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Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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Free press is vital for democracy, says Romanian envoy

Closer ties with Pakistan vital: Iran envoy

Pakistan has done well against COVID-19



GILGIT-BALTISTAN

Pakistan rubbishes Indian contention

The dispute, which is the longest outstanding item on the agenda of the UNSC, stemmed from India's forcible and illegal occupation of the State of Jammu and Kashmir in 1947 in complete violation of international law and aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir

ADNAN YOUSAF

ISLAMABAD: A senior Indian diplomat was summoned in Ministry of Foreign Affairs to convey Pakistan's rejection of India's baseless and fallacious contention regarding the Supreme Court of Pakistan's verdict in a matter pertaining to Gilgit Baltistan. The spokesperson said that it was clearly conveyed that the Indian claim over the occupied state of Jammu and Kashmir as an "integral part" of India had no legal basis whatsoever. The entire state of Jammu and Kashmir is a "disputed" territory and is recognized as such by the international community. The dispute, which is

the longest outstanding item on the agenda of the UNSC, stemmed from India's forcible and illegal occupation of the State of Jammu and Kashmir in 1947 in complete violation of international law and aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. No subsequent illegal and unilateral Indian actions could or have altered the status of Jammu and Kashmir as a disputed territory. It was underscored that the only resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute was faithful implementation of the relevant UNSC Resolutions that recognize the Kashmiris' inalienable right to self-determination through the democratic method of free and impartial plebiscite under the UN auspices. Pending the resolution of

the dispute, any unilateral Indian actions in IOJ&K were illegal. In this regard, it was reiterated the Indian unilateral actions of 5 August 2019 and subsequent attempts to alter the demographic structure of Jammu and Kashmir, in violation of the 4th Geneva Convention, were illegal and in clear violation of the UNSC Resolutions. It was also emphasized that the baseless Indian contention about Gilgit-Baltistan could neither cover up the atrocities being perpetrated by the Indian occupation forces against innocent, unarmed Kashmiris in IOK, nor could they succeed in diverting the attention of the international community from the Indian state terrorism and aggravating human

rights situation in IOJ&K. The Government of India was called upon to immediately reverse all of its illegal actions in IOJ&K, including ending illegal occupation of the territory, and let the people of Jammu and Kashmir exercise their right to self-determination as enshrined in the UNSC Resolutions. Reiterating Pakistan's condemnation of the continuing grave human rights violations by Indian occupation forces in IOJ&K, India was called upon to lift restrictions and communication blackout, release illegally detained Kashmiri youth and incarcerated Kashmiri leadership, and withdraw draconian laws such as Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) and Public Safety Act (PSA) in IOJ&K.



ISLAMABAD: Chinese officials handing over relief goods to Mayor Islamabad Shikhe Anser Aziz in the wake of COVID-19. - DNA

Expo 2020 Dubai postponed

PARIS: The Expo 2020 Dubai has been postponed by a year because of the coronavirus outbreak and will now be held from October 1, 2021, to March 31, 2022, the Paris-based organiser said Monday. A two-thirds majority of member states of the Bureau International des Expositions (BIE) voted in favour of the delay, which "allows all participants to safely navigate the impact of COVID-19," it said in a statement. - APP

Uzbekistan to construct wind, solar power plans

Uzbekistan's Ministry of Energy has announced a new strategy for the production and provision of electricity between 2020-2030 amid increasing energy demand from a growing population and a fast-developing economy

DNA

TASHKENT: Uzbekistan's Ministry of Energy has announced a new strategy for the production and provision of electricity between 2020-2030 amid increasing energy demand from a growing population and a fast-developing economy, the ministry said Monday.

The strategy, which will be amended and adjusted as necessary, defines mid-term and long-term objec-

tives and implementation of international best practices and modern trends in the global electricity industry, according to the document posted by the ministry.

The new strategy envisages the modernization and reconstruction of existing power plants, construction of new generating assets using energy-efficient power production technologies, improvement of power metering systems and development of renewable

energy sources. While the state owns hydropower plants, nuclear power plants and some thermal power plants, the document said that most of the country's electricity generation plants will be concentrated in the private sector by 2030.

To achieve the development indicators of renewable energy, Uzbekistan will construct three gigawatts of wind and five gigawatts of solar power plants by 2030, the document said.

Briefs

Dollar declines by Rs 1.17

DNA

KARACHI: Dollar on Monday declined by Rs.1.17 with interbank trading reaching to around Rs.159, as previously registered on March 29. According to analysts this reduction in dollar values will help government by reducing pressure on debt payment by Rs. 950 billion.

Chairman Senate calls on PM

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Sadiq Sanjani called on Prime Minister Imran Khan here on Monday, the PM Office said. The meeting discussed matters of mutual interest. - DNA

Romanian ambassador supports free press

Says media's fundamental role is to give information they need to participate in the process of government decision making

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of Romania Nicolae Goia has said he strongly believed in power of journalism adding in a democratic society free press has an important role to play. In his message on the occasion of World Press Freedom Day the Romanian ambassador said media's fundamental role is

to give information they need to participate in the process of government decision making. He said being the watchdog of democracy, the Press must be absolutely free from any conditionalities and fear nevertheless there are instances in today's world that journalists are not only persecuted but in some cases tortured and killed also for the only reasons that they

exercised truth. Romanian ambassador said the World Press Freedom Day emphasizes that free press is a fundamental human right. "This day is also a moment to remember with much love and respect to those who paid the ultimate price for telling the truth. We stand together for press freedom today and everyday", Ambassador Nicolae added.

Jordan to open all economic sectors

AMMAN: Jordan has said businesses in all economic sectors will start operating as of May 6.

All businesses should abide by health and safety instructions and that at least 75 percent of their staff should be Jordanians, Minister of Industry and Trade Tareq Hammouri said. Some sectors will remain closed, including food courts at malls, schools, cinemas, and gyms, the minister said in a statement. The total number of COVID-19 cases reached 461 and the deaths reached nine as of Sunday, according to Health Minister Saad Jaber. - APP

Shaista new CCP chief

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ms. Shaista Bano Gillani has taken charge as the Chairperson, Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP). The Finance Division on Monday issued a notification after the federal cabinet in its meeting held on 28 April



2020 approved the appointment of Ms. Shaista Bano

as the Chairperson CCP, on acting charge basis. Ms. Shaista Bano holds a Master's degree in 'Economics for Competition Law' from King's College, University of London and a Master's in Business Administration with majors in Finance from Quaid-e-Azam University Islamabad.

Japanese NGOs support needy families

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Aspart of relief assistance and goodwill gesture by the people of Japan to respond to the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic in Pakistan, an international Japanese NGO, KnK (KokkyonakiKodomotachi, Children without Borders) has stepped forward to provide emergency support to the deserving families in Mansehra, which is one of the most seriously COVID-19 affected districts in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) after Peshawar and Mardan. This emergency support,

provided by KnK on behalf of the Japanese people, has a scale of JPY 711,500 (ca. PKR 1,077,500) and 165 families in target villages of Haripur district have been provided with one-month food package along with sanitation kits. Besides providing financial support to the vulnerable families in targeted areas, KnKhas initiated a hygiene awareness campaign among the village communities to sensitize them about the threat of COVID-19 virus and also sanitized houses, roads and mosques in the area. School children were also trained on how to better protect themselves from the

corona virus like practicing hand wash regularly which is an easiest safety precaution against this invisible enemy. To better equip the medical staff fighting the COVID-19 as a frontline force, KnK also provided Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) and other necessary med-

ical equipment through a local Pakistani NGO Friends Welfare Association to three hospitals where corona virus patients are being treated. There is no doubt that the Medical Staff fighting against the deadly COVID-19 virus is the front-line force and without whom fight

against this pandemic can never be won. While expressing his views on the relief assistance being provided by the Japanese NGO KnK, H.E. MATSUDA Kuninori, Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan has said that all of this emergency support is funded by personal donations from the people of Japan for the people of Pakistan in this difficult time. "This support shows the longstanding friendship between Japan and Pakistan as well as the strong will to stand by those in need to fight against COVID-19. I believe that such goodwill gestures will continue in the future" emphatically said the

Ambassador. It is pertinent to mention here that earlier this month another international Japanese NGO AARJapan has distributed relief assistance such as food packages and hygiene kits in the targeted areas of Mansehra district to help and support the vulnerable families after the outbreak of COVID-19. KnK has been supporting the vulnerable people in Pakistan since 2005. The latest project of KnKis the grant aid support of the government of Japan, "The Project for Promoting Girls Education Through Improved Learning Environment in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa" from 2017.



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Govt to slowly lift lockdown: PM

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan, addressing volunteers of the Corona Relief Tiggers Forces on Monday, said the government will gradually ease lockdown enforced to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus. He said the lockdown restrictions took a serious toll on daily-wage earners and weak segments of society, adding there is a need to lift the lockdown to mitigate its economic impact on the masses.

51 virus cases in Attock

DNA

ATTOCK: Another person tested positive of coronavirus in Attock on Monday, raising the tally to 51 in the district. According to Attock district focal person for COVID-19, Dr Asif Arbab Niazi, a resident of Farooq-e-Azam Colony Attock and has recently returned from UAE tested positive.

Briefs

Proper disaster financing mechanism demanded

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Convener FPCCI Central Standing Committee on Insurance Dr. Murtaza Mughal has asked the insurance industry to provide maximum relief to policyholders amid the coronavirus crisis. Insurance sector must not delay necessary adjustments and introduce new disaster mitigation measures amidst coronavirus pandemic to help those affected by the crisis, he said.

Dr. Murtaza Mughal said that the response of insurance sector to the crisis has left much to be desired but prolonged lockdown and is also to be blamed for the situation. He said that there were only a few pandemics in the past century but now the insurance sector can offer services based on the latest crisis model to mitigate the risks.

'Fire Fighters played a vital role'

MUNIR FAISAL

ATTOCK: Marking International Fire Fighters Day, district emergency officer Dr Ashfaq Mian Monday said fire fighters played a vital role amid people and properties rescue operation. Talking to media, he said fire fighters put their lives at risk and rescue the people so they were being termed as heroes across the world. He paid rich tributes to those fire fighters who sacrificed their own lives including the fire fighters who sacrificed their precious lives during Gakhar Plaza rescue operation. He said, Rescue 1122 was in dire need of more facilities for extinguishing fire in multi-stories' buildings.

PTCL Group unfurls R 1.9 bln relief package

DNA

ISLAMABAD: PTCL Group, one of the country's largest telecom groups and backbone of connectivity in Pakistan, is undertaking a comprehensive Coronavirus relief and support effort worth PKR 1.9 Billion. The package aims to help people across the country to stay connected and it will also provide access to facilities, mainly food and healthcare, to the most vulnerable communities. The Group's foremost priority is to keep Pakistan connected in this time of crisis, whether it be individuals, organizations or government institutions being able to work seamlessly. PTCL Group including Ufone, U Microfinance Bank and PTCL have undertaken numerous measures to provide support to the people in these unprecedented times.



LALAMUSA: Oil tankers stand in queue to unload oil at various filling stations. - Khurshid Nadeem

Govt -Timesaco join hand for e-commerce retail promotion

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The government and Chinese digital company Timesaco had agreed to work on shared goal of common e-commerce platform for introducing the online retail business in current challenging situation of COVID-19 pandemic.

"We are negotiating with the ministry of commerce and soon both side would sign Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to promote online retail business

in current lock down situation in all major cities of the country, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Chinese online Services company Timesaco, Donald Li told APP here Monday.

He said recently, Timesaco has launched e-commerce platform 'Dazaran' for introducing the online retail business to provide facility to the people in current situation of COVID-19 pandemic.

"We have decided to launch e-commerce Dazaran App in advance to support all merchants in Pakistan to open online

stores through support in two hour instant delivery system in the same city to maintain retail business and reform the retail methods in Pakistan.

Donald said that Dazaran was a provider and operator of e-Commerce ecosystem platform in Pakistan. He said that under the umbrella of mother company Timesaco, "We are providing the five different services to the customers in 10 major cities of the country including twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

Donald Li said that his company

was committed for employment opportunities to the people in this critical situation of pandemic disease, when whole of the world was suffering from this curse, he added. The CEO informed that the launch plan was three months ahead of schedule but because of people difficulties Dazaran start its operation to encourage business merchants to run their business online.

He said that Pakistan's New-commerce Platform "Dazaran " in each main city in Pakistan, in-

cluding merchants and Customer friendly platform which would provide a hub to business to the local community.

Replying to a question, he said that during COVID-19, merchant started facing business difficulties and the people started facing the demand pressure of basic living goods.

He said that most merchants in Pakistan still use traditional retail model and in the face of pandemic, most of them were helpless and could not support their families.

Govt advises for physical distancing

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Secretary, National Health Services Regulations and Coordination Dr. Nausheen Hamid Monday advised people to maintain physical distance while performing economical activities to stay safe from the global pandemic.

Talking to a private news channel she stated that economic activities could not be curbed as Pakistan was already struggling to strengthen its national economy, total and strict lockdown was not the effective solution of this international crisis.

"I prefer smart lock down over complete lockdown, but masses should adapt all SOPs to prevent from the disease," she mentioned.

In replying to a question she hailed the government and media for educating people the prevention measures effectively.

Even developed countries had soften lockdown for their public to open markets by following all safety measures, as it was not possible for any nation to continue with the strict lockdown for long time, she expressed.

IRSA releases 169,400 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 169,400 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 221,600 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in the Indus River at Tarbela Dam was 1479.80 feet, which was 93.80 feet higher than its dead level 1386 feet. Water inflow in the dam was recorded as 61,000 cusecs and outflow as 60,000 cusecs.

The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1209.75 feet, which was 169.75 feet higher than its dead level of 1040 feet whereas the inflow and outflow of water was recorded as 79,200 cusecs and 28,000 cusecs respectively.

The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa and Sukkur was recorded as 112,100, 77,500 and 12,300 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from the Kabul River a total of 52,700 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 16,000 cusecs released from the Chenab River at Marala. - APP

ICCI cautions against prolonged lockdown

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) has shown great concerns over the prolonged lockdown as it would cause permanent closure of millions of businesses and cripple the growth of overall economy.

Therefore, it called upon the government to ease restrictions and allow gradual opening of businesses as due to con-

tinuous lockdown, labor was losing daily earnings and financial problems were multiplying.

Muhammad Ahmed Waheed, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry said that Asad Umar Federal Minister for Planning & Development has himself stated that lockdown due to pandemic could cause closure of up to one million business institutions rendering 18 million people jobless and pushing

up to 70 million people below the poverty line, which showed that gravity of situation caused by continuous lockdowns. He urged that to start with, construction industry in Islamabad should be opened forthwith to provide jobs to idle labor and spur business activities. He said that if the current lockdown continued, many corporate companies would be at risk of default that would have long-term negative impact on the economy.

Pak Post introduces slabs

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Post has introduced slabs for registered mail service from 50 grams to 1 kilogram and 2kg. Spokesman Pakistan Post told APP on Monday that simple mail weighing 2kg could be charged as normal letters, adding that the ticketing system will not be used for international mail and instead senders will be given money receipts, he said. He explained that because they would have to attach more tickets to envelopes, people found difficult to write their recipient's complete address. He said that Pakistan Post has increased charges for its international mail service because of the increase in the delivery service rates of airplanes due to COVID-19. The new system has also ended the use of tickets on international mail. Senders will now receive a receipt for money charged by the Pakistan Post for delivery abroad.

Call to remove duty on tyres

SHAHEEN QURESHI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tyre Importers and Dealers Association (PTIDA) has demanded immediate removal of Regulatory Duty on Tyres. A delegation of PTIDA led by Mr. Shahid Anwal, Chairman FPCCI Standing Committee on Tyre along with Mr. Azeem K. Yousufzai, Chairman PTIDA, Mr. Syed Burqi Senior Vice Chairman PTIDA, Mr. Muhammad Qamar and Mr. Muhammad Shahid called upon Vice President Sheikh Sultan Rehman and Mr. Zakaria Usman Convener FPCCI Advisory Council on Budget. The delegation apprises them of various slabs of regulatory duty on tyres which in effect is encouraging smuggling of tyres and significant revenue loss to the government. The delegation informed that there is 205 percent increase in tyres via Afghan Transit Trade which

ultimately is smuggled into Pakistan. It is highly unfortunate that upto 86 percent demand of truck tyres, 69 percent of Light Truck and Van tyres and 69 percent of passenger car's tyres in Pakistan is met by smuggled tyres. This situation is not only hurting the legal trade in Pakistan but also depriving the national exchequer of valuable revenue. They demanded an end to RD on tyres to revive local trade and discourage rampant smuggling of tyres in the country.

Zakaria Usman, Convener of the FPCCI Advisory Council on budget, after listening the problems and issues faced by the tyres said that if the manufacturing is over 70 percent locally than Regulatory Duty may be applied to protect the local industry whereas when local demand is met with import the regulatory duty may not be applicable.

Teachers unable to pay house rent

ISLAMABAD: Teachers and non-teaching staff of the Federal Government Colleges are faced with an acute shortage of funds to pay their term rent for housing. According to an official source, the budget allocation to disburse every year to the landlords whose houses are on public pool for government employees is set annually.

The F.G Colleges, which were already running in deficit, received a reduced

amount this year as compared to the previous fiscal year to pay the rental ceiling. The allocated funds consumed in just six months which put the teachers of these colleges in a very difficult situation. Funds allocated to meet the rental ceiling of all the 10 Federal Government colleges for the fiscal year 2018-19 was Rs 96765000, whereas it was drastically reduced to Rs. 81920000 for the year 2019-20. - APP

AIOU launches Next Generation Learning Management system

FIJAZ CHAUDHRY

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) launched Next Generation Learning Management system (LMS) with Virtual class room facilitation grid to meet students' academic needs.

It upgraded 'Aaghi LMS portal' to offer online programs and hold Online classes at the post-graduate-level particularly during the lock-down period in wake of COVID-19.

Through this portal, online sessions are being held with the students of Associate Degree, BS, Bed, MA, MSC, MS/M.Phil and PhD programs, it was stated

here on Monday.

With having experience of 46 years in Distance Learning, the AIOU has recently made a paradigm shift from traditional Distance Learning to next generation Distance Learning.

At the time when educational institutions are closed and students are worried about their academic activities, the AIOU was fulfilling its responsibility, connecting them with their academic programs through well-managed, organized and upgraded Learning Management System with Virtual classroom facilitation grid i.e. Aaghi Learning Management Portal.

The LMS Portal is based on state of the art next generation LMS

Engine that has updated and integrated by the University to manage virtual classroom grid.

This facilitate the students and teachers to be connected through text, voice and video for live face to face interaction (discussions and lectures) without any interruption and problems. As per the feedback, Faculty members and the students are highly satisfied with the upgraded system, stating that it meet the academic needs, particularly in wake of COVID-19.

The Aaghi Learning Management Portal has been successfully developed and managed by a team of Directorate of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) that is actively

engaged in digitalizing the University's academic and administrative services, taking benefit of the new technology.

The task was undertaken under the visionary leadership of Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum, who is himself professor of Computer Sciences, Artificial Intelligence and Augmented/Virtual Reality. The Faculty members are fully trained to provide online help to their students for providing full academic support to their students of Associate Degree, BS-4 years, BSc, MA/MSc, MPhil and PhD programs.

According to Director of ICT, currently the University is providing support to its Faculty, enabling it to provide academic support

at postgraduate level programs to more than 40, 000 students in 15 regions (out of 54 regions) through this Aaghi LMS portal.

Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum has also offered his all possible support to all the educational institutions in the country, if they want to manage online programs and training for their faculty members and staff. The University at this critical time has also provided its academic support to Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training for launching of Tele-School through the PTV. This job is being done through the University's own resources, in order to fulfill its national duty, when the whole nation is confronting with COVID-19 epidemic.

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Worsening rights

THE annual report for the year 2019 by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) should serve as an eye-opener to those who fail to see the worsening situation of human rights in Pakistan. An important message from this report is that the most vulnerable segments of society are being neglected and their voices are not heard. This has made their presence invisible, though they are the ones who bear the brunt of most injustices in society. Released on April 30, the HRCP report highlights that the weakest segments of society have become victims of widespread economic marginalization.

This is in addition to the social exploitation they face across the country. The report has also pointed out that the human rights record in Pakistan continued its downward slide in 2019 and the situation has become 'worsome', especially in the face of the ongoing pandemic of Covid-19. The report warns us that the prospects for human rights in the country were already bleak when the current pandemic cast its shadow. It is definitely a cause of concern that HRCP has noticed 'systematic curbs' on political dissent. These curbs are imposed by a continued chokehold on press freedom. Apart from the curbs on media, there is also a persistent neglect of economic and social rights in the country.

This year, the HRCP report is more detailed and focused as it offers separate chapters on each province and other federating units that compose Pakistan. Among the issues highlighted by the report, child abuse and forced labour by underage youth figure prominently. There have been reports of child labourers being assaulted, raped, murdered, and dumped, without such incidents getting much attention in the mainstream media.

Violence against women is another frighteningly common occurrence across the country. They become targets in the name of honour as Pakistani society becomes more and more fixated with the concept of damaged or lost honours of male relatives. Punjab has the disgraceful distinction of being at the top with the highest proportion of 'honour' crimes.

The HRCP report has also underscored the miserable conditions of prisoners in overcrowded jails. As many journalists have reported, they find it difficult to criticize state policy, as the space for free expression on electronic, print, and social media has been eroded in an organized manner. This is also linked with a deliberate financial squeeze on the media which is being targeted and victimized in a selective manner. Another cause of continued concern is the case of persons reported to be 'missing'.

The HRCP has rightly recommended that the government must legislate to criminalize enforced disappearances.



Super tax

ACCORDING to some reports, the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) is considering a super-corona tax for the rich in the country. The government may include this proposal – though it is in early stages at the moment – in the budget recommendations for the next fiscal year starting in July 2020. Apparently the government will impose this tax to generate extra money for providing financial relief to the needy. The details of this proposal are still under consideration and may take a couple of months to finalize. The next two months will be crucial for at least two reasons. One, the trajectory that Covid-19 takes in the country will determine the magnitude of efforts further required to stem the disease; and two, the allocation of resources for the next budget will need a fundamental change in the way we have been collecting revenues and disbursing funds under various heads. In terms of revenue collection, the FBR will be striving to achieve the desired tax collection target of Rs5.1 trillion in the next budget, which may or may not be possible without additional measures. If we are able to restore full economic activities by the end of this fiscal year, the start of the next will be much easier.

But if the crisis takes a protracted path, which seems to be likely at the moment, a proposal like a new corona tax on the rich and wealthy will become inevitable. In that case, the government needs to define the features of the rich and wealthy carefully, without putting extra pressure on those who are already under the strain of an imminent financial crunch. Suggestions such as anyone who owns an above 1000cc car should be paying a super tax is preposterous. Simply imposing this tax on anyone without considering their present level of income is also likely to cause further hardships on people who currently do not fall in a high-income category. The FBR must be diligent in developing its proposals, keeping in mind the current level of income of those who own a car or a house. A largely untaxed segment of the privileged are land-owners across the country.

In addition, the government has not yet apprehended those who have made billions in sugar and wheat scams. Then there are questions about transparency in getting foreign loans and their use. Ever since this government came to power in 2018, it has been on a relentless spree of begging and borrowing; and the Covid-19 crisis is a useful excuse to keep doing the same. Be it with the ADB, the IMF, the World Bank, and some friendly countries showing their usual largesse, the practice must be above board. That means all loans and taxes collected in the name of the coronavirus must be utilized for the relief of the people in a transparent manner. Lastly, we must stress once again that our resource allocation in the next budget must make the development and welfare of people a primary concern of the state.

Can Ad agencies compete with the Government of Pakistan?

Sardar Zaheer



Interestingly on other the hand, PID simultaneously placed an advertisement for hiring Advertising Professionals to join the Cyber Wing of PID, offering lucrative salaries (as high as MP II scale). Apparently, through this, PID aims to build their own resources to manage in house designing of advertisements and digital campaigns, basically putting an extra burden on Government's already limited budget and of course wasting taxpayers' money

IN 1970s Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto imposed nationalization policy by taking over Private Businesses and Industry which costed great to this nation and halted our exponential economic growth.

Business of advertising also suffered greatly, and many global players went back after this brutal decision. Consequently, some local employees did try managing the top agencies of that time, but they could not do much as

state was the majority owner of these entities. By late 90s most of it was taken back by private sector once again. The last agency acquired back then by the private sector from Government of Pakistan was IAL by the EMG group for Rs. 5 million.

After the private sector takeover, the ad industry witnessed great boom with emergence of 100s of new ad agencies, media buying houses, production houses, digital agencies, and many more such entities. This not only created thousands of jobs but also helped other businesses grow, thus ultimately boosted Pakistan's overall economy. This was the time when the ad industry helped Pakistan emerge as a promising country at the international stage and also assisted to earn great fame for the country that even at their own expense.

Unfortunately, at present not a single Government body has been able to emerge as a strong regulator for the advertising and media industry of Pakistan. Especially with respect to social media, there are many grey areas which presently none of the regulatory body addresses. For example, PTA cannot even regulate advertising on any of the Internet based platforms/mediums except imposing a broad ban on any portal e.g. YouTube, Facebook. On the other hand, Press Information Department (PID) headed by Principal Information Officer (PIO), is the all in all with respect to Government publicity as per the rules of business of Government of Pakistan.

The lack of effectiveness and efficiency of PID is evident from the very fact that it is not even able to regulate advertisements for ISPR or any other military entities despite having constitutional cover. Additionally, the department has been ineffective to even develop proper policies in writing about content or procedure of Government advertising; that could provide a guideline for the entire industry in terms of placement of advertisements as well as payment of advertising bills.

Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) did use some muscle in the past to ban "vulgar" advertisements on electronic media but in general failed to bring and impose any clear guidelines or policies for the electronic media/ad agencies. Another government department, Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has done some appreciable job through exercising their legal powers to successfully control deceptive and misleading advertising in Pakistan, but CCP has a very limited role with respect to ad industry.

In the recent past PID did step up a bit and took some commendable initiatives, such as issuance of online PID Number System to increase transparency and regularized almost 90 % of Government clients with APNS by

holding rigorous competition. This not only helped client departments to appoint best of the best agencies on panel for two-year tenure, but also provided agencies a sustenance model to tailor their resources to clients' needs and be more productive.

This competition model for appointment of advertising agencies on panel of Government departments, proved to be amazingly effective. Other than their routine and regular advertising designs, because of having competitive creative agencies on panel these Government departments were also getting innovative ideas to improve their business operations without paying a single penny. As per the current practice ad agencies working for Government sector are not being paid for any creative work for print, electronic or any other medium of advertisement.

They only get 15% commission, which is being paid to them by Publications or TV channels that too after using their own cash flow on account of Government departments for over 180 days at an average. It is imperative to note that APNS and PBA only extends credit of 90-120 days to agencies and after that they can suspend any ad agency for any meager payment.

Resultantly the ad agencies are in constant financial pressure. Agencies being into a competitive business are not able to suspend any client for recovery of their payment like telecom companies as they have higher stakes and personal reputation involved in it.

Ad Industry, which is already facing multiple challenges, is once again being sidelined. PID's recent unfortunate attempt to threaten ad agencies business is a reminder for us of Bhutto's nationalization strategy. By issuance of a single notification, PID stopped flow of all classified advertisements (the major chunk of Government's business) that include Tender Notices/Job ads etc.; through ad agencies, thus depriving them of their main source of income from the Government Business i.e. 15% agency commission.

Interestingly on other the hand, PID simultaneously placed an advertisement for hiring Advertising Professionals to join the Cyber Wing of PID, offering lucrative salaries (as high as MP II scale). Apparently, through this, PID aims to build their own resources to manage in house designing of advertisements and digital campaigns, basically putting an extra burden on Government's already limited budget and of course wasting taxpayers' money. They are fully aware that agencies cannot offer similar pay scales even to its senior team members. Sadly, in this case a regulatory body is directly engaged in an act that is more of a hijacking attempt on the ad

industry business.

This makes many ponder, why would a government body bring itself in direct competition with a full fledged industry, which is a source of livelihood for millions of families. Is it not against the basic Competition laws of Pakistan? i.e. targeting of already cornered business segment which has been facing manifold challenges due to increased costs of business operations, dual taxation, higher rentals and retaining of good human resources. Plus, the timing of the decision makes it more controversial, PID knows well that presently as the entire nation faces COVID-19 driven lockdown, it would be easier to put the issue under the carpet.

This unfair attack on advertising industry makes us wonder, what was the need for all this now? And why such a decision has been taken at this point of time when the entire nation is confronted by an unprecedented coronavirus pandemic. Which has already resulted in closure of so many existing businesses.

Is there any other sector which Government/state is after? Answer is No, despite so many corruption cases, so many sectors with individuals who have minted public money and have been looting people by imposing higher tariffs and price tags on their products and services, but no sustainable action has ever been taken against them. But unfortunately, in this scenario, an action has been taken by a Government department that will result in making Government pay for the services they were being offered free of cost, can this be ever justified? Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mr. Imran Khan is an honest leader, during the current crisis it has always been heartening to see his concerns for the poor people of our society. He has maintained that his biggest concern and fear with respect to COVID-19 crisis is that, it will lead to massive loss of people's livelihoods.

But unfortunately, some of his team members are not working in line with PM's vision. Rather their actions reflect that they might be working in a total opposite direction and are after the livelihood of an entire industry. Taking this opportunity, I would like to make a special appeal to the Prime Minister of Pakistan Mr. Imran Khan, to immediately intervene in this serious matter and uphold the competition and open merit culture.

The entire ad industry's eyes are on you Sir! Adman also have families whom they need to feed themselves, wenever expected any relief from Government, never asked for any plots in state developed housing societies. We are a responsible tax paying segment of this society; all we want is a fair treatment and insurance of a conducive environment to continue our operations.

Sino-Afghan Relation, Critical juncture

Khalid Mahmood Faisal



Unfortunately, India considers Pakistan as its arch rival since its refusal to accept Indian supremacy and necessitate relationship on equal footing. Indian leadership have desire to isolate Pakistan and to degrade its regional standing. India has remained friendly towards all Afghan regimes except for Taliban, during this period; New Delhi supported Northern Alliance along with Iran and Russia

PAMIR mountain range is known as the roof of the world; Owen Latimore called it "the pivot of Asia".

In 19th Century's "Great game" control of Pamir knot was crucial concern. It is situated at the cross road of South and Central Asia. Soviet Union, China, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India all are drawn in to the same knot, as the dispute of Kashmir between Pak India, Sino-India border and Sino-Russia quarrels, and soviet invasion in Afghanistan. China remained big power in the past, now emerging as economic giant at international level, the Belt and Road Initiative is prime evidence. Beijing is playing vital role in the region in terms of foreign investment and political reconciliation among regional states; Beijing's efforts in Afghan peace process is manifestation of this claim.

Geographically, Afghanistan is land lock state, stood at the center of energy rich central Asia and energy starved south Asia. It is also strategically important and this thing attracts regional powers, India and China. Formal diplomatic relations between Afghanistan and China established in 1950. Chinese and Afghan leadership attended the Bandung Conference held at Indonesia in 1955, later on in 1964 an agreement of mutual friendship and non-aggression along with treaty of economic and technical cooperation was signed, between Kabul and Beijing when king of Afghanistan visited the China. Reciprocally, China sent high profile diplomats to Afghanistan. President of Afghanistan, Sardar Dawood paid his visits twice in to China in 1957 and 1959. The border dispute of Pamir area was settled in 1963; both countries enjoyed the friendly relations till 1970 under the Sardar Dawood regime. In such settings Afghanistan had been dependent on Soviet Union for military and Economic development.

The situation of region dramatically changed with invasion of Russia in Afghanistan, which have had impacted on the states of region. China's leadership decided to strengthen more its relations with Pakistan as a mean to counter Soviet hegemony. At that time India became neutral; having soft

corner for Russia. Pak-China remarkable friendship is to limit Indian influence in Afghanistan along with South and Central Asia.

Unfortunately, India considers Pakistan as its arch rival since its refusal to accept Indian supremacy and necessitate relationship on equal footing. Indian leadership have desire to isolate Pakistan and to degrade its regional standing. India has remained friendly towards all Afghan regimes except for Taliban, during this period; New Delhi supported Northern Alliance along with Iran and Russia. Since 2001 India has invested in the future of Afghan military by training Afghan cadet in its academy. A strategic accord was signed between Kabul and Delhi in 2011; furthermore, India facilitated Iran to develop the Chahbahar port in order to minimize Afghanistan's dependence on Pakistan to reach out the world. Islamabad has reservation on subversive activities of the Indian official working under the diplomatic cover in Afghanistan.

In the geo-strategic great game China needs Afghan mines and rare earth minerals to sustain its ambitions to rule Artificial Intelligence which will in return boat the economic capacity of aid-dependent Afghanistan hence mark the beginning to a stable Afghanistan. Beijing is also interested in developing special railway transport project for the connectivity to Central Asian states and Iran. As a rising regional power China has stated to fix its gaze beyond its border. China has not only engaged in lip service or symbolic diplomacy but also have provided financial assistance to Afghan government. China trained Afghan government officials and had exempted 95 percent of goods being imported to China from Afghanistan from custom duties. China's level of economic aid has also brought great influence within the Afghan political elite.

Interestingly, a Chinese based metallurgical group won the tender for the Anyak copper mines along with major projects for extraction gas and oil in western part of Afghani-

stan. It is estimated that group will invest \$ 4 billion in said fields over the next several years, which will create jobs for skilled and professionals it will improve the quality of men power of the state. Such investment would have yielded positive impacts but also netted profits for China.

The Beijing has adopted four points' approaches for the Afghanistan development, safeguarding security and stability, developing economy, political reconciliation along with to free Afghan to choose model of governance of their own, and international cooperation.

Afghanistan is also observer member state of Shanghai Co-operation Organization, the Afghan leadership had been attended every meeting since 2004 and criticized for eradicating terrorism in region. The Bonn conference held in 2011, China's foreign minister stated that the role of SCO and other existing international organization and cooperation mechanism should be brought in to full play. India is also member of SCO but Modi's government is not in a mood to follow any international protocol regarding maintaining peace in the region.

The Kashmir dispute is main bone of contention between two states. This is main obstacle for social, cultural, economic development of region as well as keeping peace at bay. The gigantic project of economic corridor a joint venture of Pak-China, would be a beneficial for Afghanistan, if Beijing put her in distance from Delhi. Pakistan rendered the services for peace in Afghanistan to bring Taliban and Afghan Government on table to dialogue for peace process. Being a permanent member of United Nations Security Council China has always raised voice in favor of Pakistan's policy to hold plebiscite in Kashmir as per resolution of UNO. Now it is need of time to demand for with draw of Indian forces to free people of Kashmir at their own land. Otherwise, India will play dual game in Afghanistan as its strategic partner and make foul Beijing in the name of investment in Afghanistan.

Briefs

Portugal starts to emerge from lockdown

LISBON: Portugal will begin to ease its coronavirus lockdown on Monday, with small shops, hair salons and car dealers resuming operations as a state of emergency was lifted after more than six weeks. The wearing of face masks or visors in stores and on public transport is compulsory under the government's plan unveiled last week for the gradual reopening of the country. Portugal declared a state of emergency on March 19 and has so far recorded more than 25,000 virus cases, including over a thousand deaths. That was lifted Sunday but people were still encouraged to stay home as the country takes tentative steps towards normal life. Shops cannot open before 10:00 am and should ensure social distancing measures are respected. Hairdressers and beauty salons can receive customers by appointment only. Anyone found not wearing a mask or visor on public transport could be fined up to 350 euros (\$380). — APP

EU approves 7 bln euros for Air France

BRUSSELS: The European Commission on Monday gave the green light to 7.0 billion euros (\$7.7 billion) in French state aid to national carrier Air France to cushion the economic fallout from the coronavirus pandemic. "The European Commission has approved, under EU State aid rules, a EUR7 billion French aid measure consisting of a state guarantee on loans and a shareholder loan to Air France to provide urgent liquidity to the company in the context of the coronavirus outbreak," EU competition commissioner Margrethe Vestager said in a statement. The EU's executive body, the bloc's competition watchdog, loosened its rules on state subsidies in mid-March to make it easier for member countries to come to the aid of companies in financial difficulty as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the case of Air France, the aid consists of 4.0 billion euros in bank loans, 90-percent guaranteed by the state, and 3.0 billion euros in direct state loans in return for which the airline has committed to improving its profitability and reducing its greenhouse gas emissions. — APP

US virus deaths rise

WASHINGTON: Novel coronavirus deaths in the United States climbed by 1,450 in the past 24 hours, a tally by Johns Hopkins University showed Sunday, bringing the total number of fatalities to more than 67,600. The Baltimore-based university had recorded more than 1.15 million cases in the country as of 8:30 pm Sunday (0030 GMT Monday), with 67,674 deaths. The United States has by far the highest death toll of any country in the global pandemic. — APP

Pakistan has done 'reasonably well': Amb. Majeed Khan

DNA

NEW YORK: Pakistan's "extensive measures" have helped to contain the spread of coronavirus, but the crisis stemming from the pandemic could not have come at a worse time, Ambassador Asad Majeed Khan has said. "Because of the economic reforms, exports had started to pick up, the exchange rate had stabilized, industrial activity was increasing. "All those things now had to stop, so the purchase orders, export orders, the supply chain have been disturbed," the Pakistani envoy to the United States told The Wall Street Journal. "For a country like Pakistan you

can imagine how bad it would be," he said in the interview published Sunday. "We have done reasonably well containing the spread of the virus, but the economic implications are still growing. "That's why our Prime Minister Imran Khan has been advocating more international financial support for the developing nations," Ambassador Khan said. Asked whether the international community doing enough to fight this crisis, he said the response was coming in piecemeal but termed it quite quick and extensive. "Our prime minister has appealed for a more comprehensive, coherent approach involving all concerned stakeholders.

"That comprehensiveness would help deal with both health- and economic-related implications," the Pakistani envoy said. "There is a lot happening but it needs to be more coordinated and geared more to the countries needs." Questioned whether coronavirus cases were overwhelming Pakistan's healthcare system, he said. "We resorted to very extensive measures, such as restricting incoming flights and domestic flights, closing schools, putting offices on rotation, closing all non-essential services. "All of that clearly helped in containing this contagion." "Also," he added, "we converted railway bogies into quarantine wards,



as well as hotels and stadiums, to use them when required. Luckily we have not had to use it so far, but the system is geared to deal with the situation. "But we have a high population and

the capacity of our healthcare system is not as good as we would want it to be. If this gets out of hand, we do not have the capacity to deal with it." Asked whether Pakistani people were observing social-distancing requirements and other measures, Ambassador Khan said they were now getting used to it. "Initially," he added, "People were maybe not aware of the severity and contagiousness, but as things have become clearer the whole country has come together the provinces, federal government, military, political parties. "There was initially reluctance to observe voluntary social distancing measures but people are getting used to these new realities."



TASHKENT: President of Uzbekistan visits flood hit areas and talks to people. Uzbek govt has announced compensation for the affected families. — DNA

Global COVID-19 cases top 3.5 mln

BEIJING: Global COVID-19 infections topped 3.5 million on Sunday as Mideast and Europe witnessed a continued slowdown in new cases. Global cases of COVID-19 climbed to 3,502,126 with 247,107 deaths as of 7 p.m. (2300 GMT), according to the Center for Systems Science and Engineering at Johns Hopkins University. Some countries have reported new lows for

deaths as they tend to ease restrictions, while the situation in other countries remains grim. Turkey's Health Minister Fahrettin Koca announced 61 new deaths from COVID-19 in the past 24 hours, the lowest number in over a month. The country's total death toll stands at 3,397. About 1,670 more cases have been confirmed with the total number of infections reaching 126,045.

"For the first time today, the number of healed patients has exceeded our current number of coronavirus patients since March 11," Koca said. A total of 63,151 patients have recovered, including 4,892 patients who were discharged from hospitals on Sunday. Turkey reported the first COVID-19 case on March 11. Over the past two weeks, both the number of new cases and daily death figures have

declined. Some Turkish business owners are planning to resume operations, especially after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said that the government will ease its curfew and other lockdown measures at the end of May. Iran, the second hardest-hit country in the Middle East, has also witnessed a downward trend of infection cases and death toll. APP

Japan to extend emergency

TOKYO: Japan's government prepared Monday to extend its nationwide state of emergency to the end of May as it braces for a lengthy battle against the coronavirus pandemic. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe declared an initial month-long state of emergency for Tokyo and six other regions on April 7, later expanding it to cover the entire country. It is to expire on Wednesday, but Abe is expected to announce an extension to May 31 after a panel advising the government approved the plan. "We obtained approval for extending the period to May 31 covering all prefectures in the country," said Abe's minister responsible for the virus outbreak, Yasutoshi Nishimura. The prime minister is to explain the government decision at a press conference later Monday. As infectious diseases experts met earlier Monday, Nishimura warned the battle against the virus was far from over. — APP

Vietnam kids back at school after 3 month virus break

HANOI: Millions of schoolchildren in Vietnam returned to class on Monday after the country reported its 17th straight day of no domestically transmitted coronavirus infections. The decision to reopen schools came after the Southeast Asian nation eased social distancing measures at the end of April — with experts pointing to a decisive response involving mass quarantines and expansive contact tracing for its apparent success in containing the disease. At a school in western Hanoi, secondary level students calmly lined up to have their temperatures checked before filing into classrooms for the first time in more than three months. "I am very happy and excited because it's bor-

ing being at home," said 11-year-old Pham Anh Kiet. "I feel safe when I wear a mask and have my temperature checked, I am not afraid of being infected with the virus," he added, before grabbing a classmate for a quick catch up. Tran Dang Ngoc Anh, 12, said she'd missed her friends and teachers and was happy to be back — despite being a little apprehensive about wearing "stuffy masks in classrooms". There are around 22 million school-age children and university students across Vietnam. After being sent home in late January, some kids returned last week but others — including primary school and kindergarten pupils — will have to wait it out a further week. — APP

S. Korea reports 8 more cases

SEOUL: South Korea reported eight more cases of the COVID-19 compared to 24 hours ago as of 0:00 a.m. Monday local time, raising the total number of infections to 10,801. The daily caseload hovered below 20 for 17 straight days. All the new cases were imported from overseas, lifting the combined number to 1,099. Two more deaths were confirmed, leaving the death toll at 252. The total fatality rate stood at 2.33 percent. A total of 34 more patients

were discharged from quarantine after making full recovery, pulling up the combined number to 9,217. The total recovery rate was 85.3 percent. The Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (KCDC) has updated the data once a day at 10:00 a.m. local time from March 10, after having announced it twice a day. Since Jan. 3, the country has tested more than 633,000 people, among whom 614,944 tested negative for the virus and 8,176 were being checked. — APP



US Supreme Court to be broadcast live

WASHINGTON: After a pause occasioned by the coronavirus, the US Supreme Court will resume hearing cases Monday, but in a small revolution for the tradition-bound institution the justices will participate from home, with live audio broadcast on radio and television. The move to greater transparency has been demanded for years in legal circles and was long ago adopted

by many state and local courts; but for the Supreme Court, it took a pandemic to make it happen. In normal times, the top US court meets in its stately neo-classical building directly across First Street from the US Capitol. Two hundred seats in its marble hearing room are reserved for members of the public, who often line up for hours outside the building's white-columned facade for

the privilege of hearing the nine justices ponder issues that range from the arcane to the history-changing. In the courtroom, electronic equipment is strictly banned, and journalists are not allowed to report on the justices' debates until their conclusion. Official recordings of the proceedings — audio only — are posted online only days later. Despite calls for reform, the court has always refused

to allow microphones or cameras, saying it does not want to lend undue weight to hearings, which justices say are often less decisive than the written arguments submitted by lawyers. But on Monday for the first time in history, several media outlets, including the Fox and C-Span networks, will broadcast live the exchanges between the justices, each still confined at home, and lawyers arguing cases. — APP

Desert Locust: regional cooperation needed, says Ambassador Ali Hosseini

If Iran won't be able to control the pests, our brotherly neighbor of Pakistan will also be damaged

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Seyed Mohammad Ali Hosseini, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Pakistan has made comments on the attack of Desert Locust and the need to regional cooperation. He said, emergence of new challenges like virus originated global pandemics, climate change; pollutions and infest of locusts require timely and collective response, infest of locusts from different sides threatens food

supply for millions of people in Iran and Pakistan. The ambassador further said, this year, the unusually warm and wet winter allowed an extra generation of breeding, meaning that the Desert Locust infestations will be much larger than normal and poses a major risk for the region. It is predicted that the locust swarm Iran and Pakistan is the worst Desert Locust outbreak in the last 50 years. In this regard, two countries need more and early coopera-



tion to prevent this disaster. The best way of preventing such horrible attack, that can damage thousands of hectares of agricultural lands, is early warning, spreading pesticides and coun-

tering them before breeding. He added, Iran and Pakistan will enhance cooperation with Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and benefit from its experiences. In the fight against the Desert Locust, the Plant Protection Organization (PPO) of Iran has been reporting the situation to FAO on a regular basis. Iran and Pakistan will enhance bilateral cooperation to tackle the situation. Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Iran and Pakistan are cooperating closely to enhance the connection between the relat-

ed focal points. Iran and Pakistan have proved during the history that they can overcome their common difficulties with joint efforts. Ambassador noted with concern that crippling sanctions against Iran have drastically reduced resources that were supposed to be allocated to desert locust problem. If Iran won't be able to control the pests, our brotherly neighbor of Pakistan will also be damaged. So, the subject of sanctions and its consequences is not just for Iran and needs raising our voice against the sanctions.

Italy begins to emerge from lockdown

ROME: Stir-crazy Italians will be free to stroll and visit relatives for the first time in nine weeks on Monday as Europe's hardest-hit country eases back the world's longest nationwide coronavirus lockdown. Four million people — an estimated 72 percent of them men — will return to their construction sites and factories as the economically and emotionally shattered country tries to get back to work. Restaurants that have managed to survive Italy's most disastrous crisis in generations will reopen for takeaway service. — APP