent.

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Afghan refugee crisis

THERE are images that become part of history, capturing a moment and shaping the thoughts of millions. And the image of two men falling from a US C-17 military transport plane as it took off from Kabul airport this week will now be forever seared in our collective psyche. Just like the unfortunate man who jumped from one of the burning Twin Towers on 9/11 against the backdrop of faceless skyscrapers or a young burnt girl fleeing in pain from a napalm attack in Vietnam, the image of two Afghans falling from the sky should move us. And move us to action. The Taliban are now in control in Afghanistan. But what is unfolding now is a humanitarian crisis above all else. As per the United Nations' refugee agency (UNHCR), close to 400,000 Afghans have been forced to flee their homes since the beginning of the year. Relief organisations have pointed at the hardships faced by Afghan refugees, noting that as many as 30,000 people are leaving the country every week even as Taliban move with a dazzling speed to consolidate power and complete a spectacular takeover of the country. Neighbouring Pakistan already hosts 3 million Afghan refugees since the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and subsequent waves of violence and later a civil war. There is palpable nervousness in the European Union too, which is still reeling under the 2016 migration crisis. On the Afghan migration crisis, Chancellor Angela Merkel, recently told media that the problem cannot be solved by "taking more people in". Turkish authorities too are wary, monitoring any fresh influx of migrants from Afghanistan. Many are betting on the fresh approach adopted by Taliban. While the new rulers say they will grant amnesty to all those who may have worked with foreign forces there over the past two decades, we can only take them at their word. For tens of thousands of Afghans, who have fled the violence, who have no home to return to, it is an uncertain future. In this unprecedented situation, the international community must extend as much help and refuge to the people of Afghanistan as possible. The Taliban must put their words into action. Only then, a peaceful, prosperous Afghanistan is possible.

Taming the Taliban

Ishtiaq Ahmed



Taliban leaders were also engaged by the US and other Western countries. They also had a diplomatic presence in Washington. But mere diplomatic recognition or the provision of economic support did not prove to be an effective hedge against Taliban repression at home or their facilitation of terrorism abroad

THE Taliban have emerged as an unrivalled force in Afghanistan. For the first time, they have taken full control of the country without any formidable military resistance in the foreseeable future. This leaves the world with no option but to deal with Afghanistan's new political reality. With the withdrawal of foreign forces, the Afghan people also will have to adjust to the new normal under the Taliban-led rule. The transformation is already apparent in Kabul, where female TV anchors have opted to wear the hijab, no doubt out of fear of the Taliban. Apart from a couple of instances of Taliban gunmen shooting unarmed civilians, an eerie silence persists in urban centers. Meanwhile, the Taliban are preparing to constitute the government. They have also held talks with former President Hamid Karzai and senior official Abdullah Abdullah, which confirms their declared intent to share power with other Afghan leaders. Their spokesman also recently reassured that there would be no retribution against those who fought against the Taliban, no restrictions against women going to work if they adhere to Shariah values, no curbs on the private media as long as it does not oppose Afghan values, and no Afghan havens for international terrorists. Such assurances are meant to win over public support at home and seek international recognition of the incoming Taliban-led regime. Given that the urban educated middle class of Afghanistan has tasted the fruit of freedom, democracy and development, sporadic instances of public protests may continue, but they are unlikely to spur a mass movement, and hence can be managed without much effort. Hence, the onus of ensuring that the Taliban's practical conduct in government reflects the commitments they have made in public lies effectively on the shoulders of the international community. This responsibility begins with the instant issue of diplomatic recognition.

The Biden administration is currently trying to recover from its biggest foreign policy disaster by talking tough on the Taliban and persuading its European allies to defer their diplomatic outreach to the militants. The UK may oblige, but other European countries may go ahead in engaging the Taliban. Pakistan, China, Russia, Central Asian republics, Iran and other regional states, which share respective concerns or interests regarding Afghanistan, are not beholden to the US and, therefore, will take the Taliban at their word and recognize the new Afghan regime as and when it is formed. Thereafter, the key challenge will be to ensure that the Taliban strictly comply with their commitments on women and minority rights, freedom of speech and relations with the world. The Taliban-led regime will be in dire need of international financial support, which must also be made conditional on its internal conduct and external behavior. However, if recent Afghan history is any guide, the previous Taliban regime was also recognized, if not by the world at large, by three influential Muslim countries, including Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and the UAE. Taliban leaders were also engaged by the US and other Western countries. They also had a diplomatic presence in Washington. But mere diplomatic recognition or the provision of economic support did not prove to be an effective hedge against Taliban repression at home or their facilitation of terrorism abroad. Therefore, something beyond diplomatic recognition and economic assistance needs to be worked out in order to nudge the Taliban, who are more confident today than ever before, toward cooperative international conduct. There is one big opportunity on the horizon. It is a fact that the Taliban have taken over the country without much resistance, and that the guns have gone quiet across the nation, perhaps for the first time in the past 40 years of consistent warfare. Hence, the

probability of renewed civil war or regional proxy war is also nowhere in sight. Afghanistan is therefore ripe for a major transformation from geopolitics, which has been a major source of conflict, to geoeconomics, which can integrate it with the neighboring countries of Central and South Asia in mutually beneficial economic cooperation. In this respect, there are several regional economic projects in which progress has remained hostage to the persisting security challenge inside the country. The gas pipeline agreement between Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India, and the Central Asia-South Asia power project between Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan have been pending for more than a decade. These projects seek to link the energy-rich Central Asia with the energy-starved South Asia, with Afghanistan providing the most crucial corridor. The onus of ensuring that the Taliban's practical conduct in government reflects the commitments they have made in public lies effectively on the shoulders of the international community. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a flagship project of China's Belt and Road Initiative, can also be extended to include Afghanistan. China and Pakistan both desire so. Under this project, which began in 2014, Pakistan has been able to build dams and construct highways, which are not that far from the Afghan border. Ultimately, such regional integration projects bind the participating nations in a chain of interlocking economic interests, thereby ensuring that their regimes stay focused on economic progress at home and strive for peace in the region. The Taliban-led Afghanistan should not be an exception. **Ishtiaq Ahmad is a former journalist, who has subsequently served as the Vice Chancellor of Sargodha University in Pakistan and the Quaid-e-Azam Fellow at the University of Oxford.** —Courtesy Arab News

Hudson Institute and debate on COVID-19

S.M. Hali



Hudson Institute, which has been providing food for thought for over six decades to US public policy makers and global leaders in government and business through a vigorous program of publications, conferences, policy briefings, and recommendations, sometimes adopts a biased approach. According to its website, it was founded in 1961 by strategist Herman Kahn. The protagonists of Hudson Institute claim that this premier institution challenges conventional thinking and helps manage strategic transitions to the future through interdisciplinary studies in defense, international relations, economics, health care, technology, culture, and law. Its mission statement is promoting American leadership and global engagement for a secure, free, and prosperous future, which is a noble undertaking and it has been bringing issues to the fore, which necessitate debate and deliberation for which it deserves praise. Yet perhaps in its exuberance to project issues, it sometimes fails to present the obverse side of the matter much to the chagrin of neutral analysts, who seek to separate truth from chaff. Take the instance of the global pandemic, COVID-19, which has shaken the entire world, Hudson Institute is still debating whether it is a natural break or it was created in a laboratory. The stance adopted by Hudson Institute is that COVID-19 is not natural but a strategically created tool or misfortune of a scientific lab test. In light of the Occident's incessant attacks on China and the rivalry between the US and the Chinese as well as their unending trade wars, it appears that the view presented by Hudson Institute is in consonance with the one being proliferated by US opinion builders in bashing China. This situation leads an unbiased observer to question whether this narrative influx is to enforce hidden agenda of hitting the Chinese gigantic economy and mislead the world.

COVID-19 has now been around for 20 months and has taken a toll of millions of precious lives, rendered an equal amount jobless and shattered economies, the world over. The pandemic has targeted humanity, irrespective of caste, colour, creed or religion. UNCTAD in its recent update highlighted that only tourism industry would face loss of over 4 Trillion Dollars. Despite the fact that it is a global phenomenon where each and every nation is grappling to deal with the consequences, yet some informed academics attached with Hudson Institute and other American think tanks are trying to manipulate this human suffering for their covert actions. To name a few, a so called authority on the subject associated with Hudson like David Asher and of his other compatriots are not only using the platform of this august institution to inducing media outlets to echo their specific viewpoint, which is one-sided. The redeeming factor is that credible media houses refuse to buy their version. Regrettably, such false debates are a social crime and contrary to the mores, norms and values of humankind. The fictitious evidence being propagating by these intellectuals are creating impediments in global efforts to fight COVID-19, which is morphing into even more deadly variants. While talking to ABC News, David Asher, Hudson Institute expert and a former US official who led the state department's probe into coronavirus' origins, opined that China's refusal to allow access to American investigators suggests it had something to hide. The truth is that now more and more experts are ruling out manmade origin of COVID-19—Robert Garry, a microbiologist with Tulane University who has analyzed the genome of the virus—has been cited by National Public Radio (NPR), stating that "I am more convinced than ever that this is a natural virus." Another renowned researcher Ian Lipkin from Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University, deliberated on the genetics of the virus and dismissed human manipulation of the virus, saying "there is no evidence" to support the twisted version claiming otherwise. David Asher quoted a story of The DisInformation Chronicle: 'Why Does the Wuhan Institute of Virology's Shi Zhengli Keep Changing Her COVID-19 Story?' on his microblogging site Twitter and tried to convince that China is misleading the world. Whereas Chinese government and officials are continuously updating COVID related information. It is the Chinese research, practices and measures which help the world to draft strategies to fight against COVID-19. During another talk with NBC News, David Asher launched another conspiracy theory by claiming, 'Leading Wuhan Researcher Has Ties to China's Military'. The reality is totally to the contrary, since from 2015 People's Liberation Army ramped up recruitments of scientist

and investment in the field of health research as part of its strategy to modernize its military. The coronavirus is showcasing the PLA's growing expertise in medical research, including a major role in developing the coronavirus vaccine that was the first in the world to be approved for restricted use. Although the fabricated info war is there to link coronaviruses as manmade lab based element but Chinese efforts are helping the world through providing technical support to fight against COVID-19 while on other hand supporting economies and humanity to revamp. Michael Pillsbury, Director of the Center on Chinese Strategy, Hudson Institute, Washington, D.C., speaking to Indian daily Times Now's Editor-in-Chief Rahul Shivshankar spoke about China-US relations and Coronavirus impact on the USA in May 2020. Michael Pillsbury, who was recognized by former US President Donald Trump as an expert on China, stated that President Trump never accused China of releasing the Coronavirus, he started an investigation to see what exactly happened. He claimed that the Chinese have not been shy of accusing the U.S. of releasing this virus but the U.S. did not want to stoop to the level of defamation. In the same vein, he even warned the Chinese that if the trade deal is not implemented by China then this will have serious consequences. Speaking to the gallery in India and the U.S. both of whom perceive China with antagonism, Michael Pillsbury declared that the international mood towards China, in the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, was of anger, apprehension, frustration and betrayal. He opined that in polls taken to judge the sentiments of average Americans towards China, nine out of ten expressed outrage towards China. This result is to be expected because of strong negative propaganda to denigrate China by organizations like Hudson Institute. Pillsbury's statement of Trump not accusing China of being responsible for releasing the virus is incorrect. Even in his farewell speech to the people of USA, Trump called it the China virus and Wuhan virus. Shockingly, Pillsbury, remaining oblivious of the Trump administration's poor handling of the globally pandemic and endangering lives, suggested that the survivors of the Coronavirus victims in USA should sue the Communist Party of China to get waiver from the Sovereign Immunity Act to receive financial compensation. TheWall Street Journal, in its Op-Ed titled 'Intelligence on Sick Staff at Wuhan Lab Fuels Debate On Covid-19 Origin', published on 24 May, 2021, claims that three researchers from China's Wuhan Institute of Virology became sick enough in November 2019 that they sought hospital care, according to a previously undisclosed U.S. intelligence report that could add weight to growing calls for a fuller probe

of whether the Covid-19 virus may have escaped from the laboratory. China has repeatedly denied that the virus escaped from one of its labs. China's foreign ministry cited a WHO-led team's conclusion, after a visit to the Wuhan Institute of Virology, or WIV, in February 2021, that a lab leak was extremely unlikely. "The U.S. continues to hype the lab leak theory," the foreign ministry said in response to a request for comment by The Wall Street Journal. According to the article, the Biden administration declined to comment on the intelligence but said that all technically credible theories on the origin of the pandemic should be investigated by the World Health Organization and international experts. Beijing has also asserted that the virus could have originated outside China, including at a lab at the Fort Detrick military base in Maryland, and called for the WHO to investigate early COVID outbreaks in other countries. Most scientists say they have seen nothing to corroborate the idea that the virus came from a U.S. military lab, and the White House has said there are no credible reasons to investigate it. China's National Health Commission and Shi Zhengli, the top bat coronavirus expert at WIV, has said the virus didn't leak from her laboratories. She told the WHO-led team that traveled to Wuhan earlier this year to investigate the origins of the virus that all staff had tested negative for Covid-19 antibodies and there had been no turnover of staff on the coronavirus team. Marion Koopmans, a Dutch virologist on that team told NBC News in March that some WIV staff did fall sick in the autumn of 2019, but she attributed that to regular, seasonal sickness. It is no coincidence that David Asher, the former U.S. official who led a State Department task force on the origins of the virus for then-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, told a Hudson Institute seminar in March that he doubted that the lab researchers became sick because of the ordinary flu. The WHO-led team that visited Wuhan concluded in a joint report with Chinese experts in March that the virus most likely spread from bats to humans via another animal, and that a laboratory leak was "extremely unlikely." However, team members said they didn't view raw data or original lab, safety and other records. On the same day the report came out, WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the team hadn't adequately examined the lab leak hypothesis, and called for a fuller probe of the idea. The fact remains that the US has been less than forthcoming than China in investigating the origin of COVID-19 which has been hypothesized by the some think tanks in the USA, Hudson Institute needs to relook at its priorities and support truth.

Briefs

FM discusses
Afghan crisis
with Turkish..

FROM PAGE 01

He stated that the recent visit of President Dr. Arif Alvi to Turkey for the launching ceremony of MILGEM Naval Ship further strengthened bilateral cooperation. Foreign Minister Cavusoglu appreciated Pakistan's role in the current situation and thanked Foreign Minister Qureshi for facilitating Turkey's evacuation efforts. The two foreign ministers agreed to coordinate closely on the situation in Afghanistan. Qureshi, in his conversation with Lavrov, stressed that a "peaceful and stable" Afghanistan was "extremely important" not just for Pakistan, but for the entire region.

He noted that Pakistan and Russia being a part of the "Troika Plus" – which includes Pakistan, the United States, Russia and China – played a pivotal role in establishing peace in Afghanistan. The minister emphasised that ensuring the security of Afghan citizens and protecting their rights should be the first priority in the current situation.

"The path to lasting peace in Afghanistan can be paved through a comprehensive political settlement," he said. The two foreign ministers also agreed to continue mutual consultations in light of the changing situation in Afghanistan.

Qureshi highlighted that Pakistan had deep bilateral relations with Russia, adding that the former "also welcomed promotion of bilateral cooperation between the two countries in various fields." Foreign Minister also received a telephone call from Belgian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Ms. Sophie Wilmes. Both sides exchanged views on the situation in Afghanistan. The Foreign Minister underscored the importance of security, stability, inclusive political settlement to Afghanistan issue. The Foreign Minister added that it was essential for the world community to support the people of Afghanistan to address humanitarian situation for the economic sustenance. The Foreign Minister highlighted Pakistan's efforts to facilitate evacuation of diplomatic personnel and staff of international organizations and others from Afghanistan. The Belgian Foreign Minister conveyed thanks for Pakistan's support and facilitation in their evacuation endeavours.

OIC
convenes
session

FROM PAGE 01

gather ambassadors and permanent representatives to deliberate on the rapidly changing situation in Afghanistan. The foreign minister underscored that Pakistan would continue to play its constructive role in promoting sustainable peace and stability in Afghanistan, the foreign office said in a statement. The minister expressed the hope that all Afghan parties would work for an inclusive political settlement. "The success of negotiations in Kabul would not only benefit Afghanistan, but also the region," he added. FM Qureshi stressed on the importance of ensuring the safety, security and protection of the rights of Afghan people.

Azeri wrestler
reaches final
of world
c'ship

DNA

BAKU: The Azerbaijani athlete reached the final of the World Junior Wrestling Championship, which is held in the Russian city of Ufa. Greco-Roman wrestlers in 55, 63, 77, 87 and 130 kg weight categories joined the fight for medals on the fifth day of the competition. In the 55 kg weight category, Azerbaijani wrestler Elmira Aliyeva lost to his Iranian opponent in the 1/8 finals, but since the Iranian representative reached the final, Aliyeva won the right to fight for the bronze medal. Ziyababashov will also compete for a medal of the same dignity in the 63 kg weight category, since the Russian wrestler, whom he lost in his debut fight, also reached the final.



BREST: PSG player Marco Verratti vies with players of Stade Brestois 29 (Brest) in a French league match. – DNA

Strategic choice to create the
SCO turned out to be correct

According to the Secretary General, the Organization has set a unique precedent for a stable unification of states that are radically different in their military-political potential, financial and economic power, and socio-cultural tradition

DNA

TASHKENT: Secretary General of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Vladimir Norov said this at an international scientific and practical video conference on the theme: "20 years of the SCO: from a regional forum to global recognition." "The past two decades," he stressed, "have confirmed that the strategic choice to create the SCO, made in June 2001 by the heads of the founding states, turned out to be correct and far-sighted." In his opinion, from the day of its establishment in a short period by historical standards, having passed the glorious path of its formation and development, the SCO, having stood the test of time, has achieved significant results in its activities and has earned wide international recognition as an authoritative and influential intergovernmental regional organization.

"The creation of the SCO was, first of all, a consequence of profound changes in the international landscape caused by the collapse of the bipolar system, the emer-



gence of independent states in the center of Eurasia, unconventional challenges and threats to regional and international security," said Vladimir Norov.

is based on the principles of partnership, equality and consensus decision-making. According to the Secretary General, the Organization has set a unique precedent for a stable unification of states that are radically different in their military-political potential, financial and economic power, and socio-cultural tradition.

This became possible due to the fact that the founding states were able to form a common denominator that meets mutual interests and approaches, the cornerstone of which is consideration of interests and mutual respect for each other, refusal to interfere in internal affairs, forceful methods and claims to domination.

The online conference, organized by the Center for Strategic Studies under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan on 20 August in Dushanbe, brought together a representative composition of participants from among leaders, diplomats, prominent scientists and experts from leading think tanks in Central Asia, the CIS, China, Pakistan, Iran, India, as well as representatives of international organizations such as the SCO, the CIS Executive Committee.

Pacquiao eyes Philippine presidency
as he fights for boxing crown

SPORTS DESK

MANILA: Manny Pacquiao, the eight time world boxing champion and senator of the Philippines, takes on Cuban Yordenis Ugás in Las Vegas on Saturday night in a high-stakes fight that could kickstart his campaign to be his country's next president. While 42-year-old Pacquiao has been focusing on politics over the last two years, reclaiming his former boxing title as the welterweight champion of the world would serve as a reminder to Filipinos of the rags-to-riches life story of a man who won their hearts – and votes – during his athletic prime. "The boxing fight is just a bonus," Monico Puenteveilla, Pacquiao's political spokesman, told media. "After the Las Vegas fight will be the biggest fight of his life in May of next year, and if he wins [over Ugás],

it will only add more mileage and inspire the people more to support him." The Philippines goes to the polls to choose a new president to replace self-styled tough guy Rodrigo Duterte in May 2022, and while Pacquiao has yet to say so himself, his intention to run for the top job has long been an open secret. "He's all set to run. He's been eyeing that for some time, and he just wants to finish this boxing match. He told me to tell everybody categorically that he's going to run," Puenteveilla said. Until recently, Pacquiao was well-positioned for a presidential bid. He became the president of Duterte's

political party, PDP-Laban, in December 2020 and it seemed the machinery behind Duterte was gearing up for Pacquiao. Duterte, himself, even referred to the boxer as "the next president of the Philippines". But Duterte, who is only allowed to serve a single term, risks possible trouble when he steps down in less than a year. An International Criminal Court complaint against him for crimes against humanity is moving forward, and the court may order his arrest. Rights groups opposed to his violent "war on drugs" have also promised to lodge similar lawsuits with local courts

as soon as he loses legal immunity. Unable to run for a second term, Duterte has said he wants to run for vice president and, judging by his close allies' recent actions, has indicated he would prefer the top job remain in the family. "The president is worried that if anybody aside from his daughter runs and wins [the presidency], the president knows he will be charged in the International Criminal Court," Puenteveilla said. "So now, to make sure he won't end up in jail, there's no other political person who can help him except his daughter." Beginning in June, PDP-Laban members associated with Rodrigo Duterte began pushing for his daughter, Sara Duterte, to run as the party's presidential candidate. Pacquiao opposed the idea, ostensibly because Sara Duterte was not a member of the party.

Polish athlete sells
her Olympic medal
to save a toddler

WARSAW: Poland's Javelin Thrower Maria Andrejczyk has sold out her Tokyo Olympics 2020's Silver Medal to save a life of a toddler. According to the details, Maria sold out her Olympic Silver medal for \$125,000 (PKR 2.5 crore) to help an eight-month-old kid named Milosz Malysa get his heart surgery done in California. "I didn't spend long thinking about this. It was the first fundraiser I came across and I knew it was the right one," she was quoted saying. The Polish Super Market Chain that won the bid returned the medal to their national hero and donated the equivalent money for Malysa's surgery. It must be noted here that Maria finished second in the women's category of Javelin Throw in Olympic Games 2020 with a throw of 64.61. Liu Shiying of China bagged Gold with a throw of 66.34 whereas Australia's Kelsey-Lee Barber finished third with a throw of 64.56. – DNA



Uzbekistan co-ops with number of states on evacuation

Coordinated work was ensured together with foreign partners on the orderly evacuation from Afghanistan and transit through the territory of the Republic of Uzbekistan of both citizens of foreign states and citizens of Afghanistan sent to previously agreed countries

DNA

TASHKENT: Due to the continuing difficult situation in neighboring Afghanistan, in response to requests from foreign partners, as well as in the spirit of adherence to the principles of international humanitarian law, the Republic of Uzbekistan is closely cooperating with a number of foreign states on citizens from Afghanistan. Currently, joint efforts are being made with such states as Germany, Russia, USA, Switzerland, Austria, Denmark, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Kazakhstan with the provision of services for the use of airport infrastructure, permits for flying through the air-

space, takeoff and of the necessary technical and logistic assistance. Coordinated work was ensured together with foreign partners on the orderly evacuation from Afghanistan and transit through the territory of the Republic of Uzbekistan of both citizens of foreign states and citizens of Afghanistan sent to previously agreed countries. Over the past few

days, 1982 citizens

of foreign countries have been evacuated through the territory of Uzbekistan. During a short-term stay on the territory of Uzbekistan, evacuees are provided with all the necessary assistance in compliance with strict quarantine measures, after which they are all sent to the countries of destination without delay. In addition, a lot of work was also done

with representatives of the Taliban Movement to obtain security guarantees for the citizens of Afghanistan, who illegally crossed the Uzbek-Afghan border during these dramatic days. As a result of agreements reached with representatives of the Taliban leadership to prevent any measures of violence, persecution, persecution against this category of persons, 150 Afghan citizens were returned to their homeland of their own free will. According to the information received from the citizens who returned to Afghanistan, after the necessary formal procedural measures were taken against them, they were all allowed to go home, and are now in complete safety with their families.

PDM rejects
EVM,
electoral
reforms

FROM PAGE 01

"planning to steal" the next elections through electoral reforms. The statement from the senior PML-N leader comes after Prime Minister Imran Khan, earlier this week, invited the opposition to hold talks with the government on electoral reforms after it decided in principle to use EVMs in the next general elections in 2023.

"The prime minister has categorically told the cabinet that all stakeholders should be consulted for finalising electoral reforms as the use of EVMs is imperative for holding free, fair, transparent and dispute-free elections. The cabinet was also told that a final decision on the use of EVMs in next elections would be made within the next fortnight," Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry had said at a press conference after a meeting of the cabinet on Tuesday.

Reacting to the government's offer of talks on electoral reforms, Abbasi said in a presser today: "All the parties [in the PDM] have once again rejected the unilateral electoral reforms today as they are tantamount to rid people of their freedom of speech." He said the alleged failures of the government in its last three were the result of mandate that it got through "unfair means".

Abbasi further said that the opposition alliance plans to present a white paper on the current government's performance over the past three years in order to expose its "corruption, political persecution and the flawed accountability process". He said that the country's "so-called accountability process" was an "attempt to mask the corruption of the government and its ministers, adding that there had been attempts to rig all elections.

"The proof is in front of the people. We will present a white paper regarding this after collecting all the facts," he said. He also announced that the PDM would hold rallies countrywide and its schedule for forthcoming public gatherings will be revealed after being approved by the PDM's executive committee on August 28.

Mullah
Baradar in
Kabul for
talks to set
up govt

FROM PAGE 01

Baradar arrived in Afghanistan last Tuesday from Qatar, choosing to touch down in the country's second-biggest city Kandahar – the Taliban's spiritual birthplace. Within hours of his return, the group announced its rule would be "different" this time. The Taliban have said they want this iteration of their government to be "inclusive", but have given few details of who it would include. Arrested in Pakistan in 2010, Baradar was in custody until pressure from the United States saw him freed in 2018 and relocated to Qatar. He was appointed head of the Taliban's political office in Doha, where he oversaw the signing of the agreement that led to the agreement for US forces to withdraw and end their 20-year campaign. On Friday, Khalil Haqqani – the uncle of Taliban deputy leader Sirajuddin Haqqani – was seen leading prayers at a mosque in Kabul. Another key leader of the so-called Haqqani network – Anas Haqqani – was also in the capital and had met former president Hamid Karzai and Abdullah Abdullah, who led the overall peace process for the previous administration.

No extension
given to PCB's
chairman

KARACHI: Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB)'s chairman Ehsan Mani hasn't got an extension in his tenure. According to the sources, Mani has started farewell meetings with people in the cricket board as his three-years tenure ends on September 4. Moreover, the PCB chairman has started shifting his important things from PCB headquarters. Mani's tenure in PCB's board of governors will end on August 24. Prime Minister of Pakistan and PCB's Patron-in-Chief Imran Khan will give two names for the new chairman of cricket in the country. – APP

Briefs

ISIS attack
kill three
militiamen

AGENCIES

BAGHDAD: Three fighters from a pro-Iranian militia were killed in Iraq Friday when the Islamic State (ISIS) extremist group attacked their base near Baghdad, a paramilitary and a security source said. The killed fighters belonged to the Noubaja Movement, a faction of the "Al Hashed al-Shabi" (Popular Mobilisation Forces-PMF) coalition of Iran-backed Shia militias. Both sources said they were killed in an attack by ISIS on their base in Tarmiya, north of Baghdad, with seven more fighters wounded. Formed in 2014 to back the Iraqi army in its fight against ISIS jihadists, the Hashed at the time controlled large swathes of the country but have since nominally integrated into the armed forces. It is seen as more beholden to Tehran than to Iraqi authorities. In recent months the PMF has hailed attacks on American interests in Iraq, without claiming responsibility. Some ISIS jihadist cells have remained active even after Iraq declared the extremist group defeated in 2017, especially in the Tarmiya region and the deserts of northern Iraq. They have attacked Iraqi security forces as well as the Hashed and other Shiites, who form the majority of Iraq's Muslims but are seen by ISIS as "apostates". Last month, ISIS claimed responsibility for an attack that killed 30 people at a market in the densely-populated Sadr City area of Baghdad.

Morocco keen
to keep Algeria
Spain gas
pipeline open

RABAT: Morocco wants to keep open a pipeline supplying Algerian gas via the kingdom to consumers in Europe, a senior official has said, despite a downturn in relations between the North African rivals. The operating contract for the Moroccan section of the Maghreb-Europe Gas Pipeline, which links fields in Algeria with Spain, runs out in October. There had been concern its renewal might fall foul of the latest spat between the two countries. "Morocco's desire to retain this export route has been expressed clearly and consistently at all levels for more than three years," the head of the National Office for Hydrocarbons and Mines, Amina Benkhadra, told state media.

"We have said so verbally and in writing, publicly and in private discussions, always with the same clarity and the same consistency," she said Wednesday. Relations between Rabat and Algiers have been strained for decades amid deep differences over the Western Sahara, a disputed but largely Moroccan-controlled territory where Algiers supports a long-standing independence movement. The border between the two countries has been closed since 1994. The situation further deteriorated this week when Algeria said it would "review" relations after accusing Morocco of complicity in deadly forest fires that killed at least 90 people. - APP

Thailand
reports 20,571
new Covid-19
cases

BANGKOK: Thailand on Saturday reported 20,571 new COVID-19 cases and 261 additional deaths, according to the Centre for COVID-19 Situation Administration (CCSA). The new infections took the national tally to 1,030,281, with the death toll reaching 9,087, CCSA data showed. Started in early April, the latest wave was fuelled by more infectious variants. Currently, there are 202,230 patients under medical treatment, of which 5,171 are in critical condition with 1,123 on ventilators.

A total of 26.4 million COVID-19 vaccines have been administered between Feb. 28 to Aug. 20. Roughly 8.5 percent of Thailand's nearly 70 million population have been fully vaccinated. - APP

NATO has 'some leverage'
with Taliban: Stoltenberg

NATO's secretary-general told DW the alliance will need "tactical operational contacts" with the Taliban in Afghanistan

DNA

BRUSSELS: NATO allies will use diplomatic tools and possibly sanctions to ensure that the Taliban "live up to their commitments," the alliance's chief Jens Stoltenberg told DW on Friday. After the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan, they pledged "amnesty" to Afghans who had worked with international forces and promised to allow their safe exit from the country. Western countries have scrambled to get their citizens and local staff out of Afghanistan. "The problem is not the lack of planes. Many allies have stated clearly that

they're ready to receive Afghans. The challenge is to get them there," Stoltenberg told DW's Teri Schultz in Brussels. "We expect the Taliban to allow free passage. We have some leverage. We will use that," he said. "Of course, we have less leverage now in Afghanistan than when we had a military mission. But we will use political tools, diplomatic tools, potential sanctions to do whatever we can to make sure that that people that Taliban live up to their commitments," he added. For the short term, Stoltenberg said the alliance needs "tactical operational contacts" with the Taliban "and continue to look into how we can help



people to get into the airport." "A very difficult dilemma" Stoltenberg admitted that the situation is "difficult for NATO." However, he said the allies "need to be honest and be clear-eyed and ask those hard questions about what are the

lessons learned" at a later stage. After a 20-year presence, US and NATO forces began withdrawing from Afghanistan in early May. The decision to withdraw troops came after the former US administration signed a deal with the Taliban, agreeing to end the conflict in Afghanistan. Although the US made the deal with the Taliban unilaterally, Stoltenberg said NATO "made that decision very well aware of the risks that were clearly communicated." "We knew that if we left or ended our military mission, there was a risk of the return of Taliban," he said. "But we also knew that the alternative was also a bad and difficult option, and that was to stay

in a mission with more NATO troops, with more violence, more fighting, more casualties... We actually faced a very difficult dilemma." The US-led intervention began as a hunt for Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda network after the September 11, 2001 attacks in the US. NATO then invoked its mutual defense clause, Article 5, which treats an attack on one member as an attack on all, for the first and only time in its history. Washington's recent decision to pull out of the war-torn country triggered the withdrawal of other NATO members, given that the US was the most significant contributor to the NATO-led operation.

Biden taps Burns,
Emanuel as envoys
of China and Japan

WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden on Friday nominated career diplomat Nicholas Burns as ambassador to China and former Chicago mayor and Democratic party heavyweight Rahm Emanuel to head the embassy in Japan. The White House also announced Biden had tapped another experienced diplomat, Michael Battle, for ambassador in Tanzania. The ambassador posts require confirmation in the almost evenly divided Senate. Beijing and Tokyo are in the top drawer of US diplomatic posts, with China an ever-stronger economic competitor, as well as a rising military rival in the Indo-Pacific, while Japan has been a key US ally for more than half a century. Burns, long a prominent name at the State Department, where he was under secretary of state for political affairs and ambassador to NATO and to Greece, has worked previously with China's government on issues including Afghanistan, UN sanctions on Iran, North Korea and US policy in the Indo-Pacific. Currently teaching diplomacy and international relations at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, he has also taught on US-Chinese relations. The White House said Burns is fluent in French and familiar with Arabic and Greek, but not Chinese. Emanuel seeks the Japan post with a very different profile. Before being elected mayor of Chicago, he was best known as White House chief of staff during Barack Obama's presidency. - DNA

CIA underestimated capabilities
of Afghan Taliban: CIA analyst

MOSCOW: US military intelligence so severely underestimated the capabilities of Afghanistan's Taliban that it's hard to believe it was a mistake at all, former CIA analyst Ray McGovern told RT, likening the snafu to the Vietnam War.

"What did they expect would happen" when CENTCOM chief General Kenneth McKenzie announced the US was withdrawing all air support for the Afghan army in mid-June, McGovern asked rhetorically in an interview with RT on Friday. Even if civilian intelligence had screamed to the sky that the Taliban was "just going to roll through," crushing the Afghan army in its wake, the Pentagon would have turned a deaf ear, he added. The catastrophe was a "liminal event" for President Joe Biden, McGovern said, arguing it was as important as 9/11 and expressing concern that the commander-in-chief would get the blame for the 20 years of military failures in the country under the three previous presidents that truly created last weekend's collapse.

"I'm not so sure that people like McKenzie didn't want to give Biden a bloody nose by making it possible for such a mess to happen so quickly," McGovern mused, acknowledging that this was his "conspiratorial view." McGovern seemed especially concerned that the Republicans - in particular ex-president Donald Trump - could "capitalize on this because the major media wouldn't be able to tell the truth about what happened."

He also worried that the Taliban's return might spur chatter about Al-Qaeda also coming back to Afghanistan, something he insisted had "no chance" of hap-

pening. While the Taliban might have needed "a little help" from Al-Qaeda 15 years ago, they don't need any now, McGovern explained, describing how the military-industrial complex's "gravy train" had become self-perpetuating and self-financing over the intervening two decades. Not only were they "building weapons" and "financing lobbyists," but they "had every incentive to keep this thing going," he said, adding it's very much to their discredit that the arrangement continued for a full two decades,



paying out generals and impoverishing both American and Afghan citizens. Channeling a sense of "deja vu," McGovern likened the thankless task of the civilian intelligence officers charged with delivering intelligence estimates to the generals serving under Biden and his predecessors to his own efforts during the Vietnam War to deliver "bad news" to his superior, Gen. William Westmoreland. Even though the generals were profoundly wrong, he recalled, the intelligence agencies were interested first and foremost with self-preservation, prompting their leaders to suppress technically correct estimates rather than embarrass the military brass. The Taliban officially reconquered Afghan-

istan over the weekend, declaring victory and establishing the "Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan" after 20 years of combat - or rather, a brief period of combat followed by a prolonged interval of "nation-building," in which Washington attempted to set up a functional puppet government that would carry out its wishes while allowing it to plunder the land for natural resources. While there were only too many willing candidates to serve as the head of the US vassal state, few if any were trusted by the people, and the \$2.2 trillion that inexplicably swirled down the drain over those two decades suggested levels of corruption that were unsustainable even in the most resource-rich country.

The US invaded Afghanistan in the months following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, though none of the individuals believed responsible for those crimes were Afghani in origin. While the Taliban was willing to turn over the attacks' alleged mastermind Osama bin Laden, they required the US first provide some proof of his culpability, which then-president George W. Bush refused to do, insisting that Washington did not "negotiate with terrorists." McGovern co-founded Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity in 2003, in response to the hard neon turn in US foreign policy that saw the invasion of Afghanistan followed by the attack on Iraq. He had served as a CIA analyst from 1963 until 1990 - receiving the Intelligence Commendation Medal upon his retirement only to return in 2006 to protest the CIA's involvement in torture - and remains a vocal opponent of American war crimes. - Courtesy RT



COPENHAGEN: Pakistan ambassador to Denmark Ahmad Farooq called on Danish Foreign Minister Jeppe Kofod. He thanked Pakistan for supporting the evacuation of Danish embassy staff from Kabul. Ambassador said Pakistan looks forward to further strengthening bilateral ties with Denmark. - DNA

Japan's FM to
make official
visit to Iran

TOKYO: Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi is scheduled to visit Tehran in order to speak with new Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, Trend reports citing IRNA. After arriving in Tehran, Motegi is expected to hold talks with Raisi and Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif. He is also planning to meet with Hossein Amir Abdollahian, a former Iranian deputy foreign minister who is set to succeed Zarif under the Raisi administration. Before his visit to Iran, the Japanese Foreign Minister called Tehran-Tokyo relations friendly and long-standing. - DNA

BOI invites int'l
investment in
Pakistan-SEZs

BEIJING: Board of Investment (BOI) has invited foreign investors particularly those from China to set up their business houses in Pakistan's special Economic Zones (SEZs). "We look forward to your high-quality investments in Pakistan while enhancing B2B and P2P cooperation," says Mrs. Fareena Mazhar, Secretary Board of Investment, Pakistan while addressing the BRI Investment Promotion Conference held in Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, China, according to China Economic Net. "Since the launch of the CPEC, China has been the largest investor in Pakistan with FDI inflows of US dollars 8 billion and outsource of US dollars 2.1 billion, thereby contributing 36% to the net investment in Pakistan", she informed the participants. She further stressed that the SEZs under CPEC are not limited to the Chinese enterprises alone and that all industrial corporation ventures under CPEC are open to third-country participation as well. Taking this opportunity, she introduced the incentives Pakistani provides to international investors, such as one-time custom exemption and a 10-year income tax holiday for both zone developers and enterprises. - DNA

US-Pak co-op is more necessary today than ever before

After the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan, the US will need Pakistan's help to preserve the gains of the last 20 years and prevent further historical unravelling

FAHD HUMAYUN

THE Taliban's dramatic takeover of Kabul has thrown the future of the US's commitments to Afghanistan, as well as its broader relationship to the region, into doubt. Questions now loom about Washington's continued investment in the neighbourhood and in particular the extent of its commitment to Afghanistan's women and minorities, who face an uncertain future under a fast-changing political reality. As the Taliban swept through Afghanistan in less than a week, statements from the Biden administration suggested dismay as well as frustration at the inability of the former Afghan government to hold its own against the Taliban. In the coming days, some of this frustration will undoubtedly be directed at former front-line ally, Pakistan's security establishment, which many in the US see as sharing at least some of the blame for Washington's failures in Afghanistan and the Taliban's ability to ride out a war of attrition against the numerically superior and better equipped Afghan security forces. While there has still been no direct contact between the Biden administration and Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan since January, well before the collapse of Afghanistan's military, officials on both sides had been working together for months to try and expedite an intra-Afghan peace accord. There have also been quieter attempts away from the limelight

to better the bilateral substance of the Pakistan-US relationship in recent months. Since the Taliban's takeover, Pakistani officials have also said they will not recognise a Taliban government until a regional and international consensus on Afghanistan's future is established. But with Afghanistan now bracing for a difficult political transition that many in the US will likely see as a reminder of the strategic futility of a 20-year-old combat mission, it will not be easy for policymakers in Islamabad to convince the Biden administration of the necessity of an enduring bilateral partnership. This does not bode well for regional stability, not least because Afghanistan's current moment of political transition necessitates deeper rather than reduced Pakistan-US cooperation on the following four accounts. First, despite the Taliban's largely non-violent takeover in Kabul, an orderly transition to an inclusive Afghan government under the Taliban, which does not exclude any political factions and upholds its counter-terror commitments, is still to be guaranteed. While most countries with skin in the game have held that a final settlement needs to be Afghan-owned and led, few players in the region have expressed the importance of this as frequently as Pakistan. Fewer still have equity and pull with nearly all of Afghanistan's many political factions. Furthermore, the US and Pakistan, along with China and Russia, sat together in the "Extended Troika" in Doha only weeks ago to consider plans put forward by Afghan-

istan's High Council for National Reconciliation. The Council's head, Abdullah Abdullah - along with Hamid Karzai and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar - is one of several key political actors who will be negotiating with the Taliban in the coming days. Furthermore, the Troika collectively agreed that an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned process was the only way forward for lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan, and also made clear to the Taliban their expectation that the group would fulfil its counterterrorism commitments, including preventing violent groups and individuals from using Afghan soil to threaten the security of other states. This contractual consensus offers a blueprint that can guide the continued engagement of key regional players with an inclusive transitional government, to ensure that political negotiations between the Taliban and other factions do not end in an impasse - or worse - a descent into violence.

Second, any cutback in Pakistan-US coordination in the coming months could provide a boon to hardline groups such as al-Qaeda, the ISIL (ISIS) group and the Pakistan Taliban or the Tehreek-e-Taliban (TTP) in eastern Afghanistan that may try to use the Taliban's routing of Afghan security forces, and the accompanying transition more generally, to regroup, foster instability, and launch attacks on civilian targets. While al-Qaeda remains a threat to US interests globally, it was also responsible for mid-wifing a TTP reunification in 2019 which has since reinvigorated its attacks against the Pakistani

state. While the Taliban turns its attention to power-sharing at the centre, the security vacuum outside Kabul, and in eastern Afghanistan in particular, will remain susceptible to terrorist exploitation until a viable political dispensation in Kabul is able to consolidate control across the country. With the US's loss of a political and security partner government in Kabul, the CIA's reliance on Pakistan's security establishment for surveillance and intelligence through its embassy in Islamabad, which remains one of the largest in the world, may well increase. This is not an outrageous proposition, given that intelligence sharing and counterterror cooperation between the US and Pakistan has been extremely successful in going after and eliminating the TTP and al-Qaeda leadership in the Pakistan-Afghanistan borderland in recent years.

Third, Pakistan's diplomats and legislators, along with stakeholders from Turkey, Qatar and China, can send clear messages to Afghanistan's new political power-brokers about vital prerequisites for international recognition and international assistance, in the absence of which a less moderate Taliban-led government can be denied external legitimacy. In particular, the constitutional rights that have been afforded to Afghanistan's women and minorities in the last 20 years can still be upheld but will require the international community to deftly get the Taliban to agree to a set of obligations and arrangements to abide by. Pakistan's political parties can help play a vital sup-

porting role, for instance, in spelling out clear consequences for Afghan trade and the cross-border movement of people and goods should the Taliban prevent women and girls from attending school or working in offices. In the immediate term, the Taliban might also be less averse to Pakistan's vast network of civil society organisations and observers serving as monitors for the state of women's rights than Western or UN-led organisations.

A fourth and final basis for more robust Pakistan-US engagement in the coming months has to do with the emerging humanitarian crisis in the region - namely refugees, the burden of which will fall squarely on Pakistan and Iran and to a lesser extent Turkey. Emergency US humanitarian assistance will be vital given the added complexity of managing incoming refugees in the midst of a ravaging pandemic, and will necessitate close and frequent engagement between the Biden administration in Washington and host governments on the ground.

Pakistan and Iran are already home to several million refugees, and Pakistan has already expressed an inability to take in more. The US can help provide crucial assistance to Islamabad to ensure that Afghans crossing over into Pakistan find reasonable shelter, and that arrangements can be made when feasible for dignified repatriation at the soonest. This could also provide the basis for a more durable and economic-oriented Pakistan-US bilateral relationship in the months ahead. - Courtesy Al Jazeera

Pakistan to
participate
in CIFTIS,
Beijing

DNA

BEIJING: Pakistan Banking sector will participate in the 8th China International Fair for Trade-in-Services 2021, scheduled to be held from September 2nd to 7th in Beijing. Talking to China Economic Net, Shaikh Muhammad Shariq, Chief Representative, National Bank of Pakistan, Beijing, said that, during the fair, the Accounting Society for Foreign Economic Relations & Trade of China (ASFETC), an affiliate of Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, will host the 2021 International Forum on Financial Innovation and Cooperation with the theme of "Innovating Financial Services and Boosting Economic and Trade Development".

At the fair, he will be presenting about the status of financial technology in Pakistan, and the opportunities of cooperation available between the Chinese & Pakistani financial and information & digital technology companies.

Haiti's Prime
Minister vows
elections soon

WASHINGTON: Haitian Prime Minister Ariel Henry pledged Friday to organize elections as soon as possible despite the devastation of last week's earthquake, in a nation still reeling from its president's assassination. Henry acknowledged that the international community views with concern the Caribbean country's "chronic" political instability, including the killing of president Jovenel Moise in July. "I am committed to doing everything in my power to put my country back on the rails of a functioning democracy with the organization as soon as possible of free and transparent elections," he told the Permanent Council of the Organization of American States (OAS). Last week, before a 7.2-magnitude earthquake struck Haiti and killed nearly 2,200 people, the provisional electoral authorities had said that the first round of the presidential elections, initially scheduled for September, would be held on November 7. - APP

Briefs

NAB summons Shehbaz in metro scandal

SHAHEEN HANIF

RAWALPINDI: The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has summoned Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) president and Opposition Leader in the National Assembly, Shehbaz Sharif in the Rawalpindi Metro Bus contract scandal.

The PML-N head has been asked to appear before the NAB on August 24. According to the NAB, the contract of Rawalpindi Metro was awarded to the brother of PML-N leader Ahsan Iqbal, in which PPRA rules were neglected.

The contractor Mustafa Kamal has also been summoned by the NAB on the same date. It has been learnt that the contract was given to Kamal on the directions of Shehbaz Sharif as the then Punjab chief minister.

The NAB during scrutiny of the record found that the contract should be given to Ahsan Iqbal's brother on the directions of Shehbaz Sharif. It is to be noted that the PML-N president was earlier asked to appear before the NAB in the same inquiry, but he did not show up. Now the summon has been sent to Shehbaz Sharif's Model Town residence through the CCPO Lahore to ensure his appearance on August 24 to record his statement.

Pakistani businesses keen to invest in Azerbaijan

DNA

BAKU: Pakistani businessmen are interested in investing in the industrial zones of Azerbaijan, said Bilal Hayee, Ambassador of Pakistan to Azerbaijan. Trend reports citing the Ministry of Economy of Azerbaijan.

According to the ambassador, Azerbaijan is a friendly and brotherly country for Pakistan, and bilateral economic relations should develop.

Pakistani businessmen are interested in investing in industrial zones created in Azerbaijan, the diplomat said. Director of Sumgayit Chemical Industrial Park LLC Elshad Nuriyev informed the ambassador about the industrial parks operating in Azerbaijan and the favorable conditions created for entrepreneurs.

"Four enterprises are currently registered as residents in the industrial park, two of which are already operating. The residents of the industrial parks have invested a total of 36.6 million manat (\$21.5 million) so far, which made it possible to create an additional 120 jobs," Nuriyev added.

"The residents plan to invest another 12 million manat (\$7.05 million) in new projects of the industrial park," he said.

India's Covid tally rises to 32,393,286

DNA

NEW DELHI: India's COVID-19 tally rose to 32,393,286 on Saturday as 34,457 new cases were registered during the past 24 hours across the country, showed the federal health ministry's latest data.

Besides, 375 deaths due to the pandemic since Friday morning took the total death toll to 433,964. There are still 361,340 active COVID-19 cases in the country with a decrease of 2,265 active cases during the past 24 hours.

A total of 31,597,982 people have been cured and discharged from hospitals so far, out of which 36,347 were discharged during the past 24 hours.

Malaysian PM sworn in as party reclaims leadership

In an elaborate ceremony at the national palace, Ismail Sabri, wearing a traditional Malaysian outfit, took the oath of office before the king

AGENCIES

KUALA LUMPUR: A new Malaysian leader was sworn in Saturday following the previous government's collapse, reclaiming the premiership for his scandal-mired party without an election.

Ismail Sabri Yaakob is a stalwart of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), the lynchpin of a long-ruling coalition that lost power in landmark elections during the multi-billion-dollar 1MDB graft scandal in 2018.

He was named as the new prime minister Friday, days after his predecessor quit following a turbulent 17 months in office.

Malaysia's king opted to appoint a new premier based on who had majority support in parliament, rather than call an election, over concerns a vote could worsen a dire coronavirus outbreak.

In an elaborate ceremony at the national palace, Ismail Sabri, wearing a traditional Malaysian outfit, took the oath of office



before the king.

The 61-year-old was deputy prime minister when UMNO was a partner in the last government, and has held several other cabinet posts during a long political career. His predecessor Muhyiddin Yassin quit

after losing his parliamentary majority, as public anger grew over his government's handling of the pandemic.

After announcing the new leader, the king, Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah, urged bickering politicians to put aside their dif-

ferences to fight the virus outbreak.

"The king hopes that with the appointment of the new prime minister, political turbulence in the country will be resolved quickly," the palace said in a statement.

Long-time opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim, who lost out in the race for the premiership, meanwhile urged his alliance to face the new "challenge" and "work harder" to prepare for the next elections.

His opposition coalition stormed to power at the 2018 polls but their government fell apart last year amid bitter infighting, paving the way for Muhyiddin to take office.

Ismail Sabri becomes Malaysia's third new prime minister in less than four years. But his government is essentially a re-jigged version of the one that collapsed a week ago, with Muhyiddin and his allies backing him.

There have been signs of public unhappiness, with a petition against his appointment garnering hundreds of thousands of signatures, and some fear his government will be as unstable as its forerunner.

Hundreds arrested in Australia protests

DNA

SYDNEY: Hundreds were arrested after violent clashes between anti-lockdown protesters and police in Australia's two largest cities Saturday as the country recorded its sharpest rise in daily COVID-19 cases since the pandemic began.

Sydney's state of New South Wales posted 825 infections a record for the entire country - a day after authorities extended the city's lockdown until at least September to try to head off the Delta variant. "No matter how hard we work, no matter if 99 percent of people are doing the right thing, there's an element of Delta that nobody can control," NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian told media. "The best way we can look forward to freedom is by making sure that we get vaccinated."

An increasing outbreak in Melbourne's state of Victoria also prompted stay-at-home orders to be extended across the entire state on Saturday. But Melbourne's public health orders didn't deter thousands from venting anger in a march against the lockdown rules, with police using pepper spray in violent clashes with protesters.

Seven officers were injured and more than 200 people were arrested in the "violent and unlawful" protest, Victoria Police said in a statement. "While there were some peaceful protesters in attendance, the majority of those who attended came with violence in mind," they said.

TikToker case: Court sent 40 accused to jail

LAHORE: A local court on Saturday sent 40 accused, involved in harassing and assaulting a TikTok star at the Greater Iqbal Park on August 14, to jail on 14-day judicial remand for identification parade.

Earlier, the Lari Adda police produced Salman and 39 other accused before Judicial Magistrate Faraz Javed Warriach at district courts. The investigation officer submitted that the accused had been arrested in connection with harassing and assaulting a TikTok star. He requested the court to send the accused to jail on judicial remand for identification parade.

At this, the court sent the accused to jail on judicial remand for identification parade. The court directed for producing them on expiry of the remand term.

The assault survivor had lodged a complaint with the Lari Adda police station, stating that she was filming a video near Minar-e-Pakistan on August 14 along with her friends when a mob of around 400 people attacked them. - APP

3.1 magnitude earthquake jolts Karachi

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: A moderate earthquake of magnitude 3.1 struck Karachi - the provincial capital of Sindh - on Saturday morning, according to the Pakistan's National Seismic Monitoring Centre.

The centre said the earthquake, felt at 11:39am in various parts of the metropolis, originated 76 kilometres northeast of Karachi and had a depth of 15km.

The statement added the quake had a longitude of 67.57 east and latitude of 25.27 north.

The tremors spread panic among locals, however, no casualties or damage was reported.

Some Karachiites shared their experience of the tremors on Twitter.



BAKU: Ambassador of Pakistan to Azerbaijan Bilal Hayee visited Pirallahi Industrial Park. He was received by Elshad Nuriyev, Director of Sumgayit Chemical Industrial Park. - DNA

Over 7,000 evacuated to Qatar from Afghanistan

AGENCIES

DOHA: More than 7,000 people have been evacuated from Afghanistan to Qatar, an official from the Gulf state said Saturday, as thousands scrambled to leave Kabul via chaotic evacuation operations.

Qatar and the nearby United Arab Emirates have been instrumental staging posts for evacuation flights for Western countries' citizens as well as Afghan interpreters, journalists and others.

"Since the start of international operations, over 7,000 people have been evacuated from Afghanistan to Qatar," a Qatari official who declined to be identified told AFP.

"At the request of NGOs, educational institutions and international media organisations, we evacuated hundreds of Afghan employees and their families, as well as female students across the country," the official said.

That came "in addition to facilitating the evacuation of citizens from the United States of America, Germany and the United Kingdom, among others. Our evacuation effort is ongoing."

American officials have confirmed that evacuation operations had stalled for about seven hours Friday because the receiving base in Qatar was overcrowded. Doha will eventually settle up to 8,000 Afghans, according to the Qatari official, who stressed that many of the 7,000 people currently in Qatar were transiting to third countries.

The UAE has also become an evacuation hub, with French authorities using the capital Abu Dhabi and Britain using Dubai as transit points for their nationals and approved refugees.

A total of over 8,500 people have transited the UAE so far, according to the government. Six days after the Taliban swept to power, the flow of people trying to flee Afghanistan has continued to overwhelm the international community.

Roads leading to Kabul airport have been choked with traffic, while families hoping for a miracle escape have crowded between the barbed-wire surrounds of an unofficial no man's land separating the Taliban from US and allied troops.

Daily Covid-19 cases show signs of downward slope

The NCOC counted 1,006,078 total recoveries. A day earlier, the number of patients who had recovered from COVID-19 in Pakistan exceeded one million

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Despite an additional 3,084 positive coronavirus cases recorded on Saturday, Pakistan is witnessing signs of a slow downward slope in the daily number of case and death counts.

According to the National Command and Operation Centre's COVID-19 dashboard, Pakistan recorded 3,084 cases over the last 24 hours after 53,770 tests were taken.

Meanwhile, 65 more people lost their lives to the

disease over the last 24 hours.

The positivity rate, too, dipped and now stands at 5.73%. The last time Pakistan reported a positivity rate of less than 6% was a month ago on July 24 at 4.89 percent.

The number of active or currently ill patients are at 89,044. The NCOC counted 1,006,078 total recoveries. A day earlier, the number of patients who had recovered from COVID-19 in Pakistan exceeded one million.

The infection tally also rose to 1,116,886 with

3,239 new cases reported over the last 24 hours after 51,982 COVID-19 tests were conducted, the NCOC stats showed.

The number of active or currently ill patients are at 89,673, which is the highest since May 2 when the country recorded 89,661 active cases.

COVID-19 infections are decreasing in Pakistan, with 3,853 new infections reported on average each day. That's 66% of the peak - the highest daily average reported on June 17.

There have been 1,119,970

infections and 24,848 coronavirus-related deaths reported in the country since the pandemic began. Pakistan has administered at least 44,736,977 doses of COVID-19 vaccines so far. Assuming every person needs two doses, that's enough to have vaccinated about 10.3% of the country's population.

During the last week reported, Pakistan averaged about 716,137 doses administered each day. At that rate, it will take a further 61 days to administer enough doses for another 10% of the population.

United States urges Americans to keep clear of airport

KABUL: The United States advised Americans in Afghanistan to avoid travelling to Kabul airport on Saturday as thousands gathered trying to flee the country almost a week after the Taliban took control.

The advisory came after Taliban co-founder Mullah Baradar arrived in Kabul for talks with other leaders to hammer out a new Afghan government after the Taliban's lightning advance across the country. "Because of potential security threats outside the gates at the Kabul airport, we are advising US citizens to avoid travelling to the airport and to avoid airport gates at this time unless you receive individual instructions from a US government representative to do so," the US Embassy advisory said.

Switzerland postponed a charter flight from Kabul because of the chaos, its foreign ministry said.

"The security situation around Kabul airport has worsened significantly in the last hours. A large number of people in front of the airport and sometimes violent confrontations are hindering access to the airport," the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs said in a statement. - Foreign Desk

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