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Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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Hamad Obaid Al Zaabi urged the graduates to stand out as a role model

Celebrating day of Russia: historical perspective



Film Actress Sabiha Khanum passes away



Briefs

Pakistan to prepare diagnostic kits: Fawad

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has developed indigenous COVID-19 diagnostic kits that have been approved by the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) for commercial use and is likely to bring down the cost of coronavirus tests in the country, said Fawad Chaudhry Federal Minister for Science and Technology.

"We were mostly importing COVID-19 test kits from China. Now our scientists have developed our own Polymerase Chain Reaction equipment," he said in an interview with Arab News. Chaudhry informed that the kit was developed by experts at the National University of Science and Technology with more than 90 percent accuracy which was about 20 percent better than the imported tests. — APP

Record rise in virus cases in India

DNA

NEW DELHI: India has announced 11,929 new confirmed cases of coronavirus - the highest one day infection total since the virus was first detected in the country in late January.

China reported 57 new confirmed - and nine asymptomatic - COVID-19 cases, for June 13, the highest since April 13, according to data released by the national health authority on Sunday. African leaders say China will ensure the supply of 30 million testing kits and 10,000 ventilators each month for the continent as the coronavirus pandemic accelerates there.

Brazil now has the second-highest coronavirus death toll in the world with 42,720 fatalities, surpassing the death toll of the UK and second only to the US.

'Panahgahs' get 1,000 face masks

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister's Focal Person on 'Panahgahs' Naseem ur Rehman Sunday said the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) had provided 1,000 face masks to six shelter homes of the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad to help its dwellers in the fight against COVID-19.

Pak virus cases to hit one million

Asad Umar says radical need to bring a change in attitude towards the virus on an individual and collective basis

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning and Economic Development Asad Umar on Sunday warned that if the carelessness of citizens in following standard operating procedures continues, coronavirus cases might climb up to 300,000 by the end of this month and to a million by end July.

Addressing media at the National Command and Operation Centre (NCC) in Islamabad, Umar stressed that there is a radical need to bring a change in attitude towards the virus on an individual and collective basis, and that wearing masks is mandatory for slowing down the spread of the disease. "Studies suggest that the

pace of the virus' spread could decrease by 50% by covering the mouth alone," Umar stated, adding that social distancing is equally valuable for combating the disease.

Also read: Coronavirus updates, June 14: Latest news on the COVID-19 pandemic from Pakistan and around the world

Reiterating support to provincial governments in the fight against the virus, the development minister said that the Punjab government will announce today [Sunday] the strategy for actions in areas which are hotbeds of the disease.

"About 500 beds are to be added in Sindh and Punjab, and 400 oxygen beds to be added in KP [Khyber Pakhtunkhwa] to help provinc-

es in the fight against the virus," he said.

Noting that more than 2,000 people across the country are on oxygen beds at the moment, Umar said that the federal government will ensure expanding the delivery of these beds to all four provinces, as well as the federal capital.

"About 2,150 oxygen beds would be provided to the provinces by the end of next month," he announced.

With testing capacities also being enhanced, the minister said that now 30,000 tests are being conducted on a daily basis which were just around 500 when the first cases were reported.

"In next four to six weeks, the testing capacity is expected to increase to 150,000," he said.

Qatar will host intra-Afghan talks

DNA

DONA : President Ghani and Mutlaq bin Majed Al-Qatani, currently the Special Envoy of the Foreign Minister of the State of Qatar for Counterterrorism and Mediation of Conflict Resolution, have agreed to hold intra-Afghan negotiations in Doha, capital of Qatar.

Last week, Qatani visited Kabul and met with President Ghani and other Afghan leaders and discussed the Afghan peace process. During his visit, Qatani also met with the Taliban delegation in Kabul. Qatani told local media that



following the meeting the Taliban released Afghan government prisoners and "more prisoners will be released in upcoming days." The Qatari envoy hopes that the release of prisoners will be completed this

Chinese staff of Saindak Project back to Job

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In order to resume the project and ensure Pakistani personnel's income, 68 Chinese staff of Saindak Project, Metallurgical Corporation of China Ltd. (MCC), arrived Saindak Balochistan and would prepare for resuming work, Gwadar reported on Sunday.

"This flight carrying the staff took 14 hours which can be considered as the fastest journey in last 18 years," a manager of MCC Saindak said.

Reporter of Gwadar Pro was told that up to now, all of those Chinese staff have been isolated for observation for 1 week and no one was detected as infected.

According to the plan, they will accept an-

other nucleic acid testing on June 22th and start resuming work for Saindak Project gradually.

Due to the pandemic, Chinese staff had been trapped in China for more than 6 months, therefore the smelteries of Saindak Project were halted and Pakistani staff couldn't get full salary.

In fact, the chartered airplane could take Chinese staff in Pakistan back to China when it returns. However, to ensure the work schedule, each Chinese staff has decided to stay at Saindak.

Up to now, both Chinese and Pakistani staff are isolated for observation. There're a series of measures to ensure their safety from COVID-19. Once they finish the isolation on June 22th, they will return to the project and resume work gradually.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of UAE Hamad Alzaabi giving certificates on the occasion of graduation ceremony of Sheikh Zayed International Academy Islamabad. Story and more pictures on Back Page. — DNA

Pakistan condemns Kabul attack

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Sunday strongly condemned recent terrorist attacks on Wazir Akbar Khan and Sher Shah Suri mosques in Kabul.

These heinous acts resulted in the martyrdom of renowned religious scholars Dr. Ayaz Niazi and Maulavi Azizullah Mofleh, respectively, and claimed the lives of other innocent worshippers. May Allah bless the departed souls.

We offer our sympathies and condolences to the bereaved families and pray for early recovery of the injured. We also reaffirm our solidarity with the people of Afghanistan.

There can be no justification whatsoever for such inhuman attacks on places of worship. Pakistan reiterates its condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

FM Qureshi stresses utilization of tech

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi Sunday said that the world had undergone a complete change due to coronavirus pandemic and underlined the need for utilization of modern technology for efficient running of the official matters.

He expressed these views while chairing a meeting with authorities of various telecom companies that called on him at the ministry of foreign affairs, a press release said.

The meeting especially discussed the enhanced use of latest technology in the ministry. The foreign minister said that in this fast changing world, sessions and meetings were being held via video link and other related latest technology.

Protests after Black man killed by police in Atlanta

Police had been called on 27-year-old Rayshard Brooks for sleeping in a car blocking the drive-thru lane of a Wendy's restaurant on Friday night

DNA

ATLANTA: Demonstrators have taken to the streets in Atlanta in protest against the fatal shooting by police of a Black man who had fallen asleep in his car while waiting in line at a fast food drive-thru south of downtown.

The Friday night incident comes at a time of heightened tension over police brutality and calls for reforms across the United States following the May

25 death of George Floyd in Minneapolis after a police officer knelt on his neck for nearly nine minutes.

Police had been called on 27-year-old Rayshard Brooks for sleeping in a car blocking the drive-thru lane of a Wendy's restaurant on Friday night. After Brooks failed a field sobriety test, the officers attempted to place him into custody, according to the Georgia Bureau of Investigations (GBI), an independent agency that has been asked by the At-

lanta Police Department to investigate the killing.

According to the GBI, Brooks resisted arrest and a struggle ensued, leading an officer to deploy a Taser. When the Taser did not work, Brooks reportedly tried to take it from the officer. A second officer then tried to use a Taser on Brooks, but it had no effect, Atlanta Deputy Police Chief Timothy Peek told reporters after the incident. During the tussle, Brooks was shot and later died at a local hospital.

Gwadar FZs get preferential policy

Based on the newly promulgated act, Gwadar Free Zone has been given zero-rating facility, not only applied to raw materials and machinery, etc



STAFF REPORT

GWADAR: With relentless efforts, Gwadar Free Zone's preferential policy of zero rating has finally been inserted into Pakistan's laws and included in the Budget Act of 2020.

Based on the newly promulgated act, Gwadar Free Zone has been given zero-rating facility, not only applied to raw materials and machinery,

etc. imported from abroad, but also for those purchased from the tariff area of Pakistan. It may be mentioned here that this preferential policy originally was tax exemption by presidential decree valid for only 3 months. Now since the zero-rating scope has been enhanced to all registered persons in Gwadar Free Zone as law, the inspiring move has greatly relieved investors' concerns.

2514 new cases reported in Punjab

DNA

LAHORE: The number of COVID-19 patients reached to 52,601 in the province after the registration of 2514 new cases during the last 24 hours. Punjab Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department spokesperson said on Sunday noon that 31 more citizens lost their lives while death toll reached to 969 in the province while 17,560 patients have so far recovered.

As many as 1331 new coronavirus cases were registered in Lahore, 5 in Nankana Sahib district, 18 in Kasur, 26 in Sheikhpura, 234 in Rawalpindi, 8 in Attock, 6 in Jehlum, 55 in Gujranwala, 130 in Sialkot, 3 in Narawal, 102 in Gujrat, 1 in Hafizabad, 157 in Multan, 9 in Khanewal, 12 in Vehari, 11 in Muzafargarh, 123 in Faisalabad, 2 in Chinot, 7 in Toba Tek Singh, 3 in Jhang, 53 in Rahimyar Khan, 43 in Sardogha, 5 in Mianwali, 2 in Khoshab.

US protests show internal crises: Putin

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin said Sunday that the US anti-racism protests were a sign of deep crises in the country, in his first comments on the situation.

"What has happened is a sign of some deep-seated internal crises," Putin said in an interview with Rossiya 1 television, asked to comment on events in the US in the recent days.

He linked the unrest to the coronavirus pandemic, saying: "It shows there are problems. Things connected to the fight with the coronavirus have shone a spotlight on general problems."

Bureaucrat turned educator retired

Allah Bakhsh Malik served the noble cause of education during his long career and earned the sobriquet of 'educator to the poor'

NEHAL MIRAJ

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Allah Bakhsh Malik, Federal Secretary retires today after serving Government of Pakistan for 35 years. He served the noble cause of education during his long career and earned the sobriquet of 'educator to the poor' His areas of expertise are education planning and management, development economics, public policy, institutional development, international coordination, governance, public private

partnership, skills for employability, public sector management, ICT and education technologies, Sustainable Development Goals and human development. UNESCO conferred prestigious Confucius Award on Dr. Malik in recognition of his leadership role for the promotion of education and skill development for less-affluent and disenfranchised sections of society in 2011.

Government of Peoples Republic of China awarded him a 'Certificate of Merit' in recognition of meritori-



ous services for promotion of affordable quality education for the marginalized sections of society.

The British Council ap-

pointed him British Alumni Ambassador to promote education and skills in youth. He is Charles Wallace Trust Fellow in Public Policy,

Governance and Economic Development at SOAS United Kingdom. He was a Post-Doc Visiting Scholar at Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, USA. He is PhD in Development Economics, Public Finance and Resource Mobilization and MPhil in Economics and Politics of Development, from Cambridge University United Kingdom.

He served as Secretary to the Government for Education and Health. He restructured Punjab Education Foundation, Punjab Small Industries Corporation,

School Education Department and established Youth Affairs, Sports, Archaeology and Tourism Department. He was pioneer of education voucher scheme in Pakistan serving the children of urban slums and remote and under-served areas. He has been widely published by the national and international Journals and is author of thirteen books on education and management. The health community, doctors, teachers and academics appreciated the services of Dr. Malik on his retirement.

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Briefs

Drive against fake number plates

RAWALPINDI: City Traffic Police Rawalpindi has started a move against vehicles and motorcycles bearing 'fake number plates' plying on various roads in the city. Talking to APP, Chief Traffic Officer Syed Ali Akbar said that the operation has been started against vehicles bearing fake number plates or revolving blue light, tinted glasses and without number plates after reports of involvement of such vehicles in increasing cases of heinous crimes. He said that city traffic police has been strictly directed to act against fake number plates and revolving lights vehicles without fear and favor. "Motorcycles and vehicles would be impounded in police stations if they failed to display original number plates," he warned, adding that stern action would be taken against those who have installed revolving light on their vehicles impersonating as police officers. — APP

Pakistan to take part in cycling bout

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan will field a strong outfit in 2020 Road World Cycling Championships, taking place in Switzerland from September 20 to 27. "We've written a letter to all our affiliated units to arrange necessary training camps for their top cyclists while adhering to safety guidelines. The camps will help prepare the paddlers for next month's trials for the prestigious cycling event," Azhar Ali Shah, president Pakistan Cycling Federation said on Sunday. According to Azhar only the cyclists having valid cycling licence and the ability to cycle at a speed of 45 kilometers per hour would be allowed to take part in trials. He said Pakistan cyclists would feature in the individual cycling event. "Although the federation is facing financial hardships, it will try to arrange the trip in the best national interest." — APP

Around 250,000 people locked

ISLAMABAD: After a surging rise in COVID-19 spread across the country, various parts of the country were put under complete lockdown with large number of positive cases reported in those areas where Muzaffarabad city was under complete lockdown with 200,000 population, two sectors of Islamabad G-9/2 and G-8/3 were locked with approximately 50,000 population. The test, trace and quarantine (TTQ) strategy developed by the government helped to impose smart lockdowns with the chunk of affected population home quarantined for reducing the contagion outbreak. — APP

PAL publishes over 500 books

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Academy of Letters (PAL) has published more than 500 books on Pakistani literature and mystic poetry translations to increase reading habits and encourage youth to read quality material. According to an official, only in year 2019 PAL has published 10 books and five quarterly magazines Adabiyat (Urdu) and bi-annual Pakistani Literature (English) and monthly newsletter academy. Magazines were also published on various topics including, "Literature" (Issue 119), "Literature" (Issue 120) Literature Pediatrician" (Issue 8-9) and "Literature Pediatrician" (Issue 10) and Fishing "Pakistani Literature" (English). — APP



LALAMUSA: Labourers busy in carpeting road. — Khushid Nadeem

RCCI urges FBR to review its revenue target for next fiscal year

RCCI chief suggested that Sales tax be dropped to single digit from 17 percent as this step will push people for more spending and on the other hand increase the industry wheel with a faster pace.

ABID RAZA

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) has urged the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to review its revenue targets for fiscal year 2020-21. The revenue target in the budget has been set to 4963 billion without assessing the ground realities and Corona threat. The economy got hit by Corona badly and as PBS Pakistan economy suffered more than

3000 billion loss in one quarter. RCCI President Saboor Malik in a statement said that the business community is not satisfied at all on budget as it falls below expectations for us, he added. Last year the revenue target was set at 4700 billion where FBR failed to meet its targets by 900 billion. It is not possible to increase the revenue targets amid lock-down and Corona spread. The Government failed to achieve its GDP growth target and except Agriculture all other key economic



indicators shows negative growth. The industry and the services sector also got worst hit by Corona. RCCI chief suggested that Sales tax be dropped to single digit from 17 percent as this step will push people for more spending and on the other hand increase the industry wheel with a faster pace. He lauded the Government for lowering FED and regulatory duties on different tariff lines and added that the business community has been demanding this since last fiscal year.

Reduction in customs duty on raw material, advance tax exemption on auto rickshaws and motorcycles and reduction in capital gains tax will help speed up business activities, he further added. The scheme announced for the construction sector, which was due to expire in December 2020, was demanded by the chamber to be extended. It has been extended to June 2021, which is a welcome step towards increasing the business activities, he said.

40% dredging of Nullah Leh completed

RAWALPINDI: To avoid expected flooding situation, Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) is continuously removing tonnes of garbage and construction debris from Nullah Leh. The excavators have been cleaning the nullah from Katrain, Rata Amral, Ganjmandi and Gawalmandi. Further more, the dredging work would also be carried out in Pirwadhi, Dhoke Dalal, Phagwari Bridge, City Saddar road and adjoining areas. The machines are cleaning Nullah Leh from Gawalmandi to Pirwadhi and also cleaning the area from Murree Road to Rata Amral. Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) Managing Director, along with the other officials visited the site and reviewed the dredging work of Nullah Lai. — APP

Two held

RAWALPINDI: The City police have arrested on Sunday two persons for impersonating as govt. officials and also recovered vehicle with revolving blue lights and weapons from their possession, informed police spokesman. RA Bazzar police stopped a suspected vehicle at Jhawara area During course of action, police held two persons who introduced themselves as govt.officials but could not prove their identity. Police have arrested both of them and recovered rifle 223 bore, Kalashnikov and 9MM pistol and bullets from their possession. Police have also confiscated the vehicle. — APP

Commission denounces cut in education budget

ADNAN YOUSAF

ISLAMABAD: The Commission unanimously deplored the sudden cut in the higher education budget by another Rs.5.90 billion from the committed Indicative Budget Ceiling of Rs.70.00 billion for FY 2020-21, and emphasized that the move will dismantle the country's higher education systems by forcing the shutdown of universities, which are already suffering from historically unprecedented budgetary shortfalls and the impact of the Covid crisis. The Members stressed upon the Government to reconsider its decision, and take immediate steps to appropriately fund the universities in order to protect access to and quality of higher education. The Commission stressed that without ade-

quate investment on higher education, the youth of Pakistan will never acquire the competencies needed to develop and compete internationally. Meanwhile, the Commission thoroughly reviewed HEC funding formula for universities, took into account various proposals, and decided that for FY 2020-21, the actual total allocation of FY 2019-20 will be treated as base plus need grants, accounting for 85 percent of the total allocation, while the remaining 15 percent will be treated as a performance grant, allocated on the basis of the number of publications, the number and amount of research grants received, as well as number of PhD faculty and students. It was also agreed that for FY 2021-22 and beyond, a new funding methodology will be

developed on the principles of equity, needs, and credit for performance. The Commission amended the Tenure Track Statutes by indexing TTS salaries to the comparable BPS scale plus a 35% TTS Premium, thus introducing automatic adjustments of future TTS salaries in line with increases in BPS salary scales. Consistent with the international practice, the Commission increased the maximum time limit for the tenure decision from the current 6 years to 9 years, and endorsed collection of granular data of TTS faculty separately in HEMIS (Higher Education Management Information System) to help universities and HEC maintain proper oversight over the progress of TTS faculty, and improve transparency and fairness of recruitment, promotion and tenure.

Huawei Pakistan launched Online 5G

FIJAZ CHAUDHRY

ISLAMABAD: The disruptions to traditional education caused by the pandemic hold the capacity to further widen learning gaps between different regions and countries, alongside aggravating the digital divide. To address this problem, distance-learning has proven to be a leading effective measure. To facilitate contactless education that is accessible to both educators and students of Higher Education Institutes and ICT academies, Huawei Pakistan initiated a series of online training and exam programs.

AIOU dispatches books to two lakh students

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has so far dispatched text books to its over two lakh students of Matric and Intermediate programs, who had registered themselves for Spring 2020 semester. According to Directorate of Mailing and Admissions, this process will be completed by the end of this month, following which the process of despatching the books to the students of Bachelor and B.Ed programs at their postal addresses will be undertaken. The books are being sent with the confirmation of the students' admission for the semester. The mailing process has been expedited so as to complete it in accordance with the University's annual Academic Calendar, and as per the directives of the Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum. It was being ensured that the students could get the same at the earliest so that they submit their academic assignments within stipulated time-schedule. Meanwhile, a computerized tracking system has been put in place, enabling the students to track mailing status, by simply entering roll number and registration number

Khalid Sherdil remembered

DNA



ISLAMABAD: Brilliant bureaucrats are the backbone of our public service and their contribution makes us proud besides making the public services meaningful in real terms for the people of Pakistan, said Senator Lt. General (Retired) Abdul Qayyum here on Saturday. He was speaking at an online condolence reference organized by the Development Communications Network (Devcom-Pakistan) and DTN for the late environmentalist and bureaucrat Khalid Sherdil who was died in the PIA plane crash on May 22. He said several are the bureaucrats that work beyond the call of duty. AK Sherdil, the father of Khalid Sherdil, was one of them. So, we can say the son got loyalty in his

understanding of environment, climate change and sustainable development. Khalid Sherdil was one of them who not only understood the sustainable development but also practiced and mainstreamed in the public policies. He was very focused and master of multi-tasking. Dr. Tauqeer Hussain Shah, a senior bureaucrat and former Principal Secretary to the Punjab Chief Minister, said Khalid Sherdil played the most crucial role in organizing PDMA as the coordinating authority that provides a platform for all departments to come together and strategize the preparedness and response to a disaster. As the founder and the first Director General of PDMA, Khalid Sherdil has worked on Pakistan's largest ever calamity, the massive Floods of 2010.

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Sugar action

IN response to the plea by sugar mill owners, Islamabad High Court (IHC) Chief Justice Athar Minallah has raised some pertinent questions. The investigation report of the Sugar Inquiry Commission had blamed industry barons for misuse of public money and cartelization leading to massive price hike of sugar in Pakistan. Though the court has issued a stay order for 10 days, the sugar industry representatives in the meantime gave an assurance to the court to sell the commodity at Rs70 a kilogram in open market. The entire sugar industry appears to be up in arms against the inquiry commission. The main point of contention is the objection about the constitutional mandate and limitations of a Federal Commission of Inquiry under the 2017 Act passed by the federal government. The sugar industry claims that the commission trespassed into matters that are the exclusive domain of the executive and legislative powers of provinces.

It was evident from the beginning that the 324-page report of the commission left much to be desired. Perhaps the most important point raised by the IHC is about the commission findings regarding the price hike which the commission had tackled in a roundabout manner. More than highlighting the role of ministers, officials and government representatives, the commission asked the FBR, FIA and NAB to take action solely against the mill owners.

It is surprising that the government has been exclusively implicating the mill owners while advertently or inadvertently eschewing a discussion about the role of the government itself. The court has rightly stressed that sugar being a basic need of common people must be sold at a reasonable price and the government should take steps in this regard. The court expressed its amazement at how the commission failed to make any recommendations regarding the convenience of the common people. Ideally, this should have been the primary concern of the commission. Just because the government failed to take appropriate steps in the right direction – rather it took all the wrong steps possible – within two years the price of sugar jumped from around Rs50 a kg to nearly Rs85.

Now the ball is in the government's court which has been dilly-dallying on action against its own members, and focusing more on sugar mill owners. While the court has barred the government from taking any actions against the mill owners during the stay, there is nothing that can stop the prime minister from taking to task its own ministers and allies who have been involved in this scam. All those playing a crucial role in providing subsidies must be taken to task. Especially the finance division has a lot to answer for in this matter. Nearly Rs30 billion that was given to sugar mills in terms of export subsidy created a big hole in the public exchequer. Somebody must be held accountable for all this.



Children at work

PAKISTAN should have been marking the UN World Day Against Child Labour, like other countries around the world, on Friday. In the budget announced on that day, we would have rejoiced at seeing provisions to reduce child labour or at the very least regulate it by ensuring education alongside work and ensuring very young children were not forced into labour. Instead employment needs to be found for their parents, including their mothers.

While Pakistan has signed UN conventions which protect children from being placed in hazardous work conditions and has ratified the instrument, implementation of course is virtually non-existent.

According to child rights monitoring groups, there are at least twelve million child workers in the country. These are children under 14 who should not be working at all under Pakistan's laws, but of course they do. Children are especially vulnerable to abuse.

They are often employed because it is possible for employers to get away without paying them the wage an adult would demand and they have no ability to fight back for their rights. Over the past decade, we have had case after case of young maid servants being abused, tortured or even killed by their employers for small faults during their long hours of work which sometimes stretch to 14 hours a day or perhaps even more.

A few weeks ago, eight-year-old Zohra Shah was murdered in Rawalpindi after she accidentally released expensive parrots kept by her owner. Her body showed previous signs of brutal abuse. There have been other cases before this.

In the mining industry, considered a hazardous sector where no person under 18 should be employed under the law, the Central Mines Labour Federation said after a survey of mines in Balochistan that children were frequently abused, small boys subjected to sexual abuse and other kinds of exploitation was common. We know the same is true at brick kilns across the Punjab and agricultural estates in Sindh. There are numerous other examples.

The Pakistan government in past years, with ILO support, has established some projects to ensure education alongside work for children working on stitching footballs and in carpet weaving. This may have helped their condition.

For numerous others, including those working in the glass bangle making industry in Sindh, there has been virtually no relief. We need to find a way to give every child in Pakistan his or her childhood. We also need to find a way to ensure education for all. Despite existing laws, this continues to be denied and the reasons are tied in not only to poverty but also to lack of will on the part of state and all of us as citizens.

Celebrating day of Russia: historical perspective

Dr. Aleksandr Khozin



The Russian Federation, as the country is named now, came into being in 1991 as the legal successor to the USSR.

Russia retained its nuclear arsenal but lost its superpower status.

President Vladimir Putin took political and economic power in 2000 and engaged in an energetic foreign policy.

On foreign policy: Maintaining international peace and security is one of Russian priorities

A Glimpse of Russia: The Russian Federation occupies about one-seventh of the earth's surface, it is the largest country in the world. It covers the eastern part of Europe and the northern part of Asia. Its total area is about 17 million square km. The country is washed by the seas of 3 oceans: the Pacific, the Arctic and the Atlantic. It borders on a lot of big and small countries on land. On the vast territory of the country there are various types of climate, from arctic in the north to subtropical in the south with a variety of scenery and vegetation.

The country is rich in oil, coal, iron ore, natural gas, copper, nickel and a lot of other mineral resources. No less valuable treasure is the country's scientific and cultural heritage which is generously being shared with the world.

A bit of history: The prehistory of Russia begins with the histories of the East Slavs. The start-date of specifically Russian history is the establishment of the Rus' state in the north in 862 ruled by the Varangians. Novgorod (Velikiy Novgorod nowadays) became the first major city of the new union of immigrants from Scandinavia with the Slavs and Finno-Ugrians. In 882 Prince of Novgorod seized Kiev, thereby uniting the northern and southern lands of the Eastern Slavs under one authority. The state adopted Christianity from the Byzantine Empire in 988, beginning the synthesis of Byzantine and Slavic cultures.

After the 13th century, Moscow became a strong center and the territories of the Grand Duchy of Moscow became the Tsardom of Russia in 1547. In 1721 following the victory in the Great Northern War over the Swedish Empire Peter the Great renamed the state as the Russian Empire.

The beginning of the 20th century was marked by three revolutions triggered by a combination of war-weariness, economic breakdown, and discontent with the autocratic system of government. The overthrow of the monarchy in 1917 led to seizure of power by the communist Bolsheviks. Between 1922 and 1991 the history of Russia became essentially the history of the Soviet Union, effectively an ideologically-based state. By the mid-1980s Mikhail Gorbachev embarked on major reforms, which eventually led to the overthrow of the communist party and the breakup of the USSR, which gave the start of the history of post-Soviet Russia.

The Russian Federation, as the country is named now, came into being in 1991 as the legal successor to the USSR. Russia retained its nuclear arsenal but lost its superpower status. President Vladimir Putin took political and economic power in 2000 and engaged in an energetic foreign policy.

On foreign policy: Maintaining international peace and security is one of Russian priorities. In foreign policy our point today is based on the recognition of Russia's special responsibility for universal security and global stability, this along with promoting national interests. We have duties of our own as a nuclear power and a permanent member of the UN Security Council. This says a lot.

Throughout history we have gathered experience, particularly when it comes

to those lessons of the 20th century that teach us that it is necessary to have a well-considered and balanced policy in international affairs. Hence the equitable and democratic world order should be based not on the balance of brutal force, but rather should be built as a concert of interests, models of development, cultures and traditions. Speaking of this region, we share the common continent, the vast huge continent of Eurasia. Is not it important to promote the ideas of making this continent really united and competitive in the global world? Russia welcomes Pakistan joining the SCO in 2017 as a full-fledged member. Pakistan plays a significant role in the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), particularly in moving forward anti-narcotics cooperation.

Russia-Pakistani Cooperation and economics: It is clear nowadays that our countries should develop economic and political cooperation more actively and act jointly against such threats as terrorism, drug-smuggling, stand together against efforts of third powers to adjust world order according to their immediate needs brazenly interfering in domestic affairs of other countries, imposing unilateral sanctions under some artificial pretexts in violation of the principles of international law.

Today comprehensive cooperation between countries is not possible without due region-to-region, company-to-company, people-to-people contacts. We understand that Pakistan is a valued partner, that has been seriously set to develop relations with Russia for recent years, and we appreciate it a lot. In 2019 Russian-Pakistani trade turnover was 539 million USD and decreased by 26.4% in comparison with 2018. Whereas Russian export fell by 59.7% (168.7 million USD), import from Pakistan grew by 18% (370.3 million USD). Our countries exchange food and agricultural products, mineral and chemical industry products, leather, furs, machinery, transport vehicles, etc. It is not an impressive exponent so far and by all means it does not meet the real potentiality of our cooperation.

2018 saw the governments of St. Petersburg and Sindh Province signing Road Map following the Agreement of October 2017 between the parties. The content of the document foresees realization of joint interregional projects in the field of industry and trade as well as in education, science and culture in the period up to 2021. In the light of actuality of the tasks that stand before us in the way of promotion of Russian – Pakistani interaction in the above mentioned areas, we call upon our Pakistani specifically Karachi businessmen and companies to actively get involved in putting the plans into practice all for the good of mutually beneficial Russian-Pakistani relations.

As the Head of Industry and Trade Ministry of Russia Denis Manturov says, nowadays Russia's advantages are fortitude, science, natural resources and qualified specialists. Fortitude, as the Minister puts it, allows to promptly and effectively meet the arising challenges. Fundamental science makes it possible to solve the most complicated problems. Successful realization of the Import Substitution Program in Russia is the proof of that.

In March this year during the meeting with major investors President Vladimir Putin noted, in particular, that the state will create all the necessary conditions for investors to work, including lifting excessive pressure from the administrative and law enforcement bodies. The country's strategic goal was defined as making a transition to an innovative economy and restructuring our economy. It is a fact that any crisis is also a window of opportunity for effective investors and a time for smart investments in the high-tech sectors. The investors noted that it is extremely important to create, at this particular time, the right conditions for the work of venture funds and venture investors in Russia, as well as create a Russian market for investments.

It was also pointed out that the new digital economy relies on creative people. Unlike other industries, in this new economy it is people that are the generators of a value-added product. Not raw materials, not even money – but peo-

ple. In this sense, we are in a good position: we are sitting on a goldmine as we have a lot of talented people, and a very good engineering education system – this is an asset.

And in conclusion, despite the external turbulence, investors certainly should plan to actively invest in Russia, where the national debt is very low compared to the global level (325 percent of world GDP) and the macroeconomic policy is very stable.

On the occasion of the 75th anniversary of Victory over Nazism

This year marks the 75th anniversary of victory over Nazism. At the cost of inconceivable sacrifices of 27 million Soviet people and massive efforts that were unprecedented in world history, our country played a decisive role in destroying the Nazi war machine and liberating the European nations and the world in general from the brown plague and the ideology of Nazism.

The anniversary celebrations were planned for May 9 in Moscow with the participation of many official delegations from foreign states, representatives of foreign public circles and veterans. Under the situation with Coronavirus the event has been postponed till June 24.

Regrettably, the attempts to rewrite the history of the war and use it as a tool in dirty geopolitical games have increased. This scourge has severely affected a number of European states, in which the glorification of Nazi henchmen had, in fact, become part of state ideology and policy. Our government is working hard to preserve the historical truth about the World War II. The Russian initiative, On Combating Glorification of Nazism, traditionally enjoys widespread support at the UN. A special item, "The 75th anniversary of the end of World War II," was included on the agenda of the 75th session of the UN General Assembly at our suggestion.

The legal foundation of international architecture laid in the wake of the Great Victory remains the most important pillar in effectively overcoming the challenges and threats that are common to all peoples and in maintaining global and regional stability. This is what President Putin's initiative on holding, this year, a special summit with the leaders of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, which, under the UN Charter, have a special responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, is designed to achieve.

Our country has been through numerous critical times and severe trials. The disaster we are facing now along with the world community, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), is the latest. But our multinational people have always met all the challenges with dignity and honour.

The foundation, the core of this unity and tenacity has always been and always will be devotion to the Fatherland. Greeting you today I sincerely wish you every success and achievements, optimism and self-confidence, sound health and happiness. I wish peace and prosperity to the people of Pakistan and Russia. In this turbulent time I also wish mutual understanding and happiness to peoples of our Mother Earth.

Happy Russia Day!

Dr. Aleksandr Khozin is the Russian consulate in Karachi

By passing Covid-19: Online Intra-Afghan Talks

Iqbal Khan

The Taliban and Afghan government are in the process of a prisoner swap that was negotiated as part of the Afghan peace deal. The agreement calls for the release by the Kabul government of some 5,000 Taliban prisoners. So far 1300 have been freed. The release process has been proceeding rather slowly and it has already delayed the talks by weeks

PAKISTAN'S Army Chief of Staff, General Qamar Javed Bajwa, met with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and Chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation Abdullah Abdullah during a visit to Kabul on June 09. Two sides discussed the ongoing peace process. Army Chief conveyed Pakistan's unwavering support for a sustainable peace in Afghanistan. Bajwa's visit was a follow-up to his earlier meeting in Islamabad with US peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad on June 07.

According to ISPR, during the meeting, "matters of mutual interest, overall regional security situation including Afghan refugees issue and Afghan reconciliation process and Pak-Afghan border management were discussed." The US special envoy had visited Pakistan and Afghanistan to jump start the talks between Taliban and the Afghan government.

Special envoy also met with Taliban leaders in Doha, Qatar. Having accomplished the benchmark of pulling out 5000 soldiers out of Afghanistan ahead of schedule, the US is desperate to push forward the other components of peace process. Kabul government appears vulnerable as the Afghan military is not seen as fit enough to stand alone against the insurgents.

Disagreement over the Taliban's demand for the release of 5,000 prisoners has blocked the progress towards resolving the conflict. However these issues are gradually being resolved and consensus is evolving for initiation of formal talks. However, due to complications from the coronavirus some negotiations might initially be held virtually.

Reportedly, a number of top leaders of Afghan Taliban are seriously ill with the Coronavirus. According to Lynne O'Donnell's piece for Foreign Policy, "Nearly all the Taliban leadership in Doha [who negotiated a bilateral deal with the US] has the bug." The supreme leader of the Afghan Taliban Mullah Haibatullah Akhonzada has also contracted COVID-19 and rumors are making round that he may have possibly died while receiving treatment. Some Taliban sources in Quetta have said Akhonzada went to Russia for treatment. Many of the Taliban's senior leaders in Quetta had also caught COVID-19, including Akhonzada's deputy, Sirajuddin Haqqani.

Confirmation of Corona virus hitting leaders came from a senior Taliban military official Moulvi Muhammad Ali Jan Ahmed. "Our leader is sick, but he is recovering," Ahmed told Foreign Policy in an interview. However, three other Taliban figures in Quetta, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said they believed Akhonzada had died of the illness. No official confirmation is forthcoming. Akhonzada, the supreme leader, had not been seen for the past

three months and had not made any voice recordings, including an Eid-ul-Fitr message, traditionally regularly released by all Taliban supreme leader as a statement ahead of the Eid. Such messages serve as annual policy statement as well.

The uncertainty is that if talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban are not likely to start within the next few weeks due to sickness, how long will Taliban keep up their Eid cease-fire? The Taliban had offered a three-day cease-fire to coincide with the Eid holiday. Afghan media quoted an unnamed Kabul government source saying the cease-fire would continue unofficially as neither side had yet announced its end.

For the time being Mullah Mohammad Yaqoob, the eldest son of Mullah Mohammed Omar, has taken over administrative, operational, and military command of the movement. He had ambition of taking his late father's mantle as Taliban leader. He has stepped into Haqqani's role as chief of operations and is consolidating his hold on the group's military operations. While Yaqoob is believed to support peace in Afghanistan, this may depend on what support he receives in his bid for a formal takeover of the Taliban. "The prince is trying to claim his crown," said one source close to the Taliban leadership.

The Taliban and Afghan government are in the process of a prisoner swap that was negotiated as part of the Afghan peace deal. The agreement calls for the release by the Kabul government of some 5,000 Taliban prisoners. So far 1300 have been freed. The release process has been proceeding rather slowly and it has already delayed the talks by weeks. The Kabul official maintains that the head of the Taliban's Prisoners Commission, Mullah Nooruddin Turabi, also remains ill with COVID-19.

The Kabul official also confirmed that another Doha-based Taliban figure, Mohammad Nabi Omari, who was directly involved in negotiating the deal with the US, had also been ill with COVID-19 and has now recovered. "He has been leading the Taliban delegation during video teleconferences with the government that set the stage for prisoner releases," the official said. Omari was held in US custody at

Guantanamo Bay for nearly 12 years – one of the so-called Taliban Five who were prominent in the group's pre-9/11 administration. They were released in 2014 in a prisoner swap for US Army Sergeant Bowe Bergdahl, who had been held by the Taliban for five years.

The UN, US, European Union and the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) have called on the Taliban to agree to a cease-fire so that the country could focus on containing the further spread of the pandemic. The Taliban said on June 04 that they were willing to temporarily suspend fighting against the Afghan forces in areas hit by the coronavirus, rejecting news reports that the group could declare a country-wide truce amid the pandemic.

According to Mohammed Moheq, Afghanistan's ambassador in Egypt, the Taliban will "only agree to a cease-fire if the virus hits their ranks." That may not be far away as the disease is fast spreading into rural Afghanistan. Of the patients test, roughly one third are reported Covid-19 positive. Last month, Afghanistan's health minister, Ferozuddin Feroz, warned that coronavirus could kill some 110,000 Afghans if its spread was not controlled.

The Taliban spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, said that he had been misquoted by the Associated Press, which reported, on June 03, that the group was ready to declare a cease-fire in areas of Afghanistan under its control if they were hit by the pandemic. "God forbid, if there is an outbreak of coronavirus in areas under our control, we will have control over the situation, then we will not fight in that particular area so that health workers deliver assistance to that area," Mujahid said. The Taliban have said they welcome the operation of international health organizations in areas of their control to combat the coronavirus. Keeping in view the uncertainty of timeframe with regard to end of Covid-19 and the fixed timeline of the US elections 2020, the online format is a feasible proposition; it presents a way forward to keep the peace process afloat and to have solid foundation for peace in Afghanistan before the US elections.

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Briefs

Virus' indirect effects on women, youth

UNITED NATIONS: World Health Organization (WHO) has expressed concern about the impact of coronavirus on women, children and young people, as the pandemic continues to escalate.

"The indirect effects of COVID-19 on these groups may be greater than the number of deaths due to the virus itself", WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a virtual new briefing in Geneva.

The pandemic has overwhelmed health systems in many parts of the world, which means women may be at greater risk of dying from complications related to pregnancy and childbirth, WHO said.

Early evidence also suggests that people in their teens and 20s are at increased risk of depression and anxiety, online harassment, physical and sexual violence and unintended pregnancies. In response, WHO said it has published guidelines for health facilities on maintaining essential services during the pandemic, including for newborn care. Experts have also investigated the risk of COVID-19 being transmitted to babies during breastfeeding. "Based on the available evidence, WHO's advice is that the benefits of breastfeeding outweigh any potential risks of transmission of COVID-19", Tedros said. -APP

Turkey, Russia to hold talks on Syria, Libya

DNA

MOSCOW: Russia's foreign and defence ministers will visit Turkey on Sunday for talks, the two countries' foreign ministries said on Saturday, with media reports saying discussions would focus on Libya.

The visit by Sergey Lavrov and Sergei Shoigu was agreed by Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Turkish counterpart, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the Turkish foreign ministry said on Saturday, adding that the meeting will cover regional issues. The Russian foreign ministry also confirmed the visit of Lavrov and Shoigu "to hold consultations on regional problems that are of mutual interest".

Turkish state broadcaster TRT Haber said the ministers would also discuss the situation in Syria.

Turkey and Russia, whose leaders have forged a strong partnership in recent years, back opposing sides in Libya, which has been riven by unrest since the fall of former leader Muammar Gaddafi in 2011 in a NATO-backed uprising.

Russia, along with the United Arab Emirates and Egypt, has backed eastern-based renegade military commander Khalifa Haftar. Haftar has reportedly received support from the Wagner mercenary group, a Russian private military contractor.

Turkey backs the UN-recognised Government of National Accord (GNA) based in the capital Tripoli and has intensified its support this year.

NAB summons PPP MNA

SUKKUR: The NAB Sukkur has summoned PPP MNA from Ghotki Sardar Muhammad Bakhsh Khan Mahar on 18 June. According to Sukkur NAB official, the NAB Sukkur was investigating into alleged illegal allotment of state assets beyond means. NAB after collecting concrete evidence has served a notice to MNA Sardar Muhammad Bakhsh Mahar to attend DG NAB Office Sukkur on June 18 to answer the questions. -APP

DREAMS CANNOT BE QUARANTINED

Unique graduation celebrations at Sheikh Zayed Academy amid Pandemic

Hamad Obaid Al Zaabi urged the graduates to stand out as a role model for others, to shine and be successful in their future pursuits, and to stay connected to the school that has imparted such high standard of education

EXCLUSIVE

DNA

ISLAMABAD: 'Unprecedented circumstances provide unprecedented opportunities for innovation' - the sentence that aptly wraps up the efforts of the Principal of Sheikh Zayed International Academy Islamabad, Mrs. Wafaa Abdul Ghaffar and the sterling support of the Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates Hamad Obaid Al Zaabi, to mark the accomplishment of IB-DP2 students.

Sheikh Zayed International Academy Islamabad commemorated the success of the graduating class of session 2019-2020 at the Embassy of the United Arab Emirates in a novel fashion to make the day indelible for the students amid the restrictions of the Covid-19. Students of IB-DP2 clad in graduation gowns, caps, masks, gloves and face shields, gathered in their private cars festooned with balloons and banners in a convoy headed by the Principal's car at the Embassy of the United Arab Emirates.

To ensure social distancing, students were instructed to remain in their private cars and briefly exit individually to receive the certificates of accomplishment from Hamad Obaid Al Zaabi.

To remind the graduates of ethical and professional responsibilities, the Principal, Mrs. Wafaa Abdul Ghaffar, took a Graduation Pledge from the students, who stood three metres apart keeping safe distance among them. The students pledged to be principled, open-minded and caring, to uphold to help this world become a better place and to use their knowledge and logic to make decisions and choices for the best of humanity.

At this auspicious moment, Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates Hamad Obaid Al Zaabi congratulated the 'SZIA GRADS' in his stimulating address upon their achievement of a momentous milestone. Hamad Obaid Al Zaabi urged the grad-



uates to stand out as a role model for others, to shine and be successful in their future pursuits,



and to stay connected to the school that has imparted such high standard of education. The ceremony concluded with a photo session of the graduates with the Principal, Mrs. Wafaa Abdul Ghaffar and cutting of a uniquely designed cake, pre-

pared specially for this occasion. The distinctively organised graduation ceremony provided an opportunity to the graduates to celebrate their success and remember that no matter the current circumstances seem dismaying, yet the future will be promising.

China reports 57 new Covid-19 cases, including 36 in Beijing

DNA

BEIJING: China has reported 57 new confirmed Covid-19 cases including 36 locally transmitted cases in Beijing, local health authorities announced on Sunday. The total number of confirmed locally transmitted cases in the Chinese capital now stands at 463 while the confirmed cases on the Chinese mainland stand at 83,132 and the cumulative death toll at 4,634, while 103 asymptomatic patients are under medical observation. Fengtai District in Beijing

has launched wartime-like control measures to curb the spread of novel coronavirus after the virus was detected at Xinfadi wholesale market in the district. Eleven residential communities around the market have been closed off, said the authorities. Three primary schools and six kindergartens were also closed in the area. Beijing authorities also suspended group tours and sports events. The local health authorities also warned of the rise of new cases. However, the public health experts assure Beijing's re-

gionally clustered Covid-19 infections would not cause a second wave of the epidemic in China, but act as a warning to alter the nation's anti-epidemic policies.

The epidemic in Beijing, being the capital, strings hearts and confidence of the whole nation in fighting against Covid-19, but Wang Peiyu, deputy head of Peking University's School of Public Health, believes the clustered infections in the capital will be curbed soon and would not cause a second wave of Covid-19. Wang told the Global Times that the consecutive reports

of confirmed cases indeed triggered widespread panic in Beijing, where it has been implementing one of the most-strict anti-epidemic measures in the entire country. "Whether China can prevent domestic cases from further rebounding depends on how quick and well Beijing curbs Covid-19," Wang said. As a severe pandemic, it is normal to see a rebound of the epidemic after it's basically controlled. Outbreak rebounds were also seen in countries like Japan and South Korea recently, the public health expert said.

NAB to bring back Salman Shahbaz thru Interpol

DNA

ISLAMABAD: National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has decided to bring back Salman Shahbaz from United Kingdom in a money laundering case through Interpol.

According to NAB spokesman, Salman has already been declared a proclaimed offender in money laundering case against Sharif family. Salman' non-bailable arrest warrants have already been issued by the Accountability Court Lahore. NAB has also decided to contact National Crime Agency, United Kingdom (UK) to provide all possible assistance in deportation of Salman Shahbaz from UK as per law.

Sh. Rashid shifted to CMH

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Federal Minister for Railways Sheikh Rasheed Ahmad, who is suffering from coronavirus, has been shifted to Combined Military Hospital (CMH) in Rawalpindi. Sources told that the federal minister was admitted to the hospital from his home on doctors' advice.

It is to be mentioned here that Sheikh Rasheed had quarantined himself at his house after being tested positive for deadly coronavirus. Prominent leaders including Prime Minister (PM) Imran Khan and Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa had inquired about his health.

Sabiha Khanum passes away

NEW YORK: Sabiha Khanum, a leading Pakistani film star of yesteryears, has passed away in Leesburg, in the United States, State of Virginia, leaving behind a treasure of cinematic work and a large number of grieving fans, her family announced on Saturday. Sabiha, 85, who ruled the silver screen in 1950s and 1960s, was suffering from renal disease, according to her family sources.

"It is with great sadness that we share the news of the demise of our beautiful and beloved Sabiha Raza (Sabiha Khanum) who passed away earlier today, June 13th, 2020," her granddaughter, Sarish Khan, said in a Facebook post. Sabiha starred in a number of movies, but directors mostly cast her opposite her husband, the late Santosh Kumar (Syed Musa Raza). Sabiha and Santosh were branded as the "perfect couple". Having been in the public eye for four decades, she finally retired, and migrated to the United States where she lived with her eldest daughter. Her son and the youngest daughter are also settled here. -APP



Babar has his own class: Younis

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's batting coach Younis Khan believed young prolific batsman and skipper Babar Azam should not be compared to Indian captain Virat Kohli, saying the Lahore-born cricketer has his own class.

"It is unfair to compare Babar with Kohli because the latter has been playing international cricket for more than a decade. Whereas, Babar has only played for 4-5 years," cricket-pakistan.com.pk quoted Younis as saying.

"Don't put this thing in his mind and let him do his wonders. He has his own class and I want him to become a legendary cricketer and lead Pakistan to victories," he said. Younis, who holds the record for the most runs and most centuries scored by a Pakistani in Test cricket history, said when he first played One Day International (ODI) and Test, he was being compared with batting legend Inzamam-ul-Haq and was called his replacement.

"I was put under-pressure when I was compared with Inzamam who debuted in the 1990s and had the 1992 World Cup on his credit," he said. -APP

61st Passing Out Parade of Pakistan Marines



DNA

KARACHI: 61st Passing

Out Parade of Pak Marines held at PNS QASIM, Manora, Khi. Commander Coast, Vice Admiral Faisal

RasulLodhi graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. The Chief Guest congratulated the passing out batch

comprised of 444 Marines on successful completion of their training. Training of the batch is mainly focused on physical conditioning, watermanship, firing, handling of different small Arms, NBCD & Fire Fighting enabling them to augment security of PN units in present environment. COMCOAST appreciated the overall turn out, drill of the passing out batch and highlighted that POP is 1st milestone in a soldier's career and facing future challenges to defend the motherland.

Ali Hassan Mar/ UT and Muhammad Waleed Mar/ UT remained Best Overall and Runner up of the course, respectively. Limited guests were invited to witness the parade under controlled environment by adopting all SOPs of COVID-19.

Repatriation of stranded Pakistanis from Australia

High Commissioner for Pakistan, Babar Amin, and Consul General Sydney Mohammad Ashraf were at the Sydney airport to see-off and facilitate smooth departure of the Pakistanis

DNA

CANBERRA: A special repatriation flight, organized by the High Commission for Pakistan and operated by the Sri Lankan Airlines, carrying 77 stranded Pakistanis, left Sydney for Lahore at 1000 hours. This was the second repatriation flight from Australia which was organized by the High Commission for Pakistan. High Commissioner for Pakistan, Babar Amin, and

Consul General Sydney Mohammad Ashraf were at the Sydney airport to see-off and facilitate smooth departure of the Pakistanis.

The Consulate General Sydney, set up a fully functional field office at the airport to facilitate the passengers in case of any passport or visa issues at the last moment. The passengers mostly included Pakistanis who had been visiting their family members, international students and temporary residents in Australia who

were stranded due to the sudden closure of international flight operations in the aftermath of pandemic outbreak.

Speaking on the occasion the High Commissioner, reiterated the resolve of the Government of Pakistan to look after the needs of overseas Pakistanis especially those stranded abroad in keeping with the vision of Prime Minister of Pakistan and the guidelines of the Foreign Minister. He added that the repatriation flights

from Australia were a part of such efforts.

The Pakistanis boarding the special repatriation flight expressed happiness to be able to return home and thanked the High Commission and its Consulates for making it possible despite logistic and commercial difficulties. They also acknowledged the efforts being made by the Pakistani Missions in Australia for the welfare and wellbeing of the Pakistan diaspora during these difficult times, owing to the COVID 19.

