

Work on CPEC 2nd phase is on full swing, says Asim Bajwa

Renowned TV host and actor Tariq Aziz dies

FM slams India for Hindutva mindset



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Briefs

Work on CPEC 2ND phase geared up: Bajwa

A.M.BHATTI

ISLAMABAD : Chairman CPEC Authority Asim Saleem Bajwa has said some detractors are giving false impression of CPEC being slowed. In his Tweet he said not only pace of work on projects has picked up recently, a great deal ground work has also been done to launch phase-2.

Asim Bajwa also made it clear ML-1 project worth USD 7.2 billion was also coming soon. He added, two Hydel Power projects investing \$3.5 billion, SEZs were also in the pipeline. Gen Bajwa said scope of agriculture has also been enhanced.

13 Taliban killed

DNA

KABUL: At least 13 Taliban were killed and 12 others wounded in clashes with Afghan security forces in southern Kandahar province, police confirmed. Jamal Nasir Barikzai, a spokesman for Kandahar police said that the Taliban fighters attacked security outposts in Zherai and Takhta pul districts of the province on Tuesday which faced resistance by Afghan forces.

The militants stormed a security outpost in Zherai at around midnight Tuesday, in which at least 8 insurgents were killed and three others injured, Barikzai said.

He added that one policeman was killed and another was wounded in the shooting exchange.

Veteran TV show host 'Tariq Aziz' dies

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Veteran Pakistani Radio and TV compere, film actor and politician Tariq Aziz passed away in Lahore after a prolonged illness on Wednesday.

According to his family, he had no illness. He was taken to hospital for throat problem where he died.

He was host of the renowned programme 'Nealam Ghar'. His first programme 'Bazm-e-Tariq Aziz' was started in 1974. He also remained an MNA from 1997-1999. He was conferred Pride of Performance for his excellent services in 1992, PTV news reported.

China claims to have vaccine

DNA

BEIJING: China's COVID-19 inactivated vaccine gets 100 percent positive conversion rate. The report says, according to the report, all subjects of the coronavirus vaccine researched and developed by China's Wuhan Institute of Biological Products have developed antibodies, with a 100 percent positive conversion rate. According to China's State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission (SASAC), the meeting for the blind review and the unblinding of the Phase I and II clinical trial results of COVID-19 inactivated vac-

cine were held in China's Beijing and Henan Province synchronously on Tuesday. The unblinding shows that the safety of the vaccine is sound, without any case of adverse reaction. All the 1,120 subjects who had got two injections have produced higher titer of antibody, with the neutralizing antibody positive rate of 100 percent. Meanwhile, China National Biotec Group, the parent company of Wuhan Institute of Biological Products, is actively promoting the Phase clinical cooperation overseas, and has confirmed the intention of cooperation with enterprises and institutions in several countries.

It is learnt that the coronavirus vaccine may appear on the market at the end of 2020 or the beginning of 2021, according to SASAC. The workshop has been making the final preparation for the production of the vaccine since May 30, 2020. China National Biotec Group belongs to China National Pharmaceutical Group Co., Ltd. (Sinopharm), a large healthcare group. Sinopharm has a full chain in the industry covering R&D, manufacturing, logistics and distribution, retail chains, healthcare, engineering services, exhibitions and conferences, international business and financial services, the report added.



LARKANA: Prime Minister Imran Khan interacting with beneficiaries during his visit to Ehsaas Centre setup at Police Training Centre. Governor Sindh Imran Ismail, Minister for Maritime Affairs Syed Ali Zaidi and PM's Special Assistant Dr Sania Nishtar accompanied the prime minister. - APP

BNP-M quits govt

ISLAMABAD: The federal government was dealt a blow on Wednesday as Balochistan National Party-Mengal (BNP-M) leader Akhtar Mengal announced that they are breaking their alliance with the ruling party. "Today, I announce in the Parliament [the BNP-M's] separation from PTT's [ruling] alliance," Mengal said while addressing the National Assembly. However, the lawmaker clarified that his party will continue to be part of the National Assembly and keep talking about their problems.

Mengal reminded the House that his party had two agreements with the ruling party, adding that it was the Imran Khan led party which had come to him for an alliance, not the BNP-M which went to Bani Gala - the personal residence of PM Imran Khan. "The first agreement was done on August 8, 2018 and signed by Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Jahangir Tareen and Yar Muhammad Rind," said Mengal. He added that his party had demanded that missing persons issue be resolved and the National Action Plan be implemented in letter and spirit in the agreement.

China says 'we don't wish to see more clashes'

BEIJING: China said Wednesday it wanted to avoid more clashes in a border dispute with India that resulted in the first deadly confrontation between the two nuclear powers in decades. "We of course don't wish to see more clashes," foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said at a regular press conference, while urging India to avoid "provocative gestures" that could complicate the border situation.

Kyrgyz embassy facilitates repatriation of 100 citizens

Another repatriation flight for another 100 Kyrgyz citizens in Pakistan is being worked out by the Embassy on June 19, 2020 on the route Lahore-Bishkek

A.M.BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic in Islamic Republic of Pakistan with assistance of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) organized repatriation flight for 100 citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic on the route Islamabad - Bishkek, along with women, children, el-

derly people, students, businessmen and others. Another repatriation flight for another 100 Kyrgyz citizens in Pakistan is being worked out by the Embassy on June 19, 2020 on the route Lahore-Bishkek. Work on the return of citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic who are in foreign countries and want to return to their homeland will continue.

This issue was worked out in pursuance of the instruction of the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic as part of the ongoing work to return citizens of the Kyrgyz Republic from foreign countries against the backdrop of the suspension of international air traffic due to the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic.

Corps commanders discuss security

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Corps Commander's Conference was held at GHQ. The forum was briefed on national and regional security situation. Forum expressed satisfaction on continued reduction in incidents of violence across the country, gradual positive effects of ongoing Afghan Peace Process along the Western Border and resolved to keep supporting the normalization process through national institutions.



Noting the Indian aggression, forum resolved to continue thwarting Indian designs and expose Indian targeting of innocent civilians in Kashmir and open support to terrorist outfits. Forum also discussed Army's ongoing support to Government against COVID-19, Locust threat, Polio campaign and ways to improve the same, within available resources.

FM slams India for Hindutva mindset

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi on Wednesday said India's Hindutva mindset and hegemonic designs were to be blamed for killing of 20 Indian soldiers in last night's face-off with Chinese forces along the disputed Himalayan frontier. "India whensoever will show stubbornness and Hindutva approach, the region will experience chaos and conflict," the foreign

minister said, responding to the deadliest clash between China and India in Laddakh region on Tuesday. The foreign minister said India had turned a deaf ear to China's repeated calls to resolve the issue with negotiations and continued illegal construction in the disputed area. He said China had a principled stance that the 3,500 kilometre area between Tibet and Laddakh was a disputed territory.

"India's attempt to occupy the land will be entirely unacceptable to China," he said. Qureshi said Pakistan was a peaceful country and desired peace and stability in the region. "If India thinks, it can coerce Pakistan with its aggressive attitude, it is simply a wishful thinking," he added. He said India always rejected Pakistan's offer for dialogue over all outstanding issues. - APP

Pakistan record highest single day deaths

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has confirmed 136 deaths - highest till date - by novel coronavirus in one day as the number of positive cases has surged to 154,760. The nationwide tally of fatalities has jumped to 2,975, Dunya News reported on Wednesday.

According to the latest figures by the National Command and Operation Center (NCOC), 5,839 persons have been tested positive for COVID-19 in 24 hours. Punjab remains the worst-hit province by the pandemic followed by Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. Till now 58,239 coronavirus cases have been confirmed in Punjab, 57,868 in Sindh, 19,107 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 8,437 in Balochistan, 9,242 in Islam-

abad, 1,164 in Gilgit-Baltistan and 703 in Azad Kashmir. - DNA

Punjab bans sale of Dexamethasone

LAHORE: Against the backdrop of Dexamethasone being termed major breakthrough in Covid-19 treatment, the Punjab government on Wednesday banned the sale of the steroid drug without doctor's prescription. The chief drug controller issued directives for drug inspectors to monitor the distribution of Dexamethasone across the province and maintain a record of the drug's stock in the province. The directives are aimed at averting possible hoarding of the steroid drug. - DNA

Afghan envoy thanks Pak govt

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Afghanistan Ambassador to Pakistan, Atif Mashal, thanked Pakistani government for reopening border crossing of Torkham and Chaman besides resuming trade from Ghulam Khan crossings. Atif Mashal praised the decision of the Pakistani government for agreeing to resume imports from Afghanistan to Pakistan via Torkham and Chaman borders from June 22 and the continuation of imports and exports from Ghulam Khan crossing. Thanks to the Pakistani government for agreeing to resume imports from Afghanistan to Pakistan via Torkham and Chaman as well as opening of Ghulam Khan crossings from 22nd June. It is worth mentioning that Ghulam Khan crossings will open for both imports and exports.

The Afghan envoy said in his Twitter messages that the decision to reopen border crossings was taken in the last meeting of Pakistan-Afghanistan steering committee. He added that Ghulam Khan border crossing will be used for bilateral trade, whereas, both sides will finalise a strategy to make it as transit route at earliest.

Thanks to the Pakistani government for agreeing to resume imports from Afghanistan to Pakistan via Torkham and Chaman as well as opening of Ghulam Khan crossings from 22nd June.

It is worth mentioning that Ghulam Khan crossings will open for both imports and exports.

All this will hopefully start happening by the due date after technical meetings between Steering Committees of both sides from 15-18 June. We are also working closely with Pakistan government to make Ghulam Khan crossing a transit route soon.

"Serving masses our top priority", says Prime Minister Imran Khan

The members of Sindh Assembly lauded the government's recent budget proposals, strategy to counter coronavirus and launch of Ehsaas Emergency Cash Programme. They also gave suggestions on strengthening ties between federation and provinces

DNA

KARACHI: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Wednesday said serving the masses was the top most priority of the government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

In a meeting with a delegation of PTI's Members of Sindh Assembly here, the Prime Minister urged upon the public representatives to play an active role in resolving problems of the masses within their constituencies.

According to PM Office Media Wing, the PTI MPs included Umer Ammari, Dr Syed Imran Ali Shah, Arsalan Taj Hussain, Bilal Ahmed, Syed Firdous Shamim Naqvi, Haleem Adil Sheikh, Jamaluddin Siddiqi, Karim Bux Gabol, Muhammad Ali Aziz, Mir Ramzan, Shahzad Qureshi, Malik Shahzad Awan, Raabistan Khan, Syed Ahmed, Shah Nawaz JAdoo, Muhammad Aslam Abro, Shehryar Khan, Adeel Ahmed, Raja Azhar Khan, Dr Sanjay Gangwani, Tahira Dua Bhutto,



Sidra Imran, Dr Seema Zia and Rabia Azfar. Sindh Governor Imran Ismail, Minister for Maritime Affairs Syed Ali Zaidi and Prime Minister's Special Assistant Dr Sania Nishtar were present.

The members of Sindh Assembly lauded the government's recent budget proposals, strategy to counter coronavirus and launch of Ehsaas Emergency Cash Programme. They also gave suggestions on strengthening ties between federation and provinces.

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"Peace process in Afghanistan should not be seen as a zero sum game"

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Briefs

Blaze at ghee mill still continues

RAWALPINDI: Firefighters are struggling to extinguish the huge fire broke out at Dalda Cooking Oil and Ghee Mill, some 19 hours ago, located in an area of Kalayam Shareef. While updating the latest situation, a spokesman of Rescue 1122, said that five rescue vehicles were called to the site. While 100 rescuers 15 fire extinguishers, two ambulances, two special equipment vehicles and army helicopters were taking part in the fire fighting operation. Two rescue workers were injured and given first aid at the scene and are out of danger. No other injuries or casualties were reported. Most parts of the building have collapsed, the spokesman said. A huge fire broke out at the Dalda Cooking Oil and Ghee Mill located in an area of Kalayam Shareef on Tuesday evening, the fire spread quickly and engulfed the entire building and godown, which were supplying cooking oil and ghee to different parts of the country. - APP

Police arrest six car lifters

PESHAWAR: The capital city police in a crackdown against car lifters have discerned two gangs and arrested six of their members, police informed on Wednesday. The arrested car lifters belonged to inter-provincial car lifter gangs who used to lift vehicles from Peshawar, Islamabad, Lahore and other cities and after tempering the engine and chassis number sale it. Among the arrested car lifter two belonged to Khyber district, one was from Nowshera and three belonged to Peshawar. The arrested accused have confessed to involvement in several cases of car lifting, police said adding a total of five cars have been recovered from them. - APP

Mobile phones import increases

ISLAMABAD: The import of mobile phones into the country has witnessed an increase of 63.17 percent during the eleven months of financial year (2019-20) as compared to the corresponding period of last year. Pakistan imported mobile phones worth US \$1138.641 million during July-May (2019-20) as compared to the imports of US \$697.813 million during July-May (2018-19), showing growth of 63.17 percent, according to the latest data issued by Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). On year-on year basis, the import of mobile phones witnessed increased of 68.76 percent in May 2020, as compared to the imports of the same month of last year. - APP

RCB announces 10 percent concession

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi Cantonment Board has announced 10 percent concession in 2019-20 property tax for those who are willing to pay them until June 30. According to a RCB spokesman, action in accordance with the law would be taken against the property tax defaulters who did not clear taxes despite various notices. He said, the authorities concerned had tasked the field staff of the board to expedite the recovery process and submit a daily report of the progress. - APP

ICCI calls for cut in electricity tariff to promote industry and exports

The ICCI President further said that hydropower generation increased in the summer season so it was a good opportunity for the government to take advantage of this and reduce power tariffs

FIJAZ CHAUDHRY

ISLAMABAD: Muhammad Ahmed Waheed, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry has called upon the government to immediately reduce the price of electricity for promoting industrialization, investment and exports. He said that industrial development was essential to stabilize the fragile economy of Pakistan but the high cost of electricity was a major stumbling block in the way of business and industrial development. He said there was a need for the government to reduce the electricity tariff in proportion to the reduc-

tion made in the prices of petroleum products. He said that despite significant cut in POL prices, the government has increased the price of furnace oil from Rs.40,000 per metric tonne to Rs.61,000 per metric tonne within two months which was unjustified. He said that most of the electricity in Pakistan was generated from furnace oil but it was strange that price of furnace oil has been further enhanced despite the record decline in oil prices in the global market. He said that the government has significantly reduced the price of kerosene but the kerosene was being sold in the market up to Rs.140 per litre and urged



that the government should immediately investigate this matter. Muhammad Ahmed Wa-

heed said that due to Covid-19 pandemic, business and industrial activities in the country have been af-

ected badly which has further weakened our fragile economy. He said that the best solution to overcome economic challenges was to promote industrial activities. "Reducing electricity price would reduce production cost, which will help boost business activities," he said. He said that the coronavirus has hit the whole world and big importers of our products were demanding discounts. However, it was impossible to give discounts to importers without reducing the production cost and this situation could lead to further fall in our exports. He said that the best way to cope with such challenges

was to reduce cost of doing business and increase exports. He said these objectives could be achieved only by reducing the price of electricity. The ICCI President further said that hydropower generation increased in the summer season so it was a good opportunity for the government to take advantage of this and reduce power tariffs. He said that the cheap electricity would bring multiple benefits to the economy as it will reduce the cost of doing business, make our products more competitive in the global market, increase exports, reduce inflation and help in reviving the overall economy.

Federal Govt institutions donate Rs 11 mln

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Director General, Federal Government Educational Institutions (FGEI), Major General Muhammad Asghar has donated the cheque of PKR 11million for Prime Minister's Corona Relief Fund. The cheque was handed over to the Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Shafqat Mahmood, said a news release here on Tuesday. The amount was collected by the employees of Federal Government Educational Institutions Cantonnments/Garrisons to support the dignified cause of government for helping poor segments of the society in this hour of need. The Minister acknowledged the valuable efforts of FGEI for the country.

Footwear exports increase record 4.29%

ISLAMABAD: Footwear exports during first eleven months of current financial year grew by 4.29% as compared to the exports of the corresponding period of last year. During the period from July-May, footwear worth \$114,860 thousand were exported as compared to the exports of \$110,140 thousand of same period of last year. According to the data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, the exports of Leather Footwear increased by 1.83%, Leather Footwear valuing \$97,413 thousand exported as compared to worth \$95,665 thousand of same period of last year. Meanwhile, canvas Footwear worth \$351 thousand were also exported in first eleven months of current financial year as compared to the exports of valuing \$245 thousand of same period of last year. During the period under review, Other Footwear exports of the country also recorded positive growth of 20.14%. Other Footwear worth \$17,096 thousand was exported as compared to the exports of \$14,230 thousand of same period of last year.

Govt taking steps to contain virus

ISLAMABAD: Senior leader of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Sadaqat Ali Abbasi Wednesday said that the federal government was utilizing all available resources to increase testing capacity for COVID-19 from 25,000 to 30,000 per day and taking multiple steps to contain the further spread of coronavirus in the country. Talking to a private news channel, he said the challenge of COVID-19 was not only the issue of Pakistan but the entire world was dealing with this pandemic and the revival of economy was topmost priority of the government. "Pakistan's testing capacity was limited when the first case was reported in the country but with each passing day, it was increasing," he said. - APP



RAWALPINDI: Firefighters struggling to extinguish fire as more than 1000 firefighters struggling to extinguish the massive fire that broke out yesterday afternoon at Dalda Cooking Oil and Ghee Mill, located in the area of Kalyam Shareef.

Budget is a disappointment for women: IWCCI

Coronavirus, lockdowns, and closure of businesses have already drained economy and taken a toll of businesspersons while there is no relief for the business community in the budget

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Samina Fazil, founder President, Islamabad Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry (IWCCI) on Wednesday said recently-announced budget has left masses, business community and women entrepreneurs highly disappointed. Women which are 51 percent of the population have totally been ignored in the budget, therefore, it is fated to fail very soon, she said. Samina Fazil said that the second budget of PTI-led government will add to the miseries of businesswomen and man on the street who were already finding it difficult to fulfill their basic needs. Coronavirus, lockdowns, and closure of businesses have already drained economy and taken a toll of businesspersons while there is no relief for the business community in the budget which is a great disappoint-



ment, she added. Ms. Fazil said that this budget will not enhance people's purchasing power and contribute nothing to make the economy and businesses healthy. She noted that like all other business groups, women were also anticipat-

ing some relief in the budget but it proved otherwise strengthening the impression that the government is not concerned about the problems being faced by the masses and the business community. She said that the budget is according to the wishes and aspirations of the IMF and its negative impact will damage the fragile economy. Samina Fazil said that revenue targets are based on expectations which will push FBR to harass the business community and choke economic growth. The government is aiming to substantially increase its tax revenues which is wishful thinking amid current economic scenario, she said, adding that it will further isolate women. How can the government achieve the ambitious target of over two percent GDP growth without mainstreaming of women entrepreneurs, she questioned.

VCs criticize cut in higher education budget

ADNAN YOUSAF

ISLAMABAD: Vice Chancellors of all public sector universities have expressed their strong criticism of the recent cuts imposed by the Finance Ministry on the budget for higher education. A resolution passed by the university heads, after the Vice Chancellors Committee meeting held online on Tuesday, stated that Pakistani universities are already under enormous financial stress because of the squeezing of their budgets since last three years. Currently, the COVID crisis has further exacerbated the situation, both by increasing costs, and by reducing the inflows of tuition fees. The Vice Chancellors appealed to the Prime Minister, the Education Minister, and the SAPM to immediately reverse the cuts, and enhance the higher education budget to the levels needed by universities. The resolution emphasized that future of the country depends critically on the future of education, especially higher education. If the funding cuts are not reversed, some universities will not be able to survive. It will force some universities to raise tuition fees at a time when students are unable or unwilling to pay regular tuition because of the virus pandemic. The VCs asked Chairman HEC to arrange a meeting of a delegation of Vice Chancellors to call upon the honorable Prime Minister to apprise him of the difficulties faced by universities because of the repeated budget cuts over the last three years. The Vice Chancellors also expressed their unequivocal opposition to the actions of some elements to change legal provisions and undermine the autonomy of universities, especially draft changes in the Punjab Universities (Amendment) Act, 2020.

Shafqat for 'Virtual session of parliament'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Education Shafqat Mahmood Wednesday stressed the need for conducting virtual session of the Parliament instead of physical session, considering the risks of spreading coronavirus among more members. Talking to a private news channel, he said opposition parties of Pakistan People's Party and Pakistan Muslim League-N were harming themselves and other lawmakers by opposing virtual session of the parliament in this situation of the pandemic. He said the decision to convene parliament's virtual

or physical session will be finalized after the consensus of opposition parties but they still are not in favor of virtual session which is putting the lives of people on risk. Parliaments around the world have adopted innovative ways and new online working methods to ensure they continue their essential work during the pandemic, he explained. For instance, they can reduce the number of MPs sitting in plenary, proportionally to the parliament's political composition, or use social distancing sitting arrangements. He suggested that, "We should ensure all health SoPs in wake of the pandemic for safety of the parliamentarians and

its supporting staff, adding, parliamentarians should set a better example for nation and conduct all virtual sessions". He said it would also convey an effective message to public about their representatives taking proper precautionary measures against the coronavirus. He also stressed for coordinated efforts of the nation to fight the coronavirus pandemic effectively. Replying to a question, he said as schools were closed due to the lockdown to combat the raging COVID-19 pandemic. He said that the government was making efforts to keep education alive by offering classes million students via the Internet and TV channels.

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Warming model

I modeled mathematically the thermal imbalance of our biosphere, which we call global warming, so as to gain my own quantitative understanding of the interplay of the two major effects that give rise to this phenomenon. This is a 'toy model', an abstraction of a very complicated planetary phenomenon that teams of scientists using supercomputers have been laboring for decades to enumerate in its many details, and to predict its likely course into the future. The result of my model is a formula for the history of the rise of average global surface temperature. The parameters of the model are ratios of various physical quantities that affect the global heat balance. Many of those physical quantities are set by Nature and the laws of physics. A few of those parameters characterize assumptions I made about physical processes, specifically: the degree of increase in Earth's reflectivity of light because of an increase of cloud cover with an increase of temperature; the degree of decrease in Earth's reflectivity of light because of a decay of ice cover with an increase of temperature; the rate of increase in Earth's reflectivity of light because of the steady emission of air pollution particles; and the rate of increase of the infrared radiation absorptivity - heat absorptivity - of the atmosphere because of the steady emission of greenhouse gas pollution.

The parameters for the four processes just mentioned were selected so that a calculated temperature rise history from 1910 to 2020 matched the trend of the data for average global surface temperature rise during that period. That average temperature rise was 1 C between 1910 and 2020.

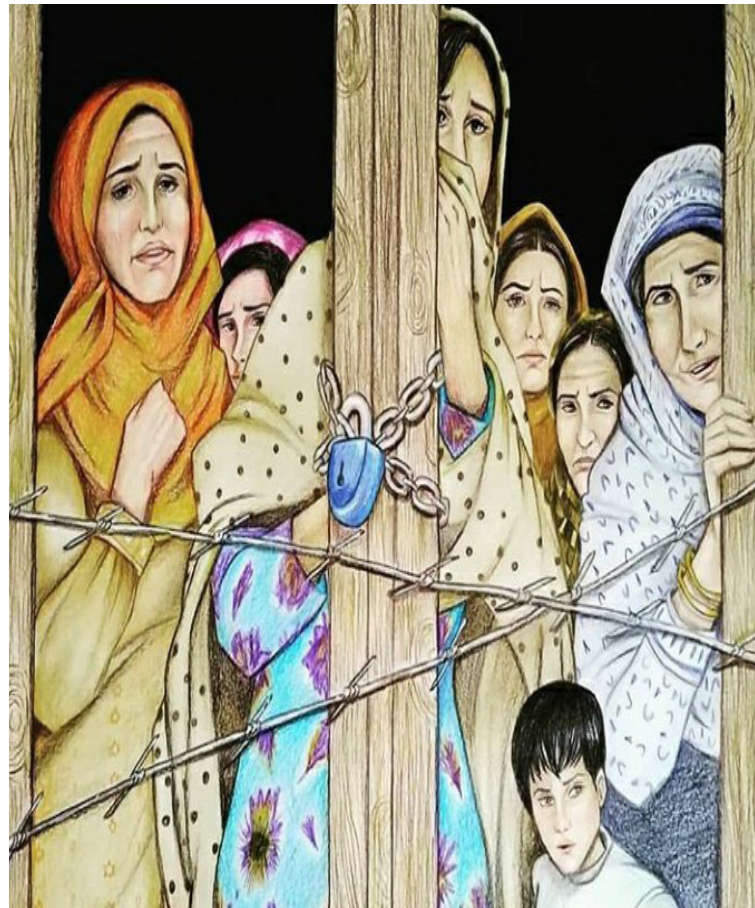
The two major effects involved in the dynamics of the current global heat imbalance are: heating because of the enhanced absorptivity by the atmosphere of outbound infrared radiation - which is heat; and cooling because of the enhanced reflectivity of the atmosphere to inbound sunlight.

The biosphere is in thermal equilibrium - existing at a stable average global temperature - when the rate of absorbed inbound sunlight is matched by the rate of heat radiated out into space.

Greenhouse gases emitted into the atmosphere capture a portion of the infrared radiation - heat - rising from the surface of the Earth, and retain it. They are able to do this because the nature of their molecules makes them highly efficient at absorbing infrared radiation. The molecules involved are primarily those of carbon dioxide (CO₂), water vapor (H₂O), and methane (CH₄).

This captured heat is then redistributed to the rest of the atmosphere by molecular collisions between the greenhouse gas molecules and the molecules of the major constituents of our air: nitrogen (N₂) and oxygen (O₂). The excess atmospheric heat evaporates more seawater, makes more clouds, drives stronger winds and causes more intense rainstorms - such as hurricanes, typhoons and tornadoes - and more frequent and severe flooding.

That excess atmospheric heat is gradually absorbed by the oceans, which as a unit is the most massive and heat retentive component of the biosphere.



Reading the budget

THE task of preparing Pakistan's federal budget is quite a complicated one. On the needs side, it has four Ds: debt servicing, defence, day to day administration and development. On the resources side, it has two ingredients: federal revenues (generated both from tax collection and non-tax income) and borrowing (from domestic banks as well as bilateral and multilateral foreign lenders). Since the needs always outrun resources, the makers of Pakistan's budget continuously struggle to match them.

What makes this complicated task even more complex is the fact that the strings attached to borrowing from the IMF are always directly linked to such budgetary indicators as tax collection, inflation, interest rate and currency's value. When Pakistan is getting financial assistance from the IMF, as it is doing now, the making of the budget starts with the setting of a target for fiscal deficit - the gap between revenue and expenditure. Often, the revenue gets inflated and the expenditure is deflated in such a way that the imbalance between them does not exceed an IMF-mandated deficit target. This year's budget has an additional intricacy: Covid-19. The economic and financial impact of the coronavirus has been so widespread across Pakistan's political economy that policymakers have termed the 2020-21 budget as one concerned more with "survival" than with growth. In my opinion, in the coming 12 months, we will have to deal with four Ls along with the four Ds mentioned above. These are: lives, livelihoods, lockdown and locust. The government, too, is aware that it cannot overlook or undermine the importance of these factors. The officially released latest edition of the Pakistan Economic Survey contains a section titled 'Covid-19 Advent and Impact Assessment' which talks about the loss of jobs, loss in revenue, loss in exports, loss of economic growth and loss of precious lives.

Let us draw a brief outline for the future course of these losses. As of June 14, Covid-19 cases in Pakistan have approached 141,000. In the first 14 days of the current month, the daily average of detected corona cases has been a staggering 5000. This can rise further as the spread of the disease has not peaked yet. But even before the peak is reached, Pakistan's health infrastructure is beginning to creak. The budget, therefore, needs to allocate enough resources to improve this infrastructure so that it can effectively handle the medical impact of the corona pandemic.

It is important to note here that the country's health facilities were far less than adequate even before Covid-19 struck. For instance, only one hospital bed was available for more than 1,680 people. The budget needs to focus on improving this ratio. It also needs to ensure that child immunisation campaigns, which have been halted due to Covid-19, are resumed. The current level of immunisation, at 66 percent of all children in the country, is too low to be effective against such scourges as polio. The economic shock of Covid-19 has been as bad as its medical effects. It is directly threatening the livelihoods of 27.3 million informal non-agricultural sector workers, and 22 million agricultural sector workers. A study by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) shows that one million small and medium enterprises (SMEs) may not survive if they are forced to remain closed for more than one month without any government assistance.

Indians Resort to Humiliating Friendly Arabs

F. Z. Khan

This is too much, something indigestible; the people of Arab countries, especially women in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE and other sister states, are outraged over such derogatory and insulting remarks by none else but a 'friendly' country's MP. Such a 'friendly' country that gets transferred every year over \$55 billion from the Gulf countries, and more than \$120 billion annually from all Muslim countries. 'Friendly' in a sense that Indians, mostly Hindus, are treated well in the Arab states, as much as the Indians in UAE constitute the largest part of its population: over 3,510,200 Indian migrants are living in UAE

India for the last many decades has been enjoying very good economic as well as diplomatic relations with the Arab world; a huge number of Indians, over 7 million, are working in the Gulf states, and the trades with UAE, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia have earned India the biggest chunk of forex as well as prosperity. But, of late, these relations have been marred by the extremist Hindu regime's anti-Muslim tirades; ever since the Modi-led RSS-fueled BJP has started state-sponsored persecution of Muslims in India. The Hindutva-committed Modi regime is out "to Hinduize India, where Muslims are no longer safe", especially after the enactment of new Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) that denies Muslims and other minorities right of citizenship. The longest curfew in Indian Occupied Jammu & Kashmir, the hell unleashed on Kashmiris and the persecution of Muslim population in other parts of India has not only agitated the world community, but the people of Arab countries are also feeling its heat; they have started questioning the very nature of their governments' relationship with New Delhi.

But what has added fuel to the fire, recently, are the highly derogatory and insulting remarks made by a BJP MP, Tejasvi Surya, about the Arab women, which has sparked widespread hatred among the Arabs against Modi and his ideology, and their diplomatic and trade ties with New Delhi. Surya, a 29-year-old RSS Hindu fanatic from India's South Bengaluru, in a tweet said, "95% Arab women have never had an orgasm in the last few hundred years! Every (Arab) mother has produced kids as act of sex and not love." Another ex-MP dragged in Iranian women too, saying "hymenoplasty is increasing fast in Tehran..." This is too much, something indigestible; the people of Arab countries, especially women in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE and other sister states, are outraged over such derogatory and insulting remarks by none else but a 'friendly' country's MP. Such a 'friendly' country that gets transferred every year over \$55 billion from the Gulf countries, and more than \$120 billion annually from all Muslim countries. 'Friendly' in a sense that Indians, mostly Hindus, are treated well in the Arab states, as much as the Indians in UAE constitute the largest part of its population: over 3,510,200 Indian migrants are living in UAE, which is over 27% of the total population. In Kuwait 580,000 Indians are working while in Oman their number is 450,000. India's business tycoon, who ranks at 394 on the list, is the richest Indian expat living in UAE with assets estimated over \$4.9 billion.

"Is this the return of feeding the poor Indians, who have long been eating our share of meal while living amongst us for the last many decades?", question the Arabs. "Isn't it a backstabbing by our so called 'friend'?" Swift reactions, in the strongest terms started coming in from various Arab figures who demand from PM Modi 'punitive action' against his MP. "Pity your upbringing @Tejasvi_Surya that respect for women couldn't be instilled you despite India having some great female leaders. Please note if someday the govt bestows a foreign ministry to you, avoid travelling to Arab lands. You are not welcome here. This would be remembered". These are the words of Noora Al-Ghurair, a Dubai-based businesswoman, who now demands expulsion of Indians from the Gulf region, because a number of RSS-influenced Hindus living in UAE and Kuwait are caught spreading hate material on social media. Six of them have recently been arrested.

Noora wrote in another tweet: "World is suffering from corona virus and India is suffering from corona via RSS. Hindutva are flourishing all over Middle East. They are persecuting and collecting extortion from Muslims in India. But no Hindutva has been forced to pay Jazia or any protection money to Muslims. If Muslims wanted, they could have easily extorted money from them but they didn't." She added, "For too long RSS is working in Gulf spreading poison. Interest to sell oil to India has emboldened coward Hindutva militants. All Arab countries should ban Indian Cultural Centers in their capitals. They are actually spies of anti-Muslim activities on front B/wood faces of SRK-AK-SK." Surya, who has been serving the BJP in multiple capacities including being an active member of Akhil Baratiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) and state spokesperson of the YuvaMorcha and is currently playing active role in BJP's national social media team, had recently warned over the Indian Muslims' Shaheen Bagh protest against the CAA by saying that the Mughal raj would return if the "majority (Hindu) community" was not "vigilant". He called, "Islamofascism is [a] grave threat to civilisation." He is quite popular on social media, with more than half a million followers on Twitter. He called upon the BJP to "really become a Hindu party & not just be perceived as one." In March 2019, he said people who are not with Modi "are strengthening anti-India forces". He opposes the idea of women's reservation in Parliament, which was part of BJP's manifesto in 2014 and 2019.

Although he deleted his tweet on Arab women, yet its screenshot is still being tagged. Mona Alarbash, a lawyer, says: "The Indian parliamentarian's deletion of this com-

ment will not forget us of the heinous insult from it. We demand urgent and immediate accountability from (Indian) parliament and the (Modi) government. We the Arab Muslim women, are generational educators and directors of global competencies. Mejebe-al-Shrika, from Kuwait Institute of Law and Legal Studies, called upon the Indian PM for taking action against Surya. "@PMOIndia Respected Prime minister @narendramodi India's relation with the Arab world has been that of mutual respect. Do you allow your parliamentarian to publicly humiliate our women? We expect your urgent punitive action against @Tejasvi_Surya for his disgraceful comment", reads his tweet. The outpouring of reaction doesn't stop here. The royal families are also expressing their resentment against it. Her Highness Princess Henda Al Qassimi, said, "UAE law applies on nationals and non-nationals in terms of hate speech... Anyone that is openly racist and discriminatory in the UAE will be fined and made to leave." She tweeted a screenshot of a law on hate speech that reads: "...The law prohibits activities the government deems supportive of political or extremist interpretations of Islam. These include the use of the internet or any other electronic means to promote views the government believes insult religions, promote sectarianism, damage national unity or the reputation of the state, or harm public order and public morals. Punishments include imprisonment and fines from 500,000 dirhams (\$136,000) to one million dirhams (\$272,000). In August the government increased the penalties for electronic violations of the law, including raising the maximum fine to four million dirhams (\$1.09 million). The law prohibits membership in groups the government designates as terrorist organizations, with penalties up to life imprisonment and capital punishment."

Although a strong criticism is being seen from saner elements in India, yet the maniac Modi's government has still not apologized over Surya's remarks. "Today, India stands embarrassed, humiliated", said Congress leader Sanjay Jha, however, the row on Twitter continues to trigger outrage amongst the Arabs. "Everyone is disturbed with the death of pregnant elephant but none is concerned about the hardships faced by Safoora Zargar who is in a jail. She was arrested for participating in anti-CAA protest." And last but not the least: "Show me one case of a Hindu being forced to chant anything by Muslims. These stories of Muslims being lynched keep emanating and it is obvious that the terrorists involved in this are supported by the (Indian) government, why else would this continue?"

Indians stand embarrassed, humiliated

Farooq Alay

It all started with both sides digging defences and Chinese trucks moving equipment into the area, raising concerns of a long faceoff. But interviews with former Indian military officials and diplomats suggest the trigger for the flare-up is India's construction of roads and airstrips

Flared up by India's strategic move to ramp up infrastructure along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China, Sino-India border tensions have risen high in Ladakh as over 20 Indian soldiers, including a Colonel, were killed in Galwan Valley deadly clash, the first in last 45 years. The two countries fought a war in 1962 when India suffered a humiliating defeat. China's Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said India had crossed the border twice "provoking and attacking Chinese personnel, resulting in serious confrontation between border forces on the two sides". According to AFP, "No shots were fired" in this latest skirmish and there are reports that it was fought with rocks and clubs; the Indian soldiers were "beaten to death". Last month, both sides exchanged physical blows on Sikkim border, too. Inside India, Modi government is facing criticism over "great embarrassment and humiliation". India wrongfully disputes China's 38,000 square

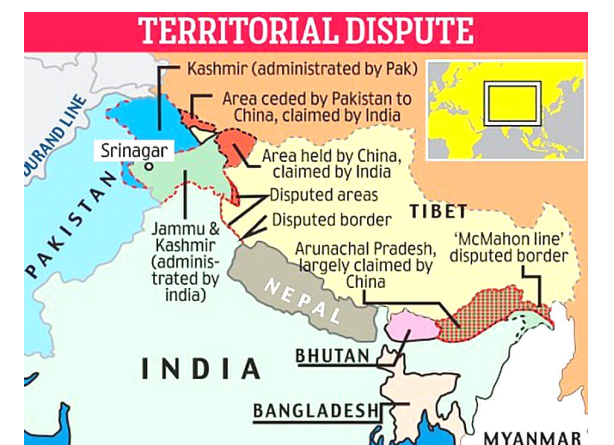
kilometer territory and 3,440 km long LAC, and Pakistan's 140,000 sq km territory with a 740 km long LoC. Several rounds of talks have so far failed to resolve the boundary disputes; instead India has started building roads network to boost its capability to move men and material rapidly in case of a conflict with China and Pakistan. Security analysts believe that the Indian maneuverability is aimed at blocking China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) under which China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is being built. Already, India is struggling to contain a surge of Covid-19 infections and revive an economy which looks headed for recession.

Hu Xijin, the Editor-in-Chief of Global Times, tweeted that his understanding is that the Chinese side also suffered casualties in the Galwan Valley clash. "Based on what I know, Chinese side also suffered casualties in the Galwan Valley physical clash. I want to tell the Indian side, don't be arrogant and misread China's restraint as being weak." The Sino-Indian conflict on the LAC in Eastern Ladakh gradually generated enough heat to become international news and grew in intensity by this June. Making bold headlines, the conflict is now flaring upon which the Indian government and military turn out to be the losers. India has not only lost the territory, but also its credibility. The silence of Indian PM, wholike President Trump is obsessed with tweeting and making ridiculous claims, shows that he has nothing left to tweet. The claim that Indian army some days ago had conducted a surgical strike and regained territory from the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA), just as he had done falsely in Kashmir, has earned Narendra Modi a strong criticism from within and outside India. The image of Chinese soldiers pushing the Indian soldiers on ground and tying their hands was the most humiliating sight flooding the social media platforms and very upsetting and demoralizing for the Indian people.

It all started with both sides digging defences and Chinese trucks moving equipment into the area, raising concerns of a long faceoff. But interviews with former Indian military officials and diplomats suggest the trigger for the flare-up is India's construction of roads and airstrips. One of these roads is near the Galwan valley that connects to Daulat Beg Oldi airbase, which was inaugurated last October. The early March aggressive posturing by India

gradually fizzled out, and was replaced by reconciliatory gestures of peace after the Chinese simply walked into Indian territory and scared the Indian army to retreat and take refuge in their bunkers. The PLA in an early morning walk was able to push back the stone-throwing Indians by 2.5 km along the LAC and reclaimed miles of their territory which is part of the Chinese Tibet. China has yet to regain 90,000 sq km of its territory from Indian occupation, including Arunachal Pradesh or South Tibet. The People's Liberation Army (PLA), which is far superior in strength and equipment organized a large-scale military operation featuring thousands of paratroopers plus armored vehicles to the Indian border in Ladakh. This move shattered the confidence and morale of the Indian army forcing them to retreat. Prime Minister Narendra Modi simply miscalculated the determination of Chinese leaders, back from beating the monstrous Covid-19, successfully calming Taiwan's desire to rebel the Chinese were in no mode to tolerate Modi's foreign policy of hugging and betraying.

Flirting with Trump and agreeing to kowtow to US foreign policy Modi abused the Chinese policy of tolerance and nonviolence - no bullet has been fired after the Chinese army defeated the Indian Northern Command in 1962, so Modi decided to test the Chinese resolve by building solid military structures on Chinese Territory. The Chinese government has never accepted the British demarcation of the Tibet area and has rejected treatise which the British forced on the Chinese Qing dynasty. The Indian expansionist and belligerent policy of annexing territories of its neighbours has backfired in the Ladakh region. According to a newspaper editorial, "China is not Nepal or Bhutan and the Indian policy of eating away land will not succeed. The Indian army stands a zero chance of countering a Chinese advance. The Chinese military has grown manifolds and so has its economy since 1962. The Chinese GDP is five times larger than India. The Indians know that rhetoric and gung-ho attitude can only work on the Indian media not on the ground with the PLA". Although President Trump has offered to mediate, but his remarks about Hong Kong and Taiwan, further irritated China. Therefore, it is unlikely that the tainted US mediation offer will work.



Under the circumstances, Islamabad's concerns are genuine that the Modi's BJP-RSS-led government "is becoming a threat to neighbours. Bangladesh through Citizenship Act, border disputes with Nepal and China, and Pakistan threatened with false flag operation." Pakistan has been forewarning the international community about this worrying pattern for quite a while now, yet, India's large market has blinded the world to the policies it employs at the state level, especially in Occupied Kashmir. It is now twelfth month that India revoked IOJ&K's special status, massive human rights violations are going on inside the occupied valley under 11-month-long curfew. And the noise Pakistan has been making about India's aggressive, xenophobic policies, it must now make a lot more sense to the world. The truth is that Islamabad has been offering negotiations on all outstanding issues since Musharraf's times; he had offered a four-point solution, and the successive governments have been calling upon India to come to a negotiable table. World knows that it is only India that has always bulldozed every effort for peace. Modi has falsely made Indians believe that India is an invisible regional power. Indian Army Generals know the ground realities in Ladakh and even in Kashmir. After disappointing his nation on Ladakh and last February in Balakot, Indiamay try to reignite tension on the Line of Control to boost his public approval ratings which have gone down due to the Covid-19 disaster and massive unemployment and economic meltdown. He is doomed to fail.

Briefs

President, PM grieved over death of Tariq Aziz

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi and Prime Minister Imran Khan on Wednesday expressed profound grief over the passing away of renowned television and radio compere Tariq Aziz. In their separate condolence messages, the President and the Prime Minister paid tribute to Tariq Aziz for his immense contribution for the field of television. President Alvi termed Tariq Aziz "an institution in his field". The President offered condolence to the family of Tariq Aziz and prayed for the departed soul to rest in peace. Prime Minister Imran Khan in a tweet said, "Saddened to learn of the passing of Tariq Aziz, an icon in his time and a pioneer of our TV game shows." - APP

Norwegian Air returns to European skies

OSLO: Low-cost airline Norwegian announced Wednesday it was reopening 76 European and domestic routes starting July 1, after months of keeping most of its fleet grounded due to the new coronavirus. Norwegian, which has only kept eight aircraft in service to cover domestic flights, will roll another 12 planes out of the hangar, opening up routes to destinations such as London, Paris, Nice, Spain and Greece from Scandinavian capitals. "Feedback from our customers has shown that they are keen to get back in the air and resume their travels with Norwegian beyond the current domestic services that we have been operating," CEO Jacob Schram said in a statement. - APP

US execution stayed

HOUSTON: The US Supreme Court on Tuesday granted a last-minute reprieve to a Texas prisoner facing execution after the Catholic Church campaigned for him to be allowed to have priest present. The Texas Catholic Conference of Bishops argued that Ruben Gutierrez's constitutional rights and religious liberty were violated by a year-old state statute which bans religious officials from the death chamber. The court granted the stay based on Gutierrez's challenge to Texas's "change of the longstanding practice... of allowing prisoners to have spiritual advisers in the chamber during executions," Shawn Nolan, one of his attorneys, said. "As a devout Catholic, Gutierrez's faith requires the assistance of clergy to help him pass from life into after-life." - APP

India's Islamophobia creeps into Nepal

ISLAMABAD: India's Hindu nationalist fundamentalists and its Islamophobic media are taking advantage of the coronavirus to push hatred to Nepal through popular Indian news channels and social media. "The rise of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and his link to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh organization and its Hindu nationalist ideology, has strengthened the New Delhi establishment to the re-making of Nepal as a Hindu country again," Foreign Policy, a reputed American magazine said in its report on Wednesday. The news publication, that focuses on global affairs and current events, said Nepalis pride themselves on a history of religious tolerance, even in a region where faith has often had bloody consequences. - APP

ECC approves 100 million for locust control in Punjab

SHAHEEN QURESHI

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Finance and Revenue Dr. Abdul Hafeez Shaikh chaired the meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee of the Cabinet today at the Cabinet Division. ECC approved the following technical supplementary grants: 1) Rs.3.2 billion for PIACL (Pakistan International Airline Corporation Limited) to discharge the obligations on account of markup against GoP guaranteed loans. 2) Rs25,206,953 in favor of Pakistan Academy for Rural Development (PARAD)

Peshawar for the current financial year. 3) Rs. 1300 million to Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission to discharge its various liabilities 4) Rs 235 million to Deputy Commissioner Islamabad for making payment of internal security duty allowance to troops of Pakistan Rangers (Punjab) deployed in Islamabad 5) Rs 500 million to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to meet the expenditure of media campaign on Covid-19 6) Rs 100 million for National Disaster Management Authority (NDMF) for procuring equipment for locust control in Punjab

7) Rs 7.947 billion to NDMA on account of procurement of emergency equipment through Pakistan Foreign Mission in China (Ex-post Facto approval on account of Pakistan National Emergency Preparedness and Response for Covid-19, procurement of equipment and transfer of funds) 8) Rs.4.5 billion for the capacity building of Civil Armed forces as requested by the Ministry of Interior 9) Rs.80 million for Competition Commission of Pakistan for different expenses 10) Rs 100 million for the purchase of kerosene oil by Head Quarters Frontier Corps KP (North) to be used in different locations

posts (8000 feet and above) 11) Rs.8.093 million for the Privatization Division for employee related expenditure 12) Two TSGs amounting to Rs 1192.325 million and Rs 358.506 million for Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training for the Award of Scholarships to Afghan students ECC also granted approval for book value adjustment of overdue amount of loans amounting to Rs 30.807 billion to Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority over and above its allocated development and non-development budget. It also allowed, on the recommendation of the committee earlier constituted by

ECC, to convert two reluctant Chinese loans in to Government loans keeping in view the subsuming of ERRA into NDMA and ERRA being non-profit/ non revenue generating entity. ECC also approved the "handing over of Pakistan Machine Tool Factory to Strategic Plans Division. For the purpose of operationalization of PMTF, Rs 500 million shall be provided to SPD as a loan. The Federal Government shall pay all the liabilities accrued till the transfer of management control of PMTF to SPD, after partial settlement of liabilities of Rs 1.78 billion ECC also approved the "Risk Sharing Facility for

SBP Refinance Scheme to support employment and prevent layoff of workers. The scheme supports provision of credit at concessional rate to businesses that commit not to lay off workers till September 2020 (earlier the cutoff date was 30th June 2020), the loss coverage for SME sector has been increased to 60% from the existing 40% to promote greater take up at the smaller level of business. Under the new changes the borrowers having turnover up to Rs 800 million can avail benefit of the scheme; earlier, for the eligibility of the scheme, the turnover limit was up to Rs 2 billion).

Israel's West Bank annexation plan condemned

UNITED NATIONS: Nearly 50 UN human rights experts have condemned Israel's plan to annex parts of the occupied West Bank, calling it a "vision of a 21st Century apartheid". Such a move would violate international law and leave what would amount to "a Palestinian Bantustan", they warned in a joint statement. The forty-seven of the independent Special Procedures mandates appointed by the Geneva-based Human Rights Council, who signed the statement, said such move by Israel "must be meaningfully opposed by the international community". "The annexation of occupied territory is a serious violation of the Charter of the United Nations and the Geneva Conventions".



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi and others taking part in a meeting to discuss public diplomacy initiatives. - DNA

Academicians urge govts to come up with policy

ISLAMABAD: The infrastructural and governance level issues needs to be addressed by the governments to streamline the e-learning after Covid19 scenario in addition to efforts that the learning institutions are putting to be adaptive to new challenges. The top academicians from different national learning institutions and abroad highlighted this while sharing their views with the participants during online dialogue 'COVID-19 and the challenges to Higher Education in Distance Learning' organized by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) in collaboration with Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), here on Tuesday. Dr Alastair Creelman, E-Learning Specialist, Linnaeus University Sweden, on the occasion said that we need to understand that there is a long way to go to overcome the challenges including using and devel-

oping the required tools effectively. He said that the students and the teachers need necessary skills for effective e-learning whereas the issues such as home environment and connectivity also need to be assessed. The production of teaching and learning guides could play critical role in improving the quality of e-learning, he added. Dr Zia Ullayyqum, Vice Chancellor, AIOU, was of view that the focus on finding the ways to respond after Covid19 challenges could lead as to right strategies. He said that we have enrollment from all parts of Pakistan including remote areas with low and even no connectivity, and respond the needs of students accordingly. He said that the quality assurance is another critical aspect that needs our attention and be responded accordingly. - APP

NAB meeting reviews COVID 19 strategy

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Justice Javed Iqbal Chairman NAB chaired a meeting at NAB Headquarters. The meeting was attended by Deputy Chairman NAB, Prosecutor General Accountability, Director General, Operations, DG NAB Headquarters, DG Human Resource Development, DG Training and Research, DG Awareness and Prevention and other senior officers of NAB while Director Generals of all Regional Bureaus attended the meeting via video link.

The participants of the meeting maintained six feet social distance among themselves.

The meeting reviewed already devised comprehensive strategy regarding COVID-19.

The meeting was told that the entry of visitors had already been banned at NAB Headquarters and all Regional offices on the direction of Chairman NAB.

The meeting decided to ensure the attendance of NAB prosecutors in



different NAB cases in Honorable Accountability Courts, Honorable High Courts and Honorable Supreme Court of Pakistan during lock down in various cities besides adopting strict precautionary measures of social distancing, frequent hand washing, use of sanitizer, gloves and masks, so that no case of NAB could be dismissed due to non prosecution or non appearance of

NAB prosecutors. The meeting decided to observe working hours of NAB offices from 9am to 3pm.

The relevant DGs will reduce their staff by fifty percent in their respective offices and staff of over fifty years of age enduring different diseases will only be required in office in only urgent basis. Women staff members were allowed to work from their homes till further orders.

Special checking of staff and others will be ensured at entry gate through thermal guns and attendance of officers/officials will be reduced by fifty percent on rotation basis. The meeting decided to close official transport of NAB besides exempting the staff from biometric attendance till further orders.

The meeting decided to ensure strict implementation of comprehensive strategy regarding COVID-19 policy besides frequent hand washing, use of sanitizer, gloves and masks.

In lockdown areas, relevant DGs and concerned Directors will remain present at their respective stations.

Beijing reports 31 new local COVID-19 cases

Chinese capital cancels flights, shuts schools over new virus outbreak

BEIJING: Beijing is expanding its strict closed-off management to all residential communities, as the city raised its COVID-19 emergency response level to 2 from 3 after detection of locally transmitted 31 new coronavirus cases. The municipal health commission said on Wednesday that the city reported 31 new COVID-19 cases.

They're all cases of local transmission. The new cases were detected in five of Beijing's districts: 19 in Fengtai, five in Daxing, three each in Dongcheng and Haidian, and one in Xicheng. The commission also found three suspected cases and six asymptomatic cases over the same period.

The capital previously required strict lockdown measures on residential communities around areas where infections were found. Now, the measure has been expanded to all the city's residential communities, said officials at a meeting held by the standing committee of the Beijing Municipal government.

Key areas and people should receive nucleic acid tests, and prevention levels in places like nursing houses and schools should be elevated.

Beijing raised its COVID-19 emergency response level to 2 from 3 after the number of local infections soared over 100 in the capital in a few days. - APP

Corona Relief Tiger Force member held

DNA

ATTOCK: The Pinigheab Police on Tuesday arrested a member of the Prime Minister's Corona Relief Tiger Force for minting money from shopkeepers for their violation of Covid-19 standard operating procedures (SOPs).

Police sources said that the man identified as Mohammad Sadeeq - a resident of Meera Shareef.

Police said that the said member visited the main bazaar and harassed the shopkeepers for their alleged violation of Covid-19 standard operating procedures and demand money for not reporting the case.

Later shopkeepers overpowered and trashed him and handed over to Police for further legal action.

"Peace process in Afghanistan should not be seen as a zero sum game"

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Policy Research Institute organized a special webinar on "Afghan Peace Process: The Way Forward" here in the capital today. Featured speakers included Ambassador (R) Riaz Mohammad Khan, Ambassador (R) Ashraf Jehangir Qazi and Ambassador (R) Rustam Shah Mohmand. It was unanimously agreed that the US-Taliban peace deal in February this year, and the more recent President Ashraf Ghani giving Abdullah Abdullah the leading role in seeking peace with the Taliban and the ability to name half the

cabinet, are historic achievements. Both offer hope for the much more challenging stage of the peace process in Afghanistan, the intra-Afghan dialogue between the Kabul government, various political factions and the Taliban. It was discussed that while the US may have arm-twisted both to sign the powersharing deal in order to make the environment conducive for dialogue with the Taliban, it also addresses President Ghani's reservation of being pushed out of the loop on the Doha Agreement, putting him back into the heart of affairs, along with Abdullah Abdullah, who is not only the government's chief negotiator but also getting a hefty

share in the cabinet. All the speakers agreed that the Taliban's capacity to control violence is questionable and so before the withdrawal, the US along with other regional leaders need to define the minimum standard of what will constitute the new governance framework of the country. It was also opined that complete withdrawal of the US is not on the table. The US will likely have presence in Afghanistan to keep a close eye on China, and perhaps even support Indian interests in the region, which might keep them in confrontation with the Taliban. The speakers also discussed that it will be interesting to see how various powers engage

with Afghanistan after the withdrawal of troops based on local interests or in the context of geopolitical interests towards the United States which has the ability to offer long-term commitments.

Ambassador Riaz Muhammad Khandiscussed how this power sharing arrangement between two election opponents lucidly defines the role of both: President Ghani, who enjoys being a technocrat, will have undivided control over the office of the executive without having to deal with another "Prime Minister" and his powerplay, whereas Abdullah Abdullah, having a reputation for building con-

sensus amongst different political groups, is saddled with leading the High Council for National Reconciliation (HCNR). Responsibilities are split based on the strengths of both politicians which is a good omen. According to Ambassador Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, the existential challenge of global warming, Covid-19 and its succeeding pandemics are likely to occur with shorter and shorter intervals and are likely to fatally distract and disable Afghanistan. He called for a comprehensive "green new deal" which would transform national policies, including foreign policies. This is because of the nature of the overt and covert corpo-

rate/military dominance over governance countries like Afghanistan; and the corporate capitalist economic model that prioritises the interests of the rich over poor. Ambassador Qazi held that similar to Pakistan, in Kabul there is ruthless and unending high-level corruption on daily display - a classic instance of elite governance through class warfare. Ambassador (R) Rustam Shah Mohmand was of the view that the role of regional powers has been instrumental in the once considered elusive peace process in Afghanistan. The joint statement of representatives of Pakistan, China, Iran and Russia on 18 May

2020, shows the intent for an Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process.

In his welcome and concluding remarks, Acting President IPRI, Brig (R) Raashid Wali Janjua, highlighted that there is consensus on the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan which is contingent on the outcome of the intra-Afghan dialogue. All regional stakeholders need to be on board for withdrawal in an orderly fashion, one of the most important challenges is chalking out a powersharing deal with the Taliban and the acceptability of that deal with all factions. The Afghan peace process needs to be inclusive and participatory with full support of the regional countries.