



Islamabad POST

Friday, September 17, 2021

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Price Rs. 20

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World must stop Kashmir genocide: Bilal

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Imran Khan talks regional stability with SCO leaders

PM Khan holds meetings with Kazakh, Uzbek, Iranian and Belarusian Presidents

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

DUSHANBE: DUSHANBE: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Thursday held several meetings with foreign leaders during his visit to the Tajikistan capital, where he arrived to attend the 20th Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Council of Heads of State (SCO-CHS). Prime Minister Imran Khan and President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev met here in the capital of Tajikistan and affirmed the commitment to enhance bilateral relations in diverse fields particularly trade, investment and transportation links. The meeting, held on the sidelines of 20th Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Council of Heads of State (SCO-CHS) Summit, focused on closed collaboration for the mutual benefit of two countries. The two leaders exchanged views on bilateral relations and discussed key regional and international issues. The prime minister underlined that Pakistan was resolved to comprehensively upgrade engagement with Central Asian countries through its "Vision Central Asia" policy. He particularly emphasised the importance of connectivity and Pakistan's pivotal position in providing the shortest ac-

FM talks with Chinese, Russian counterparts

NEWS DESK / DNA

DUSHANBE: The Foreign Ministers of Russia, China, Pakistan and the Deputy Foreign Minister of Iran held an important meeting in Dushanbe on the sidelines of the SCO Council of Heads of State meeting in Dushanbe Thursday. During the meeting, discussions were held on the emerging situation in Afghanistan and peace and stability in the region. The participants reaffirmed their commitment to promote peace, security and stability in Afghanistan and the region as a whole. The ministers stressed the need for an inclusive government in Afghanistan that takes into account the interests of all ethnic and political forces in the country. The meeting highlighted the current situation in Afghanistan and the need to work together to address

cess route to the sea. The prime minister also highlighted the significance of Trans-Afghan railway project connecting Termez-Mazar-e-Sharif-Kabul-Jalalabad-Peshawar. He also elaborated his vision of socio-economic development and shifting country's priority from geo-politics to geo-economics. To promote regional integration, the two sides also decided to enhance connectivity through land and air routes. The prime minister also underscored the importance of peace and stability in Afghanistan for Pakistan and the region. He stressed that the international community had to remain engaged to support the Afghan people, to address urgent humanitarian needs, and take steps to stabilise the economy. The prime minister stressed that sustainable peace and security in Afghanistan would contribute to regional peace, connectivity and progress. The two leaders agreed to increase the frequency of high-level political exchanges. The Prime Minister renewed the invitation to President Tokayev to visit Pakistan. President Tokayev extended invitation to the Prime Minister to visit Kazakhstan. Pakistan and

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PM IMRAN IN DUSHANBE



DUSHANBE: Prime Minister Imran Khan meets with President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev. - DNA



DUSHANBE: PM Imran in Dushanbe to attend SCO summit. - DNA



DUSHANBE: Prime Minister Imran exchanging views with President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev. - DNA

Zalmay blames Ghani's exit for Taliban takeover

WEB DESK

WASHINGTON: The US negotiator on Afghanistan said that president Ashraf Ghani's abrupt exit scuttled a deal in which the Taliban would hold off entering Kabul and negotiate a political transition. In his first interview since the collapse of the 20-year Western-backed government, Zalmay Khalilzad, who brokered a 2020 deal with the Taliban to withdraw US troops, told the Financial Times that the Taliban had agreed to stay outside the capital for two weeks and shape a future government.

Blinken's remarks a 'surprise'

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office spokesperson Asim Iftikhar Ahmad on Thursday said that US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken's remarks earlier this week, in which he had said the United States would be reassessing its relationship with Pakistan, were "not in line with the close cooperation" between the two countries. He made the comment in response to a question during his weekly press conference. Terming Blinken's statement a "surprise", Ahmad recalled that Pakistan had played a "critical role" in helping the US degrade Al Qaeda's core leadership which was the int'l coalition's main objective.

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Under President Tokayev... Kazakhstan set on road to prosperity

President delivers address to the nation every year: Ambassador Kistafin

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Kazakhstan Yerzhan Kistafin has said President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev in his address to the nation assured that his government would undertake all possible steps to improve the lot of the people and further develop infrastructure. The ambassador made these observations during a press conference at his residence on Thursday. He said, every year the President Tokayev delivers his address to the Nation, articulating his views and must-to-do things to keep Kazakhstan on the track of progress and sustainable development. The President's address for 2021 was took place just a couple of weeks ago and it was an excellent



update of what is to be done in our country in a very short-run. Ambassador Kistafin said, the first part of the address was

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Nawaz, Shahbaz 'are one', PML-N stands united

Maryam warns party workers against propaganda

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: PML-N Vice President Maryam Nawaz on Thursday urged party workers to pay no mind to "propaganda by the enemy", saying that PML-N Supreme Nawaz Sharif and PML-N President Shahbaz Sharif "are one". "This is a democratic party.

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Bilawal rejects hike in petrol prices

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Chairman of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Thursday rejected increase in prices of petroleum products and said that Imran Khan has robbed the poor by hiking the price to highest level in history. Bilawal Bhutto, in a statement, said that with petrol and dollar at historic high, everyday use items will soon be out of reach of the masses.



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Briefs

Visit to Dushanbe important

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhary Fawad Hussain has said

that Prime Minister Imran Khan's visit to Tajikistan will prove to be an important milestone and further increase the prestige of Pakistan. In a televised message regarding the Prime Minister's visit to Dushanbe, the Information Minister said Imran Khan will hold meetings with the Iranian President, the Foreign Minister of China and the leadership of Central Asian States on the sidelines of the SCO Summit. The Information Minister said situation in Afghanistan will be discussed in the SCO summit. He said Pakistan recognizes Tajikistan's important role in Afghanistan.

Zardari seeks acquittal in Toshakhana

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Former president and PPP Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari has sought acquittal in Toshakhana reference. The former president through his counsel, Farooq H Naek, filed a petition in an accountability court in Islamabad pleading that none of the NAB witnesses appeared in the court so far had levelled any accusation against him. The petition said 21 of the 43 NAB witnesses testified but no one alleged anything against Zardari which showed the former president was being subjected to political victimization. The court was urged to acquit Asif Zardari in the Toshakhana reference.

Afghan crisis: UNHCR all praise for Pak help

This was stated in a meeting between Filippo Grandi, (UNHCR) and COAS General Qamar Bajwa



RAWALPINDI: Filippo Grandi, UN High Commissioner for Refugees called on General Qamar Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff. - DNA

SHUJAAT HAMZA

RAWALPINDI: Filippo Grandi, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) called on General Qamar Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) at GHQ, on Thursday. According to an Inter Services Public Relations press release, matters of

mutual interest, regional security, current situation in Afghanistan & collaboration in humanitarian assistance were discussed during the meeting. COAS reiterated the need for convergence of global efforts to avert humanitarian and refugee crisis in Afghanistan. COAS also appreciated the role of UNHCR in promoting UN core values and their response during crises. The visiting dignitary acknowledged Pakistan's effort for hosting four Million Afghan refugees for over four decades. He also appreciated Pakistan's role in Afghan situation including provision of humanitarian aid/ assistance and pledged to play their role for further improvement in cooperation with Pakistan at all levels.

Afghan Taliban deny reports of internal rifts

Afghanistan's acting deputy Prime Minister Abdul Ghani Baradar appeared in a video interview to deny reports that he was hurt in a clash with a rival faction of the Taliban

CENTRELINE REPORT

KABUL: Senior Taliban officials, including spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid and a member of the Haqqani network, have denied reports of rifts between the leadership of the group's various factions since the formation of an interim government last week. Meanwhile, Afghanistan's acting deputy Prime Minister Abdul Ghani Baradar appeared in a video interview to deny reports that he was hurt in a clash with a rival faction of the Taliban. "No this is not true; I am OK and healthy," Baradar said in an interview with state TV which was posted on Twitter by the Taliban's political office in Doha. "The media says that there are internal disputes. There is nothing between us, it is not true." Reports of disagreements first began circulating after the Taliban

formed a cabinet on September 7 that is more in line with their harsh rule in the 1990s than their recent promises of inclusiveness. Late last week, rumours emerged of an alleged violent confrontation between pragmatists and ideologues in the Taliban leadership at the presidential palace, including claims that Deputy Prime Minister of Afghanistan Abdul Ghani Baradar was killed. The occurrence of the row, reportedly between Baradar and minister for refugees Khalilur Rahman Haqqani, was confirmed to the BBC by a senior member of the Taliban based in Qatar and a person close to the factions at loggerheads. The source identified Baradar's unhappiness over the interim government's structure as the primary reason for the confrontation, but added that the two factions had also argued over who should get more credit, with Bar-

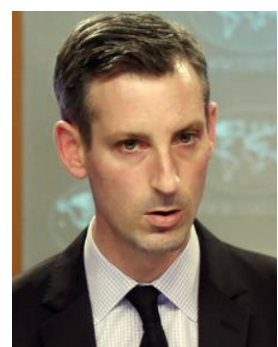
dar purportedly wanting greater acknowledgment for diplomatic efforts such as his and the Haqqani group adamant that the fighting faction played a bigger role. The rumours of Baradar's death reached such intensity that an audio recording and handwritten statement, both by the leader himself, denied that he had been killed. He reiterated his well-being by appearing in an interview with the country's national TV on Wednesday. Other Taliban officials have also come forward to refute reports of cracks within the leadership, with Mujahid among those shooting down the rumours. Anas Haqqani, younger brother of the Taliban's newly appointed Interior Minister Sirajuddin Haqqani, also issued a similar statement on Wednesday, maintaining that "the Islamic Emirate is a united front".

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US in contact with Pak on Afghan issue

DNA

WASHINGTON: US State Department Thursday said that Washington was in regular touch with Pakistan over Afghanistan's issue. Addressing a media briefing, US State Department spokesperson Ned Price said, "We have been in regular touch with Pakistani counterparts as well as Pakistani leadership. We've discussed Afghanistan in some detail." Responding to a question about US State Secretary Antony Blinken's statement in which he had said that the US will assess its ties with Pakistan, the spokesperson said, "Pakistan was represented at the ministerial that Secretary Blinken and Foreign Minister Maas convened last week at Ramstein Airbase in Germany.



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ECP serves notices to ministers

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) issued notices to Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Fawad Chaudhry and Federal Minister for Railways Azam Swati after they had levelled allegations against the institution, sources said Thursday. The ECP has sought explanations from both the ministers for accusing Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikander Sultan Raja and the commission, sources said. The development comes two days after the ECP had decided to issue notices to the information and railways ministers. CEC Raja on Tuesday chaired a meeting of the ECP where the matter of allegations levelled by the federal ministers was discussed.



KARACHI: Minister of State for Climate Change Zartaj Gul is being presented memento during the ceremony of the World Ozone Day. – DNA

PD DHA Bahawalpur meets investors

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Brig. Basharat Ali, Project Director (PD) DHA Bahawalpur met with the top and renowned property dealers and investors of Rawalpindi on the first day of his visit of the twin cities. A prestigious event was held at Jacaranda Club, DHAR for the property dealers and investors of Rawalpindi to discuss the ongoing projects of DHA Bahawalpur, issues of mutual interest, and future developments. Brig. Basharat Ali also gave a detailed briefing on the whole project of DHA Bahawalpur and shared development plans and investment opportunities in one of the finest projects in Southern Punjab. The event was very well received by the audience and concluded with a prestigious dinner.

Shipping activity at Port Qasim

KARACHI: Three ships, Loch Crinan, Maritime Comity and Gas Amazon carrying 54,412 tonnes of Coal, 32,766 tonnes Palm oil and 3,202 tonnes LPG were berthed at Pakistan International Bulk Terminal, Liquid Cargo Terminal and Sul Sothorn Gas Terminal respectively on Wednesday. Meanwhile three more ships, Irenes Ray, Efrossini and Apollo carrying Containers, Coal and Palm oil also arrived at outer anchorage of Port Qasim during the last 24 hours. Twelve ships were occupied at PQA berths during last 24 hours, out of them, two Container ships, Maersk Sentosa and MSC Rachele sailed on Thursday morning, while three more ships, IVS Pebble Beach, Arion and Port Belmonte are expected to sail from HFF&S, PQEPT and PIBT on today in the afternoon. Cargo throughput during last 24 hours stood at 165,654 tonnes, comprising 123,038 tonnes imports cargo and 42,616 tonnes export cargo, including containerized cargo carried in 2,926 Containers (580 TEUs Imports and 2,346 TEUs export), was handled at the Port. – APP

NAB takes notice of fake calls

DNA

LAHORE: National Accountability Bureau (NAB) on Thursday took notice of fake calls, in the name of NAB by some elements for pressurizing the private institutes or officials to get their personal benefits. These accused used international telephonic numbers to make telephonic calls to the officials or private institutes and they also set the NAB of ficers pictures at their whats app profile display, said NAB sources. Javed Iqbal had also issued directions to take action against such elements. It may be mentioned here that NAB intelligence wing had so far arrested 12 accused involved in such practices. The NAB once again informed that on the directions of its Chairman, no NAB official made any contact through telephone with any individual or institution regarding inquiry or investigation but they only ensured written correspondence with the individual or organization concerned.

COMSTECH, HSA ink LoU to build public health capacity

DNA

ISLAMABAD: COMSTECH and Health Services Academy (HSA) signed a Letter of Understanding (LoU) to collaborate in the areas of: teaching, research, knowledge transfer, and exchange of information with the focus to achieve shared aims and objectives, here at COMSTECH Secretariat on Thursday. It was agreed upon to conduct online, and in-person trainings in African regions in basic health sciences, and policy making by sending prominent experts in a particular field to the region to train people not only from the host country but also from the neighboring countries as well. Both the institutions resolved to carry out extensive capacity building programs public

health in African regions. It was agreed to develop joint research programmes; invite scholars for lectures, talks and participation in conferences, colloquia and symposia; organize workshops, exchange information and publications; and facilitate faculty and staff visits to the partner institutions of OIC member states. COMSTECH would invite the Health Services Academy (HSA), Pakistan, as a member of COMSTECH Consortium of excellence for the development and promotion of public health activities in OIC member states. Distinguished teachers, professors, researchers of HSA would work as resource persons for capacity building in public health of OIC member states. HSA in collaboration with COMSTECH would submit a project proposal of the

establishment of Infectious Diseases Center in Gambia under Resource Linkage Programme of Islamic Development Bank. The Health Services Academy, is a degree awarding institute, under the umbrella of Ministry of National Health Services Regulations & Coordination, Government of Pakistan. HSA offers long term, short term teaching training and research programs in public health. The COMSTECH is the Ministerial Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation of the OIC. The President of Pakistan is the Chairman of COMSTECH. COMSTECH works for the socio-economic development of OIC member states through capacity building in frontier fields of science and technology, and strengthening cooperation.

KP Government releases Rs. 400m grant for UAD

DNA

D.I KHAN: Provincial Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has released one time grant-in-aid of Rs. 400 million for the University of Agriculture Dera Ismail Khan. When contacted, Vice Chancellor University of Agriculture Prof. Dr. Masroor Elahi Babar (TI) said that provision of high quality education has always remained a focus of the university and the released funds would be used to establish new laboratories to provide up to date equipment and better research environment to the students of UAD. Vice Chancellor further added that UAD will also ensure the provision of fund-

ed research projects to its students to uplift the academic standards of the institution and provide facilities for extracurricular activities to help prepare the balance, productive and sound minds for the society. Director Planning and Development of UAD, Arshad Jamil Khokhar said that with the proper funds now in hands to utilize, the University is expected to flourish further in near future through edifying its students by providing them with the factual and research oriented knowledge. The release was a long standing demand of the University of Agriculture and citizens of Dera Ismail Khan as cash-strapped UAD was running its financial affairs through the fees of the students enrolled in different programs of the University.



LAHORE: US Consul General William Makaneole visits Lahore Shahi Qila. – APP

Usman Buzdar suspends 15 officers in Sialkot

Buzdar also took stern notice on the plight of women prisoners in District Jail Sialkot and reprimanded Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent of the jail

DNA

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar on Thursday paid a surprise visit to Sambarial and Sialkot and suspended 15 senior officers over negligence of duty and public complaints. During the visit, the Punjab CM visited various departments, during which he took stern action on negligence of duty, public complaints and poor performance. He also suspended 15 officers including Assistant Commissioner Sambarial. Buzdar also took stern notice on

the plight of women prisoners in District Jail Sialkot and reprimanded Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent of the jail. He lashed out at the mismanagement of Sialkot District Jail. During the visit, the Punjab CM also approved the construction and repair of Sambarial Road and announced the release of a fund of Rs 200 million for the construction of Shahabpura bridge and approved the construction of road from airport to Sambarial Chowk. He also directed the Deputy Commissioner Sialkot to launch crackdown on encroachments



and mafia without any discrimination. CM Buzdar appointed Secretary Excise and Taxation

DC Faisalabad meets District Peace Committee

DC informed that the Punjab government has also started vaccinating boys and girls between the ages of 15 and 17 to prevent them from corona in this regard

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Deputy Commissioner Ali Shehzad called on the members of District Peace Committee (DPC). Additional Deputy Commissioner Headquarters Muhammad Khalid and other officers were also present. Maulana Muhammad Yusuf Anwar, Pir Faiz Rasool Rizvi, Muhammad Riaz Kharal, Syed Jafar Naqvi, Dr. Iftikhar Naqvi, Yaseen Zafar, Malik Bakhsh Elahi, Syed Tajmal Hussain, Abdul Rashid, Aslam Bhalli, Rashid Mahmood, Mian Tanveer Riaz and others were present on the occasion. Deputy Commissioner welcomed the members of district peace committee and expressing happiness and satisfaction and said that the scholars of all schools of thought in Faisalabad district are united. He said that tolerance, love and observance of law should be taught to the people and especially in the gatherings of Jumua Al-Mubarak, the message of sincere adherence to Asawa-Hasana (PBUH) and protection from the Corona epidemic should

be conveyed. He said that district administration would always welcome the suggestions of Ulmas for the establishment of peace. He said that peace and security is the hallmark of religion Islam which makes the world and the hereafter better therefore, will not spare a single minute to keep Faisalabad as the cradle of peace, the credit of which goes to the scholars of all sects. He said that on the occasion of Chehluam Hazrat Imam Hussain (R.A) the administrative and security ar-

rangements would be made in the light of the suggestions of the scholars. He informed that the Punjab government has also started vaccinating boys and girls between the ages of 15 and 17 to prevent them from corona in this regard, lists are being prepared by educational institutions so the scholars should also provide lists of madrasa students. He appealed to the religious scholars to spread the message among the parents that their children between the ages of 15 and 17 should

be vaccinated against corona so that they can be protected from this epidemic. Welcoming Ali Shehzad on his appointment as Deputy Commissioner, members of Peace Committee assured their full cooperation and said that peace belongs to all of us. They also assured continued cooperation to ensure implementation of Corona SOPs. Finally, prayers were offered for the development and prosperity of the country and the nation, peace and security, unity and solidarity and blessings.



US issues visa to Omar Sharif, says Wahab

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Sindh government spokesman Barrister Murtaza Wahab on Thursday confirmed that renowned comedian Omar Sharif and his family have been issued United States visas.

In a tweet, Barrister Murtaza Wahab said that interviews were completed at the US embassy for the issuance of visas for renowned comedian Omar Sharif and his family. The US embassy exempted Omar Sharif from the interview due to illness, for which we are grateful to the US embassy and officials. Barrister Murtaza Wahab added that Omar Sharif is one of the great actor of the region. Wahab also prayed for his health and longevity. He also requested the nation pray for the recovery of Omar Sharif.

Proposal for term of FPCCI president still in pending: MoC

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Federal Ministry of Commerce has not put forward any proposal for extending the term of Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry for two years. PTI MNA from Vehari Tahir Iqbal Ch. along with former FPCCI Vice Presidents Zafar Bakhtawari and Zahid Iqbal Ch. Thursday called on Iftikhar Ali Malik President SAARC Chamber and briefed him about their meeting with federal secretary commerce Sualah Ahmad Farooqi. He said private member moved bill in this regard and government has not initiated any move however ministry will consult all chambers and associations on the proposed extension in the term of FPCCI. He said issue of UBG presidential candidate khalid Tabaw appeal against FPCCI elections was also taken up and secretary told that matter is pending before cabinet committee and in the light of its decision, the DGTO will take necessary action. Tahir Iqbal Ch. further stated that UBG Secretary General Zafar Bakhtawari informed the secretary that Khalid Tabaw appeal has been pending for last nine months and not yet decided on merit. Zahid Iqbal Ch. said government decision should be in the best interest of the people and the business community and term of FPCCI should remain same. He said government should not take any decision in haste and if it's necessary to extend the term then a business referendum should be held.

Industries in residential areas under microscope

DNA

KARACHI: Sindh government has decided to re-survey industries located in residential areas of the province including Karachi and review environmental issues. Provincial Minister for Environment Ismail Rahu further said that there would also be an environmental inspection of restaurants across the province, including Karachi. He directed officers to collect data of illegal industries, take legal action against negligent officers, industries operating without safety measures, loss of life, property and severe damage to the environment due to fire incidents. Ismail Rahu said that after the survey, action would be taken against illegal industries and they would be relocated from residential areas. Instructing the officers, the provincial minister Ismail Rahu said that environmental inspection of restaurants across Sindh would be carried out, general cleanliness of all restaurants across Sindh and also checking of indoor environment, drainage methods of restaurants across Sindh including Karachi would also be checked.

Carpet makers to call on govt functionaries

DNA

LAHORE: A delegation of Carpet Manufacturers and Exporters Association will soon call on senior officials of government to draw attention towards granting relief on Sales and income tax on raw material imported into Pakistan from Turkham Border to give boost to the local carpet industry. Senior vice chairman of the Association Riaz Ahmed told media that effective arrangements have been made to contact with the relevant authorities in the government. He recalled that exporting commodities already enjoy exemption from Sales Tax exported through after imposing Value Added Taxes

locally Turkham borders already enjoy exemption from Sales Tax. Riaz Ahmed further pointed out that due to imposing of different taxes cost of production has soared very high as a result Pakistan is losing hand-made Carpet business in the international market due to vast competition. He further assured Pakistan can gain cent percent increase in the export of hand-made carpets of Pakistan besides increasing huge foreign exchange for the country. Moreover, he pointed that if our proposals are implemented Pakistan would be able to secure jobs for more than 0.5 million skilled workers attached with the hand-made carpet industry of Pakistan.

Opp require numbers for no-trust move

STAFF REPORT

QUETTA: An opposition leader has claimed that the opposition parties have required numbers to pass a no-confidence motion against Chief Minister of Balochistan Jam Kamal. Akhtar Hussain Langove, a member of BNP-Mengal, has said that the opposition have required number of lawmakers for the success of the no-trust move. Opposition parties, the Balochistan National Party (BNP), Jamiat Ulema-Islam (JUI) and Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (P-MAP) have submitted the no-trust motion at the assembly's secretariat demanding Chief Minister Jam Kamal to seek confidence vote within seven days.

"Speaker has been bound under the rules to convene a session of Balochistan Assembly within seven days of submitting the no-confidence motion," Langove said. "The opposition parties have a strength of 23 members and they have support of more lawmakers than the required number," he said. The opposition will need simple majority of 33 members of the provincial assembly to win the no-confidence motion against the Chief Minister. "CM Jam's own party members and allies are dissatisfied with his government's policies," Akhtar Langove said.

Unsavoury spectacle

THE ongoing spat between ministers of the ruling party and the ECP continues to escalate and has now become an embarrassing spectacle. Following the objections raised by the ECP on the implementation of EVMs in time for the 2023 general elections, ministers spoke out against members of the ECP and even called the autonomy of the institution into question. Regardless of how one chooses to interpret the objections raised by the ECP, the claims of bribery and being partial to the opposition are unsavoury to say the least. Politicising every issue is something that we must refrain from. It is even regrettable to see the ECP and its employees getting embroiled in this controversy, with reports emerging of notices being issued against federal ministers. Instead of prolonging this any further, both sides need to exercise better judgement and be wary of the need to set a better example for the public. As has been said before, the introduction of newer technology is definitely something to look forward to if the process of conducting elections can be improved. However, such an undertaking cannot be done in haste and the objections raised by the ECP certainly hold a lot of weight. Even the Free and Fair Election Network (Fafen) has warned against any attempt to amend the Elections Act 2017 without a political consensus. Such a move would cause political instability that could potentially reverse the process of democratic consolidation in Pakistan. The procurement and implementation of EVMs is an important issue that must be deliberated with all the concerned stakeholders as such a decision will have far reaching consequences. This matter should not be politicised unnecessarily and should not be viewed from an "us against them" lens. Under no circumstances should the discourse devolve into personal attacks. Concerns should be raised via the appropriate channels, and institutions like the ECP should be allowed to do their job without being dragged into such controversies.

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 02 Issue: 114

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Covid-19 precautions

ACCORDING to the NCOC, the government will lift the additional restrictions put in place to reduce the transmission of Covid-19 during the fourth wave. Given that progress has been marginal in the last few weeks—with the number of cases remaining close to the 3000 mark—there has not been a significant enough improvement to justify side-lining additional precautionary measures. Currently, the NCOC reported 2988 cases in the last 24 hours. Furthermore, the positivity ratio now stands at 5.62 percent—still a relatively concerning rate. The non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) helped limit transmission but not at the rate at which they should have. The reality remains that more than 50 percent of the country's ventilators are occupied, 60 percent of oxygen beds are being used for critical patients and over 90,000 cases are active. These are figures that are hard to stomach when we understand that behind them, there is the suffering of countless patients and their family members. It does not make sense to lift the precautionary measures merely ten days after implementation; each policy needs time to have an effect and by fast-forwarding ahead, we are depriving ourselves of the progress we had the potential to make. As intercity transport, outdoor dining and school reopening resumes, the risk of digression is very real. It was vital to limit the public's activity considering that people now seem to have gotten comfortable with the idea of living in a pandemic. Precautions are not adhered to with the same diligence as before and while once there was a time when the masses displayed concern over the prevailing circumstances, now they are met with absolute apathy. A false sense of security is being indulged in after the success of the vaccination campaign. Currently, we have only vaccinated 15.8 percent of our population and that means the task of immunisation is still monumental. It is too early to deem our performance as a success story given that the situation can turn anytime, as evidenced by the sudden yet extreme fourth wave. As the numbers slowly decline, the authorities must reinvigorate the public through awareness campaigns and reiterating their social responsibilities.

Central Asia's growing role in Afghan situation

Dr. Abdel Aziz Aluwaisheg

Central Asia is vast – about 4 million square kilometers – but sparsely populated, with less than 73 million inhabitants in the five countries combined, about 70 percent of whom are in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. The region's combined gross domestic product in 2019 was merely \$300 billion and the average per capita income was about \$4,100. As elsewhere, COVID-19 has shrunk its economy – the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development estimated the shrinkage at about 4.5 percent in 2020. They are, however, recovering in 2021. The Asian Development Bank recently revised Central Asia's growth prospects...

THE hasty withdrawal of US and NATO troops from Afghanistan before a comprehensive peace deal had been reached has created a chaotic situation in the country and alarmed its Central Asian neighbors. Fears of growing terrorist activity and instability in Afghanistan have spurred the region into action. This crisis may offer an opportunity for the region to again play a greater role in shaping its own future. The Gulf Cooperation Council also sees Central Asia as a potentially important partner in dealing with the new situation in Afghanistan and maintaining peace and security, as well as an opportunity to encourage shared economic interests and common history and culture. According to the British politician and author Halford Mackinder, Central Asia is the heart of the world. One of the founding fathers of the concepts of both geopolitics and geostrategy in international relations, he believed that, in order for any great power to control the world, Central Asia must be under its control. That may have been an overstatement, but Central Asia remains very significant indeed for the geopolitical interests of many powers, including China, Russia and the US. Central Asia is also important for the Gulf region and the wider Middle East. Thirty years ago, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan – the five countries comprising Central Asia – regained their independence after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Since then, these landlocked states in the heart of Asia have had to develop their own ways to deal with security, economic, diplomatic and political affairs, as well as to manage their regional relationships in the midst of great power competition for influence. In 2015, the GCC decided to enhance its collective engagement with the Central Asian countries, in addition to its bilateral cooperation with the individual states. There is considerable potential for an effective and mutually beneficial partnership in several fields,

which could be achieved by intensive joint work, propelled by an evidently strong political commitment to pursuing that partnership, especially after the US and NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Central Asia is vast – about 4 million square kilometers – but sparsely populated, with less than 73 million inhabitants in the five countries combined, about 70 percent of whom are in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. The region's combined gross domestic product in 2019 was merely \$300 billion and the average per capita income was about \$4,100. As elsewhere, COVID-19 has shrunk its economy – the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development estimated the shrinkage at about 4.5 percent in 2020. They are, however, recovering in 2021. The Asian Development Bank recently revised Central Asia's growth prospects for 2021 up from 3.4 percent to 3.6 percent, although that would still put it below the 2019 level.

Despite its budding recovery, the region's full economic potential is yet to be realized and, with that, its influence. GCC countries could help by providing successful examples of countries that went from dirt-poor isolated backwaters to rich international economic hubs in just two generations. They could also provide the investment and know-how needed for such transformations.

Central Asia has many of the most important ingredients needed to thrive today. It is rich in energy resources, including oil, gas, coal and renewables. The region has also been described as a "geologist's paradise," as it holds some of the world's largest deposits of gold, uranium and chromium, as well as significant reserves of bauxite, boron, bismuth, copper, iron, lead, manganese, mercury, salt, silver, titanium, tungsten, and zinc. Economists believe that these energy and mineral reserves form the basis for the region's future economic growth and development. GCC countries, also being energy and mineral-rich, could help develop those sectors in Central Asia.

Reforms are needed to accelerate growth and remove any obstacles. Infrastructure upgrades are needed in several areas, including for transporting energy, as well as improving the financial, banking and payment systems. GCC countries could help by offering state-of-the-art examples to address these needs, including building modern infrastructures and streamlining financial systems.

In addition to natural resources, tourism – particularly historical and ecotourism – is another promising sector. Some of Central Asia's cities are among the oldest and best preserved in the world. Bukhara and Tashkent, for example, were established thousands of years ago and contributed to many civilizations throughout history. Samarkand, Ashgabat, Dushanbe and other Central Asian cities also evoke deep feelings of shared history and culture for many in the Muslim world, including the Gulf region. That cultural affinity can augment political and economic partnership between the two regions.

Security is an area of growing importance after the Afghanistan crisis. The Central Asian states and the GCC are equally concerned about the possibility of Afghanistan again becoming a haven for terrorist groups. Containing the threat of terrorism is a priority for both. Political and security dialogue, as well as the exchange of information and expertise, will help both regions achieve that goal. Afghanistan has also been a source of drug trafficking, which poses a threat to both regions. Traffickers trying to smuggle drugs from Afghanistan, a landlocked country, could be effectively intercepted through cooperation between its neighbors.

These shared interests in maintaining regional peace and stability and growing their economies provide a solid basis for the GCC-Central Asian regional partnership. Their strong historical and cultural ties can form the glue for their renewed engagement after decades of isolation and estrangement.

Courtesy: Arab News

#PalestinianPrisoners: This is not the time to despair

Susan Abulhawa

They want to erase from our minds the knowledge that six defenceless, emaciated men with nothing but perhaps a spoon, shook the colonial Zionist project to its core. It terrifies them that we could collectively contemplate the depths of hope and determination that propelled those six heroes to accomplish what everyone assumed was impossible. Because if we did truly ruminate on that primal impulse for freedom, on the boundless hope in the heart of every revolutionary and fighter, we might find our own individual, collective power

FOR four days, Palestinians inside Palestine and living in exile in the diaspora were euphoric. In an act of extraordinary creativity and determination, six brave Palestinian political prisoners tunneled their way out of an Israeli maximum-security prison. It was presumed they did so with a spoon, as they would have had no other tools. Certainly, they had no heavy machinery typically necessary for such a feat. The tunnel openings were exceedingly narrow, leaving everyone baffled how six grown men were able to pass through them. I was immediately reminded of these lines from a Mahmoud Darwish poem: The Earth is closing on us pushing us through the last passage and we tear off our limbs to pass through. Indeed, when two of them – Yaqoub Qadri and Mahmoud Abdullah al-Arida – were captured on the fifth day, images released of them showed they had shed a tremendous amount of weight, presumably to fit through the opening. It was life imitating art – they tore off parts of their bodies to make the passage to freedom. The following day, Zakariah Zubeidi and Mohammad al-Arida were captured. Ayham Kamamji and Munadil Infaat remain free, fighting for their lives, holding out as long as they can. Israeli police snapped photos of the men they shackled, distributing ones that showed the most anguish in their expressions. Someone promptly photo-

shopped smiles on the faces of Yaqoub and Mahmoud, and the edited pictures went viral. Many have criticised the alteration of those photos. They argue that we have to look squarely at their pain and defeat as if we are too stupid to understand what this moment means for them.

I believe whoever altered the photo did our society a great service, and I hope he or she does the same for Zakaria and Mohammad's photos. The Israeli authorities disseminated those painful photos for a reason. They want to reflect the heavy weight of them onto all of our hearts and let defeat and depression set in, as it seems to be doing. They want our deflation to be as big or bigger than our initial celebration. They want to erase from our minds the knowledge that six defenceless, emaciated men with nothing but perhaps a spoon, shook the colonial Zionist project to its core. It terrifies them that we could collectively contemplate the depths of hope and determination that propelled those six heroes to accomplish what everyone assumed was impossible.

Because if we did truly ruminate on that primal impulse for freedom, on the boundless hope in the heart of every revolutionary and fighter, we might find our own individual and collective power.

We might begin to understand that nothing is impossible, and freedom is within our reach. We might begin to organise a collective system to protect the remaining two – Ayham and Munadil – to keep them free

and alive and encourage more defiance and resistance.

We might rise up to rid ourselves of the treacherous and illegitimate regime of Mahmoud Abbas, and install a revolutionary leadership, willing to protect its own people, instead of protecting those who occupy, rob, and oppress Palestinians.

Our brave political prisoners knew the risks they were taking. This is what revolutionaries do. They would rather fight than capitulate. No matter what happens now, what they did cannot be undone. The blow they dealt to "Israel" cannot be undealt. They sacrificed so much to give us all hope. How dare we now give in to depression and the sense of defeat? It was not defeat or depression that motivated them to spend sleepless hours digging a massive tunnel without adequate tools. It certainly was not a belief in Israel's carefully cultivated perception of omnipotence.

The least we can do to honour them is to carry forth the torch of hope and the impulse for liberation that surely were at the heart of their heroism. We can solidify our defiance and refusal to live forever exiled or captive on our knees. We can understand that nothing is impossible, including ending this cruel Zionist regime. In the face of the horrors we know those heroic political prisoners are now facing, we have no right to depression or defeat at this hour. We can be certain that is not what they sought to inspire in us.

— Courtesy: Al Jazeera

Briefs

Palestinian
El-Kurd twins
make TIME
top 100 list

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM: Palestinian rights activists Muna and Mohammed El-Kurd, whose family faces forced displacement from their home in the occupied East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah, have been named to TIME magazine's annual list of the 100 most-influential people in the world. The twins, aged 23, earlier this year became the faces of a global campaign to halt Israeli efforts to forcibly displace Palestinians from Sheikh Jarrah to make way for Jewish settlers.

Israeli forces detained and questioned the siblings for several hours over their activism in June. "Through online posts and media appearances, sibling activists Mohammed and Muna El-Kurd provided the world with a window into living under occupation in East Jerusalem this spring - helping to prompt an international shift in rhetoric in regard to Israel and Palestine," the magazine wrote about the siblings. In a statement on Twitter on Wednesday, Mohammad El-Kurd said that although being named to the list was a "positive" development, symbolism is not enough to truly support the Palestinian cause. TIME Editor-in-Chief Edward Felsenthal said the top-100 list features "extraordinary leaders from around the world working to build a better future" who "in a year of crisis have leaped into the fray". - DNA

Spain restarts
dialogue with
secessionist
Catalans

FOREIGN DESK

MADRID: Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez met Wednesday with Catalonia's President Pere Aragonés in a resumption of talks aimed at resolving an ongoing crisis caused by the autonomous region's separatist movement, said local sources.

Following the roughly two-hour meeting, the two leaders expressed optimism by recognizing that the meeting itself was an important development to find a solution to the problem Spain has faced since the constitutional crisis of 1978, the Spanish daily El País reported. While Sanchez insisted that the most important thing now is to work "without haste and deadlines," Aragonés said "we need progress beyond deadlines," the newspaper said. The newspaper also highlighted that the two leaders acknowledged that their positions are very far apart.

China justifies
Lithuanian
ambassador
expulsion

AGENCIES

BRUSSELS: China's "expelling" of Lithuanian ambassador to China is a justified and legitimate reaction to Lithuania's wrong actions that contravened the one-China principle and provoked and infringed upon China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, Chinese Mission to the EU noted in response to Slovenia's Prime Minister Janez Jansa's accusations against China. Jansa made the remarks in a letter sent to EU member states encouraging them to stand with Lithuania. The spokesperson of the Chinese mission reiterated that the one-China principle is a universally recognized norm in international relations. It is the political foundation for China to develop bilateral relations with other countries and organizations, including the EU and its member states. The EU has committed to and repeatedly reiterated its adherence to the one-China policy. It should urge its member states to correct their mistakes and should not send wrong signals on issues concerning China's national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

District Election Commission
formed to conduct Uzbek polls

Candidates for members of District Election Commissions are recommended by the Jokargy Kenes of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, regional and Tashkent city Kengashes of People's Deputies to the Central Election Commission within three days after the formation of electoral districts



DNA

TASHKENT: The District Election Commissions for the election of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan play an important role both in the election campaign and in monitoring the implementation of the Electoral Code in the regions. Candidates for members of District Election Commissions are recommended by the Jokargy Kenes of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, regional and Tashkent city Kengashes of People's Deputies to the Central Election Commission within three days after the formation of electoral districts. Citizens who enjoy authority among the population are recommended as members of the District Election Commission. The total composition of the District Election Commission may be from 11 to 21 people. The personnel of the District Election Commission, its chairman, deputy chairman, secretary and members of the commission, as well as indicating their places of work,

are announced 70 days in advance on the official website of the Central Election Commission, as well as in the mass media. The District Election Commission monitors the implementation and uniform application of the Electoral Code, forms polling stations, sets their numbering by district, publishes their lists with an indication of the address. Forty days before the election, it forms precinct election commissions and publishes information about their composition, coordinates their activities. At the same time, this body notifies voters about polling stations, hears reports from public associations, citizens' self-government bodies, heads of enterprises, institutions and organizations on issues related to the preparation and conduct of elections.

The powers of the District Election Commission include monitoring the compilation of voter lists and their submission for public inspection, providing organizational and methodological assistance to precinct election commissions and reviewing other issues of material and technical support for elections. This body also issues a standard mandate to observers from political parties and citizens' self-government bodies, organizes the

activities of the press center at the District Election Commission, informs voters, observers, and media representatives about the time and place of early voting. In addition, the District Election Commission considers appeals from voters and other participants in the electoral process, as well as makes decisions on them, conducts training sessions, seminars, conferences, round tables related to the preparation and conduct of elections, including for members of precinct election commissions.

In order to organize the use by voters of the Unified Electronic List of Voters, this body provides members of precinct polling stations with the necessary information to access the Information System for Managing the Electoral Process and coordinates the work.

In its activities, the District Election Commission is guided by the principles of legality, collegiality, transparency and fairness. Observers from political parties, representatives of the mass media, observers from citizens' self-government bodies, as well as other States and international organizations may be present in District Election Commissions when adopting protocols based on the results of counting



votes from precinct election commissions and in the process of determining the results of elections in an electoral district. Other persons are prohibited from participating in this process, except those who are allowed to be present in the building of the District Election Commission. The results of elections in an electoral district are determined on the basis of the protocols of precinct election commissions. At a meeting of the District Election Commission, the results of the elections for the district are established and recorded in the protocol. It is signed by the Chairman, Deputy Chairman, secretary, other members and submitted to the Central Election Commission, respectively. A copy of this protocol is immediately posted in the premises of the precinct election commission for public inspection for a period of at least forty-eight hours.

AU calls
for end to
vaccine
nationalism

ADDIS ABABA: Rich countries should end vaccine nationalism that is to blame for a supply crunch in Africa and slowing down efforts to contain the COVID-19 pandemic in the continent, experts said at a webinar on accelerating COVID-19 vaccination in Africa on Wednesday. Michel Sidibe, the African Union's special envoy for the African Medicines Agency, said that the rich North has a responsibility to stop hoarding vaccines that has been counterproductive to the pandemic fight. He stressed that vaccine equity is key to averting the emergence of new coronavirus strains, hastening recovery and strengthening the resilience of Africa's public health systems. Speaking at the webinar convened by the Brookings Institution, Sidibe noted that Africa's battle against the pandemic has suffered headwinds amid vaccine nationalism. - APP

PAK-UAE CONNECTION



ISLAMBAAD: Federal Minister for Defence Production, Ms. Zobaida Jalal presents souvenir to Ambassador of UAE, Mr. Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Salam Al-Zaabi during a meeting at Minister's Enclave. - APP

Pak has vital stake in Afghan
peace: High Commissioner

DNA

LONDON: High Commissioner Moazzam Ahmad Khan on Thursday stressed that Pakistan, as a country most affected by decades-long instability in Afghanistan, had a vital stake in peace and stability in that country. Pakistan not only continued

to host over 4m Afghan refugees, but had also suffered 80,000 casualties and economic losses of \$ 150bn due to conflict in that country, he added. On behalf of FM Shah Mahmood Qureshi, HC, who is also the accredited representative of Pakistan to the Commonwealth, represented Pakistan at the annual Commonwealth Foreign Affairs

Ministers meeting held virtually. In his address to the Commonwealth Foreign Ministers, the HC shared Pakistan's perspective on the situation in Afghanistan, and the role being played by Pakistan in supporting evacuation and humanitarian relief efforts, a press issued by Pakistan HC in London said. The HC underscored that

today, there was finally an opportunity to put an end to the 40-year war in that country and enable the Afghan people to reconcile and rebuild. The humanitarian situation posed a challenge. Afghanistan stood on the brink of a catastrophe with 18m Afghans in dire need of assistance. At the same time it was imperative that Afghan soil was not used to harm any country. He called on the international community to avoid the mistake of abandoning Afghanistan, adopt a pragmatic approach, and sustain engagement. At this critical juncture, the Afghans must be helped to walk firmly along the path of peace.

US court dismisses
NSA lawsuit, citing
'state secrets'

AGENCIES

WASHINGTON: A US federal appeals court has upheld the dismissal of a lawsuit that challenged the National Security Agency's (NSA) practice of mass interception and searching of US citizens' international internet communications. The Wikimedia Foundation, which runs Wikipedia, said in its lawsuit that the NSA's so-called "Upstream" surveillance programme captures some of its international communications and is a violation of the US Constitution's First Amendment free-speech rights and its Fourth Amendment rights against unreason-

able search and seizure. In a divided ruling on Wednesday, the 4th US Circuit Court of Appeals said the lawsuit must be dismissed after the government invoked the "state secrets privilege", which meant that a full exploration of the issue in a court would damage national security. Judge Albert Diaz wrote in a majority opinion by the court that "the state secrets privilege requires the termination of this suit". Meanwhile, Judge Diana Gribbon Motz, who dissented in the court ruling, warned that the majority opinion "stands for a sweeping proposition: A suit may be dismissed under the state secrets doctrine.

A Pakistani
founded new textile
material startup

DNA

BEIJING: A Pakistani founded a new textile material startup in Shanghai to promote Sino-Pak bilateral cooperation in textile sector. "I have founded a new textile material startup in Shanghai's Lingang New Area. Although it is new-born, I'm full of expectations," said Faizan Shafiq from the Donghua University in an interview with China Economic Net. "Since I was a child, I have heard 'long live the Sino-Pakistani friendship' countless times. From then on, I had a strong curiosity about China," Faizan mentioned. He came to China the first time seven years ago, and in 2017, in order to pursue studies in textile industry, he passed the application and began to study for a Ph.D. degree in textile chemistry in Donghua University, Shanghai. Born in Faisalabad, the hub of textile industry in Paki-

stan, Faizan joined the field naturally. "Nowadays, many materials are technologies being used in the textile industry cause environmental disruption." He was determined to develop a new environment-friendly material. After a series of experiments, Faizan created a new kind of dye obtained from natural plants instead of chemicals. He hopes that in the future, more and more people can wear clothes dyed by his invention, "The process of extracting dyes from plants fascinates me. We're using it on cotton cloth and silk. I am always committed to the green transformation of the textile industry," noted Faizan. In this way, Faizan was determined to start his own business in China. His idea was supported by his doctoral tutor. Faizan and his Chinese classmates completed the research and development of the new dye in the laboratory, then his tutor found a foundry for him.

SEPTEMBER 2021

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Bulgaria to
hold early
general
elections

FOREIGN DESK

SOFIA: The Bulgarian president on Wednesday announced early parliamentary elections on Nov. 14 as the last polls failed to form a government. Earlier, the parliament had decided to hold the presidential elections on the same date. Rumen Radev also replaced three ministers in the provisional technocrat government he established after the July 11 general elections. Prime Minister Stefan Yanev will continue to serve in the government consisting of 18 ministers, and will be tasked to prepare for the early elections. Daniela Vezieva will replace Economy Minister Kiril Petkov, while Valeri Belchev will come in place of Finance Minister Asen Vasilev. Transport Minister Georgi Todorov will be replaced by Hristo Aleksiev. Yanev said the main task of his government is "to hold honest and transparent elections." If there is no definite result in the first round of the presidential election, in which Radev will also be a candidate, a second round will be held on Nov. 21.

SpaceX rocket
blasts off from
Florida

WEB DESK

CHICAGO: With whoops and hollers on the ground and fist bumps and thumbs ups from the crew members, Elon Musk's SpaceX venture launched the first all-civilian crew into space Wednesday night for an historic step forward in space tourism. At just after 8 p.m. local time in Cape Canaveral, Florida on a warm, clear night, a rocket dubbed Falcon 9 blasted off, carrying the Crew Dragon Capsule, which will be home for the two men and two women for the next three days. "You are truly inspiring the world," came the word from SpaceX mission control as the rocket blasted off. "Good luck, Godspeed and enjoy the ride." By 12 minutes into the ride, the capsule reached the boundary of space, drawing a big cheer from mission control. The capsule is heading to an orbital altitude of 575 kilometers (357 miles) above Earth, which is beyond the orbit of the International Space Station. The mission, called "Inspiration4" is notable for several reasons. Unlike the space flights led by billionaires Richard Branson and Jeff Bezos in July, considered the first of their kind, Musk himself is not aboard the Crew Dragon. The four civilians include Jared Isaacman, a 38-year-old billionaire who heads a payment processing company. He paid an undisclosed amount of money to help fund the trip and is dedicating it to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital for cancer patients. Hayley Arceneaux is a bone cancer survivor who later began working for St. Jude.

Briefs

Sindh to offer free booster shots to health workers

KARACHI: The Sindh government has decided to administer free Pfizer coronavirus booster shots to all healthcare workers, a notification from the province's health department said Thursday.

The department, in the notification, said the healthcare workers were at greater risk of being exposed and getting infected with the virus, and in a bid to reduce the risk, the government has decided to give them booster shots. The health department has written a letter to the National Command and Operations Centre (NCOC) in this regard as well.

The development comes a day after as many as 18 more patients died, and 817 new coronavirus cases emerged in the province, Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah said in a statement. The province's death toll has reached 7,210, while the total cases have reached 447,050, the chief minister added in the statement.

SAPM on Health Dr Faisal Sultan had in August said that the government had started consideration to administer booster shots after six months of second shot to frontline healthcare workers above 50 years of age. — APP

JAC thanks partners

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a statement issued on Thursday by the Joint Action Committee set up against PMDA, the committee thanked all those bodies and individuals; in particular, media watch dogs, lawyers associations, Human rights Associations, Political Parties, Civil Society for standing up for freedom of expression in the country.

On Wednesday, in the meeting between APNS, CPNE, PFUJ, PBA, AEMEND and the federal information Minister, Fawad Chaudhry and Minister of State Farrukh Habib, the JAC expressed its reservations on PMDA and termed it as unacceptable. However, it was agreed to form a committee to address the issue of fake news particularly on social media, the rights of media workers and ways to further improve laws and regulatory framework. The statement said that member organisations of Joint Action Committee will nominate its representatives to the above committee being formed to discuss these issues amicably along with the representatives of the Federal Government.

PIA to operate Lahore, Peshawar flights

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) on Thursday has decided to operate flights from Lahore to Peshawar. According to the PIA spokesperson, weekly two flights will be operated between Lahore to Peshawar from October 1. The first flight will take off for Peshawar from Lahore airport on October 1 at 11.40 am. The flights would be operated on Monday and Friday every week, the spokesperson said and added that ATR planes will be used for the flight operations. On Wednesday, the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the cabinet had approved US\$130 million cash support for Pakistan International Airlines (PIAC). A decision to this effect was taken at the ECC meeting, which was held in Islamabad with Finance Minister Shaukat Tarin in the chair. Earlier, the new Afghan government contacted the CAA Pakistan and sought permission for scheduled flights for Afghanistan Airlines Ariana and Kam Air.



DUSHANBE: President of Belarus Alexander Lukashenko presented souvenirs to Prime Minister Imran Khan at Dushanbe. — DNA

PM Imran Khan stresses enhanced Pak-Belarus ties

The two leaders exchanged views on the situation in Afghanistan. The Prime Minister underscored that as a country most affected by conflict and instability in Afghanistan for over 40 years, Pakistan had a vital interest in a peaceful and stable Afghanistan

DNA

DUSHANBE: Prime Minister Imran Khan met with Alexander Lukashenko, President of the Republic of Belarus, on the sidelines of the SCO Council of Heads of State meeting in Dushanbe. The two leaders discussed mutual efforts for strengthening of Pakistan-Belarus relations and exchanged views on regional and international issues.

Reviewing bilateral relations, Prime Minister Imran Khan expressed satisfaction at the growing cooperation between the two countries. The Prime Minister said that Pakistan was committed to further enhancing its relations with Belarus across all fields of mutual interest, including trade, investment, agriculture, industry and defence. It was also agreed to enhance bilateral ex-

changes at the highest parliamentary and political levels. The two sides noted that the visit of the Belarus Foreign Minister to Pakistan later this year would contribute significantly to the consolidation and further expansion of bilateral cooperation in diverse fields.

The two leaders exchanged views on the situation in Afghanistan. The Prime Minister underscored that as a country most affected by conflict and instability in Afghanistan for over 40 years, Pakistan had a vital interest in a peaceful and stable Afghanistan. The Prime Minister stressed that the international community must stand by the Afghan people, help avert a humanitarian crisis, and take steps to stabilize the economy. The Prime Minister reiterated Pakistan's full support to efforts for stabilization of Afghanistan and hoped that the international community will play

a positive role in this regard.

The Prime Minister renewed his invitation to President Lukashenko to visit Pakistan. President Lukashenko extended an invitation to the Prime Minister to visit Belarus at the earliest convenience.

PM Imran Khan is paying a two-day official visit to Tajikistan on the invitation of President Emomali Rahmon of Tajikistan. The Prime Minister is accompanied by a high-level Ministerial delegation. This is the third visit of the Prime Minister to Central Asia, underlining Pakistan's enhanced engagement with the region.

The Prime Minister will participate in the 20th Shanghai Cooperation Organization Council of Heads of State (SCO-CHS) Summit in Dushanbe. He has earlier participated in SCO-CHS held in Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic on 13-14 June 2019 and SCO-CHS hosted by Russia on 10 November 2020

through video-conference.

SCO is an 8-member permanent inter-governmental trans-regional Organization. It was established in Shanghai on 15 June 2001. Pakistan became an SCO Observer in 2005 and a full member in June 2017 during Astana SCO-CHS Summit. Russia, China, India, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan are other SCO members.

SCO also has 4 Observer states (Iran, Mongolia, Belarus and Afghanistan) and 6 Dialogue Partners (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Cambodia, Nepal, Turkey and Sri Lanka). Pakistan and Tajikistan enjoy close brotherly relations underpinned by the bonds of common faith, history and culture. The two countries have shared perceptions and a common desire to promote economic development, peace, security and stability in the region.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Turkey Ihsan Mustafa Yurdakul paid a courtesy on Syed Zahoor Ahmed Agha, the Governor of Balochistan. — DNA

Taliban should be given time: Sh Rasheed

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed on Thursday said that the Taliban should be given time to form government and run country's affairs.

He said this in his meeting with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, who called on him in Islamabad. During the meeting, matters pertaining to evacuation from Afghanistan and humanitarian assistance for Afghan citizens came under discussion.

It was agreed during the meeting that Afghan citizens would not be left alone in the current situation - food, medicine and other essentials would be provided to Afghans on humanitarian grounds.

Sheikh Rasheed said that Pakistan wants lasting peace in neighboring Afghanistan. He said the Taliban should be given time to form government and run the affairs of the country, adding that the world needs to understand the ground realities in Afghanistan.

"Taliban will have to ensure financial and human resources for governance in Afghanistan," the minister said. The minister went on to say that refugees could lead to possible humanitarian famine, instability and lawlessness in Afghanistan, adding that trucks and plane loads of food and medicine have been sent to Afghanistan under humanitarian assistance.

PM's efforts for co-op with China commendable

DNA

BEIJING: China appreciates the importance attached by Prime Minister Imran Khan and Pakistani government on practical cooperation with China and their active efforts, a Chinese foreign ministry's spokesperson said on Thursday.

"As all weather strategic cooperative partners, the two sides have constantly deepened economic and trade cooperation," Zhao Lijian said during his regular briefing held here.

During a recent meeting with CEOs of Chinese companies operating in Pakistan, the prime minister assured his government's cooperation and facilitation to the Chinese enterprises and investors. The spokesperson remarked that China has been Paki-

stan's largest source of investment and trading partner for many years in a row. "We stand ready to work together with Pakistan to advance high quality CPEC development, and to deepen bilateral cooperation," he added.

He hoped that there will be a more favorable environment for Chinese businesses who want to invest and operate in Pakistan so that we can have mutually beneficial cooperation and shared development. Earlier, several Chinese business leaders have expressed increased confidence in their operations in Pakistan after attending a meeting with Prime Minister Imran Khan that was aimed at addressing Chinese firms' concerns regarding policy support and security. During the meeting with a delegation of Chinese business leaders, Khan vowed to

chair a monthly self-review meeting to address their concerns sending a strong signal that the Pakistani government attaches great importance to Chinese companies. Zhang Shilu, general manager of Zhengbang Agriculture Pakistan (Pvt) Limited, who attended the meeting, told the Global Times that the meeting was held in response to concerns that have gripped Chinese investors. "Chinese enterprises encountered some difficulties in doing business in Pakistan and we expressed our expectations to the Pakistani Prime Minister, who showed that Pakistan attaches great importance to the development of Chinese enterprises in Pakistan. It greatly increases the confidence of Chinese enterprises," Zhang said.

He added that at the investment meeting, representatives of Chinese enterprises voiced their hopes that Pakistan could introduce an industrial park management committee - a common practice in China - to simplify approval processes. Chinese enterprises that attended the meeting included OPPO, Shanghai Challenge Textile Co, and Easy Prefabricated Homes Pvt, a subsidiary of Henan D.R. Construction Group Co. George Long, CEO of OPPO Pakistan, told the Global Times that the company was hoping for some form of preferential tax treatment and land policies from the Pakistani government to support its R&D and high-tech production. This would boost local employment and local tech supply chains would also be steadied, Long said. The

Chinese phone vendor's foray into the Pakistan market began in 2014 and it has built 17 aftersales services centers and more than 5,000 retail outlets across the country. "We're confident about expanding investment in Pakistan and bringing quality smart gadgets to the people of Pakistan, he added."

A manager surnamed Jin with Henan D.R. Construction Group who participated in the meeting said that the agenda of the meeting included difficulties for Chinese-funded firms in the local industrial park that include land purchases and natural gas and power supplies. In October 2019, the company purchased 6.1 acres of land in an industrial park as a factory production base, and started to build the factory after the land purchase procedures were approved in December 2019.

Pakistan committed in averting food crisis

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for National Food Security and Research Syed Fakhar Imam here on Thursday reaffirmed the commitment of the Government of Pakistan to support World Food Program to uplift the people of Afghanistan from humanitarian crisis.

Talking to WFP Pakistan Country Director, Chris Kaye, who called on him, Imam said that the population of Afghanistan was approximately 3.9 million and their wheat requirement was estimated at 6.8 million tons, said a press release issued by the Ministry of National Food Security and Research.

The minister said that the government will provide all the necessary support to ensure that a humanitarian food crisis does not arise in Afghanistan.

He said that the Ministry of National Food Security and Research was committed to providing support to World Food Program to enable it to avert a humanitarian crisis brewing in Afghanistan.

Kaye, speaking on the occasion said that WFP aims to provide sufficient food nutrition to Afghanistan. He said that the current issue was providing timely food nutrition to the people of Afghanistan and in that regard Pakistan can be of crucial importance. During the meeting both the sides agreed to increase coordination to address the food shortage issue in Afghanistan.

Govt pursues policy based on scientific data

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant on National Health Strategy Dr. Faisal Sultan has said the government pursued a coherent and calibrated policy based on scientific data to deal with the challenge of COVID-19.

Highlighting the key components of Anti Covid strategy at a seminar in Islamabad on Thursday, he said the success was achieved due to a collective response to the pandemic. The Special Assistant said he upgraded our health infrastructure with addition of thousands of beds and training of doctors and paramedical staff.

He pointed out that the most vulnerable segments of the society were provided with cash assistance under Ehsaas Program. The Special Assistant said the latest technology and data of NADRA was used to take forward the process of vaccination on equitable basis.

US rejects French concerns

AGENCIES

WASHINGTON: France and the United States had high-level talks ahead of the announcement of Washington's new alliance with Australia and Britain, with Canberra to acquire nuclear submarines, a White House official said Thursday.

"Senior administration officials have been in touch with their French counterparts to discuss AUKUS, including before the announcement," the official told AFP after the agreement angered France, which had a deal of its own to supply conventional submarines to Australia. "I will leave it to our Australian partners to describe why they sought this new technology... we cooperate closely with France on shared priorities in the Indo-Pacific and will continue to do so," the official added.

The AUKUS agreement scuppered Australia's multi-billion-dollar 2016 deal to buy submarines from France, which had been personally backed by President Emmanuel Macron.