



# Islamabad POST

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**Indonesian Embassy, PBC discuss COVID-19 impacts on video link**

**ICCI urges Govt. to resolve wheat supply issue**

**Indian UNSC election surprising: FO**



## Briefs

**PIA repatriates 100,000 Pakistanis**

KARACHI: Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has operated some 716 flights, from April 4 to June 16, carrying back home, a little over 100,000 Pakistanis stranded abroad due to COVID-19 induced pandemic, said the spokesman of the national flag carrier. It was claimed that during the exercise first touch downs to a number of new destinations, operating directly to USA mainland, Australia, Africa, Far East and Central Asian Republics was also achieved. Since the suspension of flight operation in March this year, hundreds of Pakistanis had been stuck abroad creating a serious humanitarian crisis, particularly in the wake of global economic shutdown. - APP

**Justice Isa's wife reveals property details to SC**

ISLAMABAD: Serena Isa, the wife of Justice Qazi Faez Isa, revealed on Thursday the details of her London properties to the Supreme Court of Pakistan while recording her statement on a video link. Justice Faez's wife, during her statement before the honourable Supreme Court said that she bought her first property in London in 2004 and her passport was accepted for the purchase of property in United Kingdom. According to the judge, his wife and children, have on their names three properties in the W2, E10 and E11 areas of London. "I faced many difficulties to get the record of these three properties in my name," she told the court. The properties were purchased between 2003 to 2013 and banks don't keep records of more than 10 years. She revealed that she bought one property for £23,600, another for £270,000, which is under her and her daughter's name, and the third one for £245,000. Her son lives in one of the properties. The money for the purchase was sent from her foreign currency bank account to London. The money was transferred to an account which is only in my name, she added. "I have even written two letters to the FBR." She told the court that her agricultural land, which she inherited from her father and does not belong to the husband, is in district Jaccobabad.

## Poverty caused by virus higher in Sindh: PM

The premier said he came across a large number of people while distributing PM Relief Fund in Larkana

DNA ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Wednesday said the unemployment and poverty caused by the coronavirus pandemic was disproportionately higher in Sindh than any other province according to "applications received by my PM Relief Fund". Some "32% of all applicants are from Sindh whereas [population] of Sindh comprises around 22% of Pak's [population]." PM Imran, who is on a two-day tour to

Sindh, wrote on Twitter following his visit to Larkana earlier today.

The premier said he came across a large number of people while distributing PM Relief Fund in Larkana and most of them were chaabri-walas [hawkers], "whom police had stopped from working". Consequently, he added, he had advised Sindh Governor Imran Ismail to take up the matter with the provincial chief minister, Murad Ali Shah, "as these poor people do not violate social distancing & their families survival

depends on their daily income".

Earlier in the day, PM Imran Khan had said he regretted the elements politicking over the coronavirus pandemic and that the federal government "has not done any kind of discrimination with any province". Reiterating his stance that a strict lockdown is not implementable in the country owing to the associated economic fallout, the prime minister had said he was worried about the labour class, particularly the daily wagers.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan chairs a meeting regarding education system. - DNA

**Pakistan condemns Houthi attack on KSA**

DNA ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Thursday strongly condemned the latest attempt by Houthi Militia to target civilians in Khamis Mushait, Saudi Arabia. It is commendable that the bomb-laden UAV was successfully intercepted and destroyed. Pakistan reaffirmed its full support and solidarity with the brotherly Kingdom of Saudi Arabia against any threats to its security and territorial integrity.

## Indian envoy summoned over LoC violations

Condemning the targeting of innocent civilians by the Indian occupation forces, the DG (SA & SAARC) underscored that such senseless acts, in clear violation of the 2003 Ceasefire Understanding

DNA ISLAMABAD: Indian Charge d'Affaires Gaurav Ahluwalia was summoned on Thursday by Director General (South Asia & SAARC) Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri, to register Pakistan's strong protest over the ceasefire violations by the Indian occupation forces along the Line of Control (LoC) on 17 June 2020, resulting in shahadats of four innocent civilians and serious injuries to one. Due to indiscriminate and unprovoked firing by the Indian occupation forces in

Bagsar and Nikial Sectors of the LoC; 27 year old Ra-zeem s/o Saleem; 25 year old Tehzeeb s/o Saleem; 13 year old Ali Maroof s/o Muhammad Maroof, residents of Ratta Jabbar village in Nikial Sector, and 60 year old Rasheeda Bibi w/o Muhammad Hussain, resident of Lewana Khaiteer village in Bagsar Sector, embraced shahadat. Also, 61 year old Muhammad Hussain s/o Fateh Ali, resident of Lewana Khaiteer village sustained serious injuries. The Indian occupation forces along the LoC and the Working Boundary (WB) have been continuously

targeting civilian populated areas with artillery fire, heavy-caliber mortars and automatic weapons. This year, India has committed 1410 ceasefire violations to date, resulting in 12 shahadats and serious injuries to 102 innocent civilians. Condemning the targeting of innocent civilians by the Indian occupation forces, the DG (SA & SAARC) underscored that such senseless acts, in clear violation of the 2003 Ceasefire Understanding and complete disregard for international human rights law and international norms, further vitiate the already tense atmosphere.

## KASHMIR ISSUE FM Qureshi briefs Russian counterpart

ANSAR BHATTI

ISLAMABAD Foreign Minister Mahkdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi during a telephonic conversation with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, briefed him about latest situation in the occupied Kashmir. Matters of mutual interest, including the Covid-19 pandemic, cooperation at the multilateral fora, prospects of enhanced bilateral cooperation, and regional issues were discussed. Foreign Minister Qureshi underlined that Pakistan considered



Russia an important partner and desired to forge a long-term and multi-dimensional partnership with Russia. Foreign Minister Qureshi offered condolences on the loss of precious lives in Russia due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The two Foreign Ministers exchanged views about the socio-econom-

ic ramifications about the pandemic. Foreign Minister Lavrov expressed solidarity with Pakistan in its efforts to combat the outbreak. The Foreign Minister apprised his Russian counterpart of Prime Minister Imran Khan's call for "Global Initiative on Debt Relief" for developing countries.

**PM Imran calls for uniform syllabus**

DNA ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan has directed to expedite efforts to formulate a uniform syllabus and its implementation as ending educational apartheid in the country is the top priority of his government. He gave these directions while chairing a meeting in Islamabad Thursday to review progress on reforms in the education system and taking forward government's agenda in this regard. The Prime Minister also ordered to augment efforts to implement the plan of action as decided with the seminars to mainstream madrassahs, especially imparting modern education to their students and making them skillful. In view of Coronavirus pandemic, Imran Khan advised to evolve a joint future strategy in consultation with the provincial education ministers regarding education and teaching process.

## Corona pandemic has not hampered CPEC: Bajwa

TAXILA: Chairman China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Authority and SAPM on Information and Broadcasting Lt Gen (ret'd) Asim Saleem Bajwa said despite the coronavirus pandemic, the progress of the multi-billion dollar project has not been hampered. Addressing a ceremony in Taxila today, SAPM Bajwa said the signing of agreements between the two countries over various new projects will bring even more investment to Pakistan. "CPEC is a reflection of the brotherly relations between Pakistan and China," Lt Gen (ret'd) Bajwa said. He added under Phase-I of CPEC, eight energy projects have been completed and nine others were well on their way to completion. "Projects worth Rs12.5 billion have been completed under Phase-I of CPEC, while those costing around Rs14 billion are underway," he said. "In Phase-II the basic railway structure will be laid down which will increase the working of the railway system," the chairman said, adding that special attention will be paid to ways of enhancing the system. He added that CPEC has now become a reality. "Through this, we are going to reduce the burden of loans and we are going for business to business cooperation and are looking at direct foreign investment. We are looking at individual entrepreneurs and investments, who will partner with Pakistani companies," the SAPM added. - DNA

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## Indian UNSC election surprising: FO

India stands in flagrant violation of several resolutions of the Security Council that prescribed a UN-supervised plebiscite to enable the people of Jammu and Kashmir to exercise their fundamental right to self-determination

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan FO Office Spokesperson Aisha Farooqi on Thursday expressed reservations on election of India as member of UNSC for next two years. She said India stands in flagrant violation of several resolutions of the Security Council that prescribed a UN-supervised plebiscite to enable the people of Jammu and Kashmir to exercise their fundamental right to self-determination. India's gross and systematic violations of human rights in the Indian Occupied Jammu and

Kashmir (IOJ&K) have been extensively documented by international human rights and humanitarian organizations as well as the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in its successive reports. India has incarcerated 8 million Kashmiris, including top Kashmiri leadership, with 900,000 occupation troops. The people of IOJ&K have been suffering under inhuman lockdown and military siege for over 10 months, following India's illegal and unilateral actions of 5 August 2019. Indian actions aimed at illegally altering the demographic structure of IOJ&K are violation of multiple



UN Security Council resolutions and international law, in particular the 4th Geneva Convention. The imposition of the discriminatory Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA); initiation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) process;

and the targeted killings of Muslims in repeated pogroms in Mumbai (1993), Gujarat (2002) and New Delhi (2020) are various facets of this phenomenon. The Indian State's proclivity to violence is no secret, which is a direct consequence of its headlong militarization and unbridled hegemonic ambitions. India's so-called "5-S approach" in the UN Security Council is only a smoke-screen to mask the arrogant, belligerent and confrontationalist side of India. Perhaps India would do well to consider another "S" i.e. Satya or truth: The truth of Indian oppression, aggression and occupation, which cannot be covered up

by false espousals. She added, Pakistan will be working with rest of the members of the Security Council in advancing the objectives of international peace and security in South Asia and beyond. She said the UN Charter has entrusted the Security Council with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The Charter stipulates that in discharging this responsibility, on behalf of the member states, the Council shall act in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations. This is the touchstone for the Council's credibility and legitimacy.

## Petrol crisis declared artificial

ISLAMABAD: The petrol crisis report has been submitted to Prime Minister Imran Khan who ordered the authorities to take action against the involved companies and responsible persons. The report has declared the crisis artificial and also determined the elements behind the shortage. The Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) has held the Petroleum Division responsible for the crisis. The report stated that nine oil marketing companies deliberately created the crisis whereas DG Oil Dr Shafi-ur-Rehman Afridi and Petroleum Division officers failed to perform their duties. - DNA

## Taftan border opened for trade

DNA

ISLAMABAD: On the intervention of the Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaiser and the Special Committee on Agricultural Products, Ministry of Interior has issued a Notification regarding de-sealing of Taftan Border for trade purposes Thursday. The Interior Ministry modifying its earlier orders of 27th March and 13th April, 2020 regarding sealing of western border has allowed opening of Taftan Border throughout the week for trade purpose subject to the observance of guidelines and SoPs. The decision has been conveyed to the Director General Federal Investigation Agency and Inspector General, Frontier Corps Balochistan for its immediate implementation.

## Cynthia challenges court order

DNA

ISLAMABAD: American blogger Cynthia Dawn Ritchie approached the Islamabad High Court on Thursday and challenged the ruling of a district and sessions judge instructing the FIA to file a case against her for defaming former PM Benazir Bhutto. She has named the Justice of Peace, FIA and Pakistan Telecommunication Authority as respondents in the case. The petition says that the order has been passed "illegally and unlawfully". The "real controversy was not looked into" and the court "straight away passed an order of registration of an FIR". Matters pertaining to the PECA are to be "tried by a special court designated by the high court, hence an



ordinary court has no jurisdiction to entertain any application regarding a special law," the petition said. "Under the FIA laws, registration of FIR is not mandatory, its always subject to the result of an inquiry and the FIA has been vested with the power to refuse to register an FIR if during the inquiry the information is found to be false," it added. On June 15, an additional district and sessions judge directed the FIA to file a case against the blogger for passing defamatory remarks about Benazir Bhutto on social media.

**Briefs**

**Pakistani scholar wins Facebook award**

**DNA**  
 ISLAMABAD: Facebook announced the winners of the Ethics in AI Research Initiative for the Asia Pacific, an initiative to help support thoughtful and groundbreaking academic research in the field of artificial intelligence (AI) ethics. Among the winners from nine different countries is Junaid Qadir, Professor at the Information Technology University (ITU) of the Punjab, along with co-investigator Amana Raquib, Assistant Professor at the Institute of Business Administration (IBA), Karachi. To support AI ethics research in the Asia Pacific, Facebook partnered with the Centre for Civil Society and Governance of The University of Hong Kong and the Privacy Commissioner for Personal Data, Hong Kong (PCPD); esteemed co-chair of the Permanent Working Group on Ethics and Data Protection in AI of the Global Privacy Assembly) to launch a request for proposals (RFP) in December 2019. The RFP was open to academic institutions, think tanks, and research organizations registered and operational across Asia Pacific.

**20,000 people served**

ISLAMABAD: 'Panahgahs'-shelter homes- have become a beacon of hope for the daily wage earners, whose number witness a steady increase in twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad with reopening of multiple sectors in the country to keep the economy on track amid the coronavirus pandemic. "There is a steady increase in number of daily wage earners, visiting 'Panahgahs' of the twin cities for food and overnight stay. During the last week, more than 20,000 people were served lunch and dinner at six facilities," Prime Minister's Focal Person on Panahgahs Naseem ur Rehman told the media during his visit to the 'Sabzi Mandi Shelter Home'. He said major 'Panahgahs', located at 'Sabzi Mandi' and Sector G-9, had been serving more than 1,500 people daily by providing lunch to over 700 and dinner to 800 people. Besides, more than 200 homeless people were staying daily at those two major points, he added. Naseem ur Rehman said other facilities that were set up in various areas of the twin cities including Tramari, Barakaho, Mandi Mor, Fawara Chowk and Tarnol had also been fully serving to the downtrodden segments of society under the vision of Prime Minister Imran Khan. - APP

**86 billion children to go to child labor**

PESHAWAR: The International Labor Organization (ILO) has feared that as many as 86 billion children will go to child labor following COVID-19 lockdown across the globe with 2 percent from South Asia. This was informed during a consultative meeting held here by "Da Hawwa Lur", leading Child Rights Movement here at KP Secretariat on the impacts of COVID-19 on Child Labor in connection with World Day Against Child Labor. It was informed that the current lockdown situation made the children more vulnerable. They are not only losing education opportunities but are more likely to suffer from a social evil like child labor as well, stated CEO of "Da Hawwa Lur" Khurshid Bano. - APP

**ICCI urges Govt. to resolve wheat supply issue**

The ICCI President said that wheat in Islamabad is supplied from Central Punjab and reaches the federal capital by passing through six districts but on the way Punjab Food Department officials stop the trucks and confiscate the wheat

**FAIAZ CHAUDHRY**

ISLAMABAD: Muhammad Ahmed Waheed, President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) has called upon the government to resolve the wheat supply issue of the flour mills of Islamabad region as any delay in this matter would give rise to another flour crisis in the region. He said that a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Imran Khan had decided to lift the ban on inter-district and inter-provincial movement of wheat while the private sector was allowed to import wheat,

however, the orders of the Prime Minister have not been implemented as yet. He said that the official target for procurement of wheat in Punjab was 4.6 million tonnes but so far 400,000 tonnes of wheat has been procured as the government rate for procurement of wheat is Rs.1400 per 40 Kg while the private rate is procuring wheat @ Rs.1950 per 40 Kg, which is why the farmers prefer to sell wheat to the private sector. He said that like every year, flour mills procure wheat from middlemen



while the government quota is only 100 tonnes which is not enough. Muhammad Ahmed Waheed said that the Prime Minister had lifted the ban

on inter-district and inter-provincial movement of wheat but the employees and officials of the Punjab Food Department stop the wheat trucks meant for private sector at border areas of districts and confiscate wheat for by making payment @ Rs.1400 per 40 Kg. If this situation continues, the price of flour will go up while people will face flour shortage and if that happens, the Punjab Food Department will be responsible. The ICCI President said that wheat in Islamabad is supplied from Central Punjab and reaches the federal

capital by passing through six districts but on the way Punjab Food Department officials stop the trucks and confiscate the wheat. He appealed to Prime Minister Imran Khan and Punjab Food Minister to intervene and issue necessary orders to ensure uninterrupted supply of wheat to the flour mills of Islamabad. He also appealed to the Chief Commissioner Islamabad Amir Ali Ahmed and Deputy Commissioner Hamza Shafiq to help in addressing the wheat supply issue of flour mills of Islamabad and not to leave them at the mercy of Punjab.

**Lok Virsa plans to start 'Cuisine Museum'**

ISLAMABAD: National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage (Lok Virsa) has planned to initiate a "Cuisine Museum" to serve famous traditional food of all cities to help promote and preserve the centuries old mouthwatering dishes of Pakistan. Executive Director Talha Ali Khan Kushvaha said Pakistan is located at an ideal strategic position which represents different cultures and languages that shaped its cuisine, lifestyle and culture. He said they are working to establish Cultural Food Museum which would be solely devoted to particular food items having cultural significance. He said that the food lovers would have some of the country's most famous foods. He said that the main purpose of this Cuisine Museum was to serve cultured and famous dishes of every city. He said that beside cultural food there would also be continental, chinese and italian food. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Justice (Retd) Javed Iqbal, Chairman, National Accountability Bureau presenting NAB Annual Report 2019 to the President Dr. Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. - DNA

**AIOU declares Post Graduate exam policy**

**SAIFULLAH ANSAR**

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) announced its exam policy for Autumn 2019 semester, in respect of Post-Graduate programs, that includes B.Ed (New), BS, MA, MSc and M.Com programs. According to the policy, that was formulated keeping in view the current crisis, in wake of COVID-19, the exam will take place in shape of 'End Term Assessment'. Question for the End Term Assessment will be placed on the University's website within next few days. The students will solve questions through their own hand-writing from their home.

The students' own hand-writing will be verified by matching it with their previous papers. If copying or plagiarism was found in the contents, the students will liable to face an Unfair means case (UMC). The students will be required to send solved copy of the questions in an envelope to their respective regional office, through registered post or courier service. Answer copy, if received after the expiry date will not be accepted. By hand delivery is also not allowed. For further information to this regard, the students could approach their concerned regional office. Earlier, the AIOU has declared its SSC/HSSC programs' result on the basis of the students' continuous assessment, in view of the current spread of COVID-19 in the whole country. The decision was aimed at saving the academic session of the students in the prevailing crisis. It also as per the University's annual academic calendar, according to which semester begins from this month. Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Zia Ul Qayyum hoped that the students who have been promoted will take greater interest in their academic pursuits, while staying at the home and improving their intellectual skills. The University will continue to try its best to serve students' interest through Online learning system and other modes of distant education, he added.

**PTI Govt believes in democracy: Fawad**

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Science and Technology Fawad Chaudhary on Thursday said different opinions, proposals and suggestions would be welcomed over national issues from all national and provincial assemblies' members as PTI was leading a democratic government in Pakistan. Talking to a private news channel he stated that our democratic government did never oppress other provinces suggestions of mitigating the worst effects of COVID-19. PPP should shun all grudges and focus on the development of masses in Sindh, COVID-19 had created multiple problems for the poor segment of the province," he added. - APP

**ICCI urges govt to provide relief to small traders**

**DNA**

ISLAMABAD: Tahir Abbasi, Senior Vice President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry has said that the lockdowns due to Covid-19 have badly affected small traders due to which they are facing great difficulties and urged that the government should announce a special relief package to alleviate the plight of small traders. He said that the majority of business people in Pakistan belong to small traders but due to lockdown many small traders have suffered huge losses. He emphasized that the government should provide them immediate support, otherwise, many of them would lose their business forever, leading to increased unemployment and poverty. Tahir Abbasi said that due to the closure of businesses, small traders in Islamabad are no longer in a position to pay rent of shops and stressed that the government should negotiate with shop owners to provide 6-month relief in rent payment to small traders. He said the government should also consider providing subsidies to small traders in payment of rents. He said that SBP has launched a Rozgar scheme for businesses so that they can take loans from banks to save their employees from becoming unemployed. However, he said that banks were demanding collateral for loans while small traders are not in a position to arrange collateral for loans. Therefore, he demanded that the government should provide loans on stamp paper to small traders so that they could protect their employees from unemployment. Saif-ur-Rehman Khan, Vice President ICCI said that hotels and restaurants in Islamabad have been closed for a long time but they have to pay utility bills besides incurring other expenditures. He stressed that the government should defer collection of utility bills from hotels and restaurants till the reopening of their businesses. He further said that hotels and restaurants in Islamabad should be reopened with SOPs as it is becoming more and more difficult for business class of this sector to pay their employees and meet other day to day expenses without restoration of businesses.

**Webinar on water resources**

**DNA**

ISLAMABAD: The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in partnership with Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources (PCRWR) and National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) hosted a webinar on "Policy Dialogue Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) a Tool for Prevention and Smart Monitoring of COVID-19". More than 50 national and international participants including experts, members from academia and students attended the event. It highlighted the challenges faced in implementing IWRM. The webinar also discussed the advantages of monitoring COVID-19 in countries like Pakistan as well as Asia Pacific Region through IWRM. Patricia McPhillips, UNESCO Representative to Pakistan, Prof. Dr. Shahbaz Khan, Director UNESCO Jakarta, Regional Science Bureau for Asia and the Pacific, Prof. Dr. Hamza Farooq Gabriel, Director RCWTTI / HoD (WRE&M), NICE, SCEE, NUST and Dr. Muhammad Ashraf, Chairman, Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources (PCRWR) spoke on the importance of IWRM.

**FPCCI to Organize Interactive Sessions**

**FAIAZ CHAUDHRY**

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) would hold a series of interactive sessions/seminars on the issues related to trade and industry and challenges being faced by the business community, this was disclosed by Shaikh Sultan Rehman, Vice President FPCCI. In his statement he said that the objective of the Seminars/Interactive Sessions is to highlight the problems being faced by stakeholders and to evolve the possible solutions. In the first phase, FPCCI will organize seminar on Food Security in Pakistan, Horticulture Sector in Pakistan: Challenges and Potentials, SMEs Sector in Pakistan: Challenges and Way Forward, CPEC and Pak China FTA (Second Phase), Impact of BREXIT on Trade and Economy of Pakistan and Promotion of Exports of Non-Traditional Items. The Seminars/Interactive Sessions will bring together stakeholders, leading

experts, research organizations, academia, policy makers and concerned government organization in order to provide a useful platform for discussion, interaction and exchanging of ideas. These sessions/seminars will be held virtually and the outcomes/ recommendations will be formulated and onward submitted to concerned Ministries for consideration. FPCCI considers that these events will contribute in expansion of economic activities in Pakistan and enhance the image of the private sector.

**Easypaisa Makes Ordering Food Convenient**



**DNA**

ISLAMABAD: Easypaisa, Pakistan's leading digital payments platform, has partnered with Eat Mubarak to expand the already diverse range of offerings available to its customers. Easypaisa users can now conveniently order food from their favourite restaurants through the Easypaisa Mobile App. The feature is aimed to provide ease of access and freedom to people while using Easypaisa as it continues to broaden the number of services which can be availed directly through the App. The Easypaisa App has become a one-stop

solution for an enormous array of financial transactions particularly during the ensuing lockdowns. Through this partnership, users will now be able to use their Easypaisa App to search for available restaurants nearby, order and track their food, and also make payments digitally thus getting contactless food deliveries from the comfort of their homes. Digital payments have become relatively more preferable and allowing users to have a one-stop food ordering experience through the Easypaisa App adds to their comfort as well as convenience. "Our primary focus has always been to provide our customers with innovative payments solutions that can introduce new levels of simplicity in their lives. This collaboration with Eat Mubarak is yet another step in our journey to transform the Easypaisa App into a comprehensive platform that can enable a digital lifestyle for everyone," said M. Mudassar Aqil, CEO Telenor Microfinance Bank / Easypaisa, while shedding light on the launch of this new feature.

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## China-India standoff

It is unfortunate that China and India are once again at loggerheads with each other in the disputed Himalayan border area. This recent spat has resulted in at least 20 deaths for India including soldiers and officers. Since no guns are allowed within two kilometres of the border area, soldiers from both sides are reported to have brawled with bamboo sticks and bats.

Fighting with sticks at that height may have sounded funny had it not been so dangerous and deadly, resulting in so many unnecessary deaths and renewed conflict and tension in the region. So far, both sides have insisted that no shots have been fired. Despite claims by India that China has also suffered casualties, Beijing has not confirmed any casualties on its side. Many Indian soldiers are understood to have died because they were left injured and unattended at sub-zero temperature without immediate medical aid. Though China and India have had long-running conflicts in their border areas and there have been sporadic skirmishes too, this is the deadliest clash between the two countries in nearly half a century.

Both India and China are blaming each other for trying to change the status quo unilaterally and also alleging that the other side attacked first. A positive aspect is that both sides have agreed to hold talks to defuse tensions in Galwan Valley which is located between China's Tibet region and India's Ladakh valley.

Be it direct hand-to-hand combat or any other fight in which, according to India media, soldiers were beaten to death, this is a stark reminder to India that persistent bullying will not work everywhere. Ever since the Hindu nationalist government of the BJP assumed power for the second term in India with a thumping majority in May last year, Prime Minister Modi and his goons have been trying to browbeat not only the non-Hindu population in India but have also been trying to assume a new aggressive posture with nearly all neighbours. Be it Bhutan, Burma, China, Nepal, Pakistan, or Sri Lanka, there has been a recurrent pattern of a new-found assertiveness in Indian behaviour that has repeatedly threatened peace in the region.

Kashmir is just one example of this Indian highhandedness with which the neighbouring countries are targeted both diplomatically and militarily. At the moment, we can only call for immediate cessation of hostilities not only with China but also on the line of control with Pakistan which repeatedly becomes a target of Indian violation, intermittent firing on civilian areas, and unprovoked shelling. China and India are not only the two most populous countries in the world, they also possess two of the biggest armies on the globe. Any more irresponsible gameplay from either side, especially from India, may result in a nightmarish scenario that must be avoided at all costs.

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## Tariq Aziz

TARIQ Aziz said farewell to the world on Wednesday at age 84, after a brief illness. Aziz was a multidimensional personality who began his career as an actor, broadcaster, commentator, and also dabbled with politics, both in his youth and then in his older years. In 1964, he had the unique distinction of becoming the first male broadcaster at the PTV.

Then he moved on to act in movies such as *Insaniyat* and *Haar Gaya Insaan* in the late 1960s. But perhaps his best known movie was *Salgirah* whose 'Le aai phir kahan par qismat hamien kahan se', became one of the most loved songs in the history of Pakistani cinema. But *Neelam Ghar* at the PTV was his forte; with his resounding voice and distinctive style of posing questions, he enamored millions of viewers across Pakistan during a time when entertainment choices were few and far between.

Those who grew up in the 80s will never forget the 'dekhti aankhon, suntay kaanon' greeting perfected by Aziz. *Neelam Ghar* was not only one of the most successful TV shows in the country but also became the longest-running spectacle in Pakistan. Starting in 1974, the show ran for over 40 years and had multiple reincarnations. With the advent of dozens of private channels, he could have moved on to do other programmes but *Neelam Ghar* remained his last love. It was not only the prizes that the contestants won, it was Tariq Aziz's style that many tried to emulate afterwards but failed.

Most of all, Tariq Aziz will be remembered for his individualistic style. He was a person who showed how much entertainment the simplest TV show could provide huge audiences across the country. Overall, he will be remembered not for his acting or politics but perhaps solely for his *Neelam Ghar* that became his ultimate identity. One can say he initiated the era when anchorpersons or TV show hosts were placed at the top of the hierarchy in the entertainment business. One also wonders how many amongst our dozens, or even hundreds of TV anchors today, can claim to have in their memory even a fraction of poetry that Tariq Aziz could recite at the drop of a hat, or the command of language that he had. With his death, an era has ended, and we are left with nostalgia of a time that seems much simpler. There is no doubt that Tariq Aziz – and in particular the phrases he almost immortalised – will be remembered for a very long time to come.

## Azerbaijan through the prism of BRI

Yunis Sharifli

*The Middle Corridor seems to dispose of an enormous potential to become the safest and shortest trade route between Europe and Asia, with Azerbaijan playing a key role in this initiative. Given the rapid development of the Azerbaijani-Chinese relations since 2015, the sharp drop in oil prices and the growing pressure on the Azerbaijani economy due to the pandemic, as well as the increasing strategic importance of railways, Azerbaijani-Chinese relations may receive a further impetus. Chinese investment in Azerbaijan would also be necessary for reviving the post-pandemic economy and more active participation of Azerbaijan in the BRI*

At a time when U.S. influence in the South Caucasus is declining and the European Union is not fully engaged in the region, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has emerged as a strategically important new player in the South Caucasus, which has the potential to enhance Azerbaijan's capacity as a regional transit hub. In particular, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), announced by the President of PRC Xi Jinping in 2013 in Nur-Sultan (formerly known as Astana), Kazakhstan, has aroused interest in Azerbaijan from its very beginning.

During the visit of the Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev to China in 2015, the two countries signed a memorandum of understanding on joint promotion of the Silk Road Economic Belt". Since regaining its independence, Azerbaijan has been seeking to invest in infrastructure projects to take advantage of its favorable geographical position. The availability and operation of the already built infrastructure has further increased the strategic importance of Azerbaijan for the PRC. The Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway (BTK) and the Baku International Sea Trade Port (BSTP) play a crucial role in the plans of both Azerbaijan and China.

On October 30, 2017, Azerbaijan and Georgia, along with Turkey, officially launched the 826-kilometer Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway. On July 24, 2019, it for the first time delivered cargo from Turkey to Georgia. The BTK has a capacity of 5 million tons of cargo per year and offers a viable alternative to other railway routes on the East-West corridor. In addition to the BTK, the "construction of the New Baku International Sea Trade Port Complex" began in the Alat settlement, 70 km south of Baku, according to a decree signed by the President of Azerbaijan on March 18, 2007. The first phase of the port has already been completed. At the initial stage, the port's loading capacity is expected to be up to 15 million tons. Upon completion of the second phase, the loading capacity will increase to 25 million tons. The BSTP is located at the intersection of the East-West and North-South corridors, as well as key highways and railways of Azerbaijan. The adoption of the law on the establishment of the Alat Free Economic Zone increases the importance of the port and attracts the attention of both regional and non-regional countries.

Azerbaijan is located within the Middle Corridor of the Silk Road Economic Belt. Covering 4,256 km of railways and 508 km of sea routes, this corridor stretches from the Chinese-Kazakh border to Azerbaijan (via the Caspian Sea), Georgia and Turkey. The location of both the BTK and the BSTP in the central corridor turns Azerbaijan into a key country in terms of realizing and reaching full potential of the BRI.

The Middle Corridor is shorter and more cost-effective than other alternatives. Goods shipped from China by sea take 36 days to reach Europe, while shipping along the Trans-Siberian route takes 20 days. The Middle Corridor, however, offers a timespan of 12 days for the Chinese goods to reach the same destination. In addition to being economically attractive, the Middle Corridor is also more politically viable for China, as the countries along this corridor are more secure, both geographically and due to stable relations with other countries. In addition, the corridor allows China to diversify its exports, reduce its dependence on Russia, a major player in the Northern Corridor, and safely ship its products to Europe without using the Southern Corridor through U.S.-sanctioned Iran.

From Azerbaijan's point of view, the Middle Corridor strengthens the country's position as a regional transit center and contributes to the further deepening of the Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey strategic triangle. Baku's decisive role in this corridor increases Azerbaijan's strategic importance not only for China, but also for European and regional countries. A greater role in the East-West corridor increases the country's attractiveness along the North-South corridor and encourages countries in the neighborhood, especially Iran and Russia, to deepen cooperation with Azerbaijan. Moreover, the Middle Corridor may help Azerbaijan to diversify the national economy and reduce

dependence on oil. The development of the Azerbaijani-Chinese relations may also attract more Chinese investment and increase the region's potential to become a transport hub by developing the business environment and making it an integral part of the country's international supply network. Politically, China's growing influence in the region could help balance Russia and increase Azerbaijan's maneuverability in the political arena and develop relations with international organizations in which China has a leading role (e.g.: Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank).

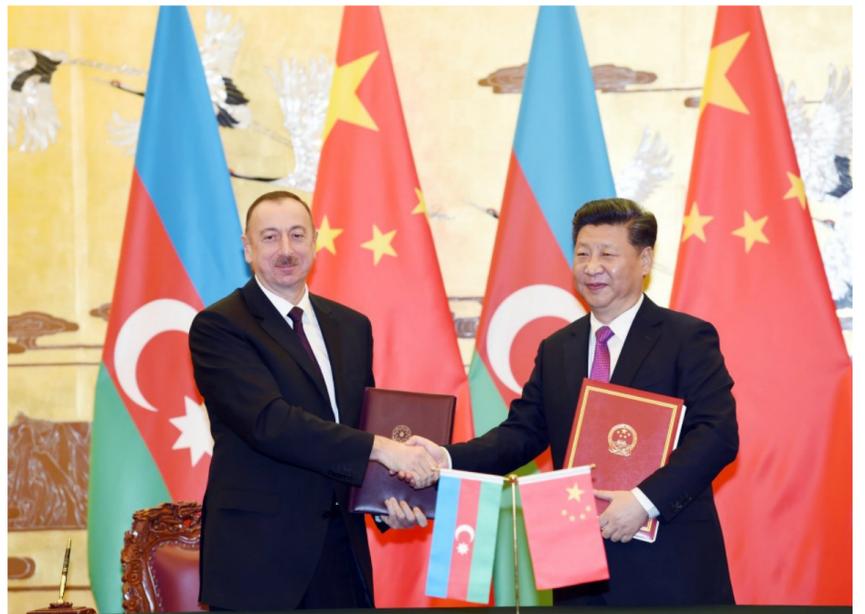
With the outbreak of the COVID-19 in China and its rapid spread to other regions, international trade has stagnated. During the pandemic, air and sea routes lost their functionality as a result of restrictive measures of many countries to prevent the spread of the virus. The closure of air and maritime routes due to the pandemic is having a serious impact on multiple industries. Experts predict that many European ports are going to be running only at 20-30% of their capacity in the coming months. At this time, elevated air shipping prices and longer transit times in both air and ocean freight means that the railways connecting Europe and China, remain the only reliable means of transportation for companies.

On April 19, a 940-meter freight train (the longest to have ever operated on the BTK) carrying 82 containers was sent from Turkey to Uzbekistan via Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan along the Middle Corridor. During the pandemic, a container transfer system was installed at the Canbaz station on the Turkish side of the Turkey-Georgia border to increase the capacity of the railway line to 3,500 tons due to the growing demand for freight on the BTK rail-

way. The increase of the BTK's freight capacity and the growing demand for freight along this route may further increase the strategic importance of Azerbaijan within the BRI framework. This situation can continue in the post-pandemic period and increase Azerbaijan's geopolitical and geostrategic value for China. This is also a promising perspective for Azerbaijan against the backdrop of the sharp drop in oil prices and the pandemic-related burden on the national economy.

The Middle Corridor seems to dispose of an enormous potential to become the safest and shortest trade route between Europe and Asia, with Azerbaijan playing a key role in this initiative. Given the rapid development of the Azerbaijani-Chinese relations since 2015, the sharp drop in oil prices and the growing pressure on the Azerbaijani economy due to the pandemic, as well as the increasing strategic importance of railways, Azerbaijani-Chinese relations may receive a further impetus. Chinese investment in Azerbaijan would also be necessary for reviving the post-pandemic economy and more active participation of Azerbaijan in the BRI. Moreover, the deepening of relations can contribute to the development of Azerbaijan as a regional transport hub, as well as China's diversification of export routes, reduction of transport costs and delivery of goods to Europe along the shortest route.

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## It will take more than Floyd to end racism

Bilkram Vohra

*In symbolic terms if not in endeavour Floyd has been an unwittingly greater force for change than Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela combined. Between technology and instant communication and the shared visual outrage from 8 minutes and 46 seconds of supreme arrogance, the combination was lethal. But there was this time around another major factor that kicked in and continues to kick in*

NO one is born racist or a bigot. We learn it and it is a lesson we blithely pass on to our children.

George Floyd would have probably lived and died unknown and unsung. He would hardly ever have imagined that he would possibly be the last straw that broke the camel's back so far as racism was concerned. That one could argue this anonymous average Joe was martyred at a time when the ripened boil was primed to burst and out has flowed the putrid toxic effluence of hatred. True. It was the timing. The built up rage at breaking point. The savagery and hubris of the assault.

It was a long time coming. Never will the gap be so wide again nor the coloured of the earth apologise for who they are.

At least one can hope it is the end and not just the timeless beginning of the end since the first 19 slaves were landed in chains to reach Point Comfort, Virginia, near Jamestown, in 1619. We have watched the modern day horror of racism through Thurgood Marshall's good fight, Rosa Park's courage on the bus, the Selma march, Martin Luther King's dream, Mississippi burning, Sammy Davis and Britt Ekland, the work of the NAACP from its formation in 1909, the shooting of Malcolm X in 1965, the Black Panthers and the clenched fist at the Olympics, the 1992 riots in LA, the Million Man march, the riots in Birmingham and Watts, the coming of Jesse Jackson, the White House and Obama, milestones that did not collectively change the equation to any profound extent. Apartheid in South Africa and the former Rhodesia, social ostracisation in Europe, cultural viciousness in the Indian subcontinent, tribal wars

in Africa, xenophobia in Europe, the yellow peril of China, the residual hang ups of colonial empires, all links in the same ghastly chain. I am a better man than you, Gunga Din.

In symbolic terms if not in endeavour Floyd has been an unwittingly greater force for change than Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela combined. Between technology and instant communication and the shared visual outrage from 8 minutes and 46 seconds of supreme arrogance, the combination was lethal. But there was this time around another major factor that kicked in and continues to kick in. The relatively privileged world of white people that has lazily and indolently paid lip service to racial equality and carried on their lives at a superior level suddenly stopped and said, wait a minute, is this who and what we are? No, no, no this has to change.

Not just your token liberals and bleeding hearts and the occasional anti-racist zealot but the man on the street, the average Joe who denied racism even as he espoused it by doing nothing to stop its proliferation is looking within himself. Many of us are like that, not just white people, but brown and yellow and cream and even black and whatever other pigment level you opt for. We have been indifferent and casual about the sting of racism. Even sport was not spared. From the time Hitler refused to shake hands with Jesse Owens in 1936 to Tommie Smith and John Carlos raising their arms on the podium at the Mexico Olympics in 1968 we have seen footballers ridiculed with banana peels, been privy to racial abuse and vilification from the stands and recently had West Indian cricketer Dar-

ren Sammy question the IPL's Sunrisers for using a racial epithet against him. That is why stand-up comic Hasan Minaj can so squarely indict half the world for its hypocrisy and its fake concern while practicing colour-oriented hostility to others and, ironically, their own people.

All too often the trick has been to con oneself into expressing racism and then saying it was all in good fun, just a joke, no intent, only locker room high jinks. That insidious cover wore thin and tore when the Derek Chauvin knee choked Floyd. The gloves are off for now, but as the sentiment of more things change, the more they stay the same. It will be up to every individual to search his and her own heart and ask: Am I a racist, even in a world when patronising is racism.

The answer might surprise us. That mirror on the wall may not any longer say the fairest of us all.

We are, as a people, good students when it comes to racial prejudice. No one is born racist or a bigot. We learn it and it is a lesson we blithely pass on to our children. So diligently that last week Sesame Street had to do a special on this subject ostensibly to balance things out.

The answer does not lie in being politically correct. That is just folderol and flawed as an attitude. The road ahead will not be easy. Maybe we need to bring down this evil from its foundation. Create laws that ban skin lightening cream, advertising that promotes the virtues of fairness, clear our minds of latent prejudice, stop shunning those who are different from us, hurting siblings who are darker, cutting out the token acceptance for a new era where racism is a foolish and laughable divider.

## Briefs

### Anti corruption efforts critical for Afghanistan

DNA

KABUL: A new United Nations report released on Thursday said that the sustained and effective efforts in fighting corruption in Afghanistan remain critical for the country's future. "Anti-corruption efforts and integrity reforms must be key priorities for Afghanistan's leadership, especially so given the country's pressing challenges and opportunities around peace and development," said Deborah Lyons, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan. "Addressing the COVID-19 crisis and building a peaceful, healthy and prosperous Afghanistan requires integrity and accountability - fundamental principles for the future of any nation." UNAMA's fourth annual anti-corruption report, titled "Afghanistan's Fight against Corruption: Crucial for Peace and Prosperity," reviews the progress Afghanistan has made in anti-corruption reform and provides analysis and recommendations to support Afghanistan's institutions in combatting corruption to "improve the lives of all citizens who must grapple each day with the issue."

### 'Murad leveling baseless allegations'

DNA

KARACHI: Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf (PTI) Vice President and parliamentary party leader in Sindh assembly Haleem Adil Sheikh said that the Sindh chief minister in his post-budget press conference has leveled baseless allegations to the Federation only because his own government is incompetent. In his video comments on the issues of Sindh, here Thursday, Haleem Adil said the chief minister has accused the federal government without giving any facts and figures. He said the chief minister in his press conference should have told what his party has done with Sindh during last 12 years. He said for last 7 years the keys of finance department are held by Murad Ali Shah, himself, and he is personally behind all corruption scandals and scams in Sindh. Haleem Adil said that the chief minister did not tell what are his achievements and what he wanted to do. He had mentioned about capital and human approaches. He said Prime Minister Imran Khan believes in humanity and his actions are based on pro-humanity approach. He has given assistance to one Crore sixty-one thousand people. He has given Rs60billion assistance to the poor masses of Sindh, while the PPP has given only poverty and deprivation to Sindh.

### CDA approves Rs 49 bln budget

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Capital Development Authority has approved the landmark development focused budget estimates with total outlay of 49 billion rupees with surplus of 10 billion rupees for the Financial year 2020-2021. As per approved budget estimates, expected receipts are 49 billion rupees while expected expenditure is 39 billion rupees. Out of 39 billion expenditure, 24.5 billion which is 63 percent will be spent on 89 development projects while 14.4 billion which is 37 percent will be spent on non development expenditure.

## Indonesian Embassy, PBC discuss COVID-19 impacts

Ambassador Iwan Amri noted with pleasure that Indonesia's trade relations with Pakistan have been on upward trajectory. The total trade value between Indonesia and Pakistan in 2019 reached USD 2.3 billion with surplus of USD 1.6 billion favoring Indonesia

A.M.BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Though, COVID 19 continues to play havoc with human lives and global economies, nevertheless, simultaneously the damage control efforts are also in full swing to minimize the devastating socio-economic impacts of the pandemic. To contain and fight off the financial downturn the friendly nations through consultations are identifying ways for mutual cooperation for the enhanced sustainable economic activities between them. With the same spirit, the Indonesian Embassy in Islamabad organized a virtual meeting with the Pakistan Business Council (PBC) which is headquartered in the Pakistani economic hub of Karachi. It represents country's leading Corporate and Business Groups and as an advocacy forum work to improve the general business environment of the country. Through its research projects, it also provides valuable input to the Government of Pakistan for bilateral agreements such as the Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) and the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between Pakistan and other countries. The Indonesian Ambassador Iwan S. Amri and the Indonesian Consul General in Karachi Totok Priyanto attended the virtual meeting. The Indonesian Embassy has always worked closely with PBC and this time the meeting was aimed at discussing and evaluating the bilateral economic and

trade situation arising out of the COVID 19 pandemic. Speaking on the occasion, Indonesian Ambassador Iwan Suyudhie Amri highlighted the current issues concerning the bilateral economic cooperation between the countries and stressed on the significance of fostering the sustainable bilateral trade relations. "Indonesia and Pakistan must work together for the sustainable trade relations between them," Ambassador Iwan Amri observed. The Envoy believed that the concerted communication and consultations with the PBC and other stakeholders in Pakistan will certainly build greater confidence and improve environment for the both countries to uplift business, economic and other aspects of the bilateral ties. "We would like to encourage and elevate bilateral trade and overall economic cooperation between the two countries that was sustainable, equitable and mutually beneficial corresponding to their respective supply & demand potential," remarked Ambassador Iwan Amri. Pakistan Business Council's CEO Ehsan Ali Malik, in his remarks, reciprocated Ambassador's views and highly commended the Indonesian Embassy in Islamabad and the Indonesian Consulate General in Karachi for their timely initiative and being persistent towards optimization of cooperation with Pakistan in various potential spheres. Ehsan Ali Malik said that with the realization of the China



Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) strategic project the economic outlook in Pakistan was more dynamic. He expressed his confidence that CPEC projects offered Indonesia a great opportunity to increase its economic cooperation and investment in Pakistan. Ambassador Iwan Amri noted with pleasure that In-

donesia's trade relations with Pakistan have been on upward trajectory.

The total trade value between Indonesia and Pakistan in 2019 reached USD 2.3 billion with surplus of USD 1.6 billion favoring Indonesia. While shedding some light on the research carried out by the Embassy, the Ambassador hoped that the PBC

could play its vital role towards making Pakistan the hub of Indonesia's palm oil business to Central Asia and the Middle East. The successful implementation of the Indonesia-Pakistan Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) in 2013 opened the door for the Indonesia's superior and competitive products in the Pakistani market such as palm oil

and its derivatives, viscos rayon materials, coal, polyester, paper, rubber, motor vehicle parts, tractor accessories, clove, broom, brush, vein chloride and others products. Following the establishment of concrete trade cooperation within the PTA framework, currently the two countries were moving towards the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) within the framework of the Trade in Goods Agreement (TIGA). On the occasion, PBC's CEO, Ehsan Ali Malik lauded the Indonesian Government's policies that created an investment friendly climate in the country and have been very successful in attracting foreign investors. "We would like to learn from Indonesia's success story in encouraging the relocation of multinationals and other large companies for instance from the US and Japan to Indonesia. Tourism sector, people to people contacts and removing non-tariff barriers for bilateral trade were among other issues that also came under discussion at the meeting. The successful two-hour long wide-ranging virtual meeting concluded with the Indonesian Embassy in Islamabad and the Pakistan Business Council agreeing to continue to work together by means of mutual consultations and sharing of the information about existing and emerging economic opportunities and potential business cooperation that can be focused and capitalized by Indonesia and Pakistan," concluded Ambassador Iwan Amri.



## \$100 mln of credit resources to be allocated for service sector

TASHKENT: The President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev chaired a videoconference on development of services and domestic tourism. The Head of the state dwelt on the epidemiological situation in the country and drew attention to the fact that recently the number of people infected with coronavirus has significantly increased, moreover, many cases are detected among the population. In particular, over the past two weeks 482 out of 551 cases were detected among the population in the city of Tashkent. It is regrettable that in 57 cases, the source of infection remains unknown. Such a disturbing situation is also observed in Tashkent, Navoi and Kashkadarya regions. "All of this shows that the situation with coronavirus is becoming increasingly complex. The moment has come for a significant increase in vigilance and responsibility in the fight against the pandemic. At this stage, we must strictly follow the quarantine rules, no matter how dif-

ficult it is. Each of us must carry out the work carefully, thoroughly considering the consequences, deeply aware of the responsibility not only to ourselves, but also to the family and children. Otherwise, all our efforts will come to naught. I am sure

that our generous and courageous people, having gained a lot of knowledge and experience during this time, will worthily overcome this

stage", said Shavkat Mirziyoyev. Uza - More than \$100 million of credit resources to be allocated for service sector projects - Google Chrome The Republican Special Commission has been instructed to

awareness-raising among the population through the media, as well as in labor collectives. The importance of regular testing among employees of all institutions providing services and whose activity involves direct contact with the population was emphasized. The service sector is one of the main sources of employment both in cities and in rural areas. Its share in the gross domestic product of Uzbekistan is 35 percent. According to the International Labour Organization, an increase in the service industry by 1 percent will reduce the number of poor by 1.5 percent. At the meeting, it was noted that the possibilities of the service sector in Uzbekistan are not fully used. It is indicated that local services such as repair of household appliances, dry cleaning, computer design, accounting, advertising, paid medical care are not sufficiently developed. This indicates the huge potential in the service sector. According to estimates, at least 160 thousand jobs can be created in this sector of the economy.



strengthen disinfection and sanitary control in enterprises and markets, in shopping malls and organizations that resume business, to expand

## Uzbek-Swiss bilateral agreement signed

DNA

TASHKENT: The Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan represented by the Ministry of Water Resources (MoWR) and the Government of Switzerland represented by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) signed the Agreement on the National Water Resources Management Project (NWRM) in Uzbekistan, Phase 2. The Agreement was signed by H.E. Mr. Olivier Chave, the Ambassador of the Swiss Confederation to Uzbekistan and Minister of Water Resources of the Republic of Uzbekistan Mr. Shavkat

Khamraev. "The new Phase of the National Water Resources Management project is designed as a logical extension of SDC's interventions within the framework of its Central Asian Regional Water Programme. The project will contribute to improving livelihoods of rural population through integrated water resources management in Uzbekistan", - says Sokhib Akramov, Program Manager, Swiss Embassy in Uzbekistan. The project will support the water sector reform by assisting the MoWR in creating overall strategic and regulatory Integrated Water Resources Management

(IWRM) framework for the country's water sector. It will include finalization of the Water Sector Development Concept 2020-2030 and drafting of the Water Management and Irrigation Sector Strategy based on the IWRM principles to achieve the water sector's sustainability. In parallel, the project will empower the Information Analytical Resource Center (IARC) under the MoWR as the driver for the implementation of the IWRM framework. In a medium-term perspective, capacities of farmers and water management organizations to use water resources efficiently and sustainably will be built at local level and

innovative irrigation technologies allowing transition to advanced intensive farming practices will be promoted across Uzbekistan. Accordingly, the project aims at strengthening water saving technology related knowledge base in the vocational colleges specialized on agriculture and water management as well as among farmers. The project will also focus on modern ICT-based knowledge dissemination tools, with special emphasis on promoting empowerment of women in water management sector. The Phase 2 of the project will be implemented from 2020 to 2024 with the overall budget of 4.6 million Swiss Francs.

### Command and Staff Conference of Pakistan Navy concluded

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Command and Staff Conference Of Pakistan Navy chaired by Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Zafar Mehmood Abbasi concluded at Naval Headquarters, Islamabad. Field Commands participated through video tele-conference. Matters related to geo strategic milieu, national security and operational preparedness were reviewed. The forum also reviewed the security situation in Indian Occupied Kashmir and reaffirmed the support for rightful struggle of Kashmiris. Detailed briefings on various ongoing and future developmental projects of Pakistan Navy were also given to Chief of Naval Staff. The Naval Chief expressed confidence over operational preparedness of Pakistan Navy.

## Mexico, Norway, Ireland India elected to UNSC

DNA

UNITED NATIONS (United States): The UN General Assembly has elected four new members of the Security Council for 2021 and 2022, with Canada losing out again and the battle for the African seat going to a second round. India, Mexico, Norway and Ireland were chosen as non-permanent members, while Djibouti and Kenya - both of which failed to receive the two-thirds vote majority required to win - will go to a second round of voting on Thursday. Canada was beaten once again for one of the Western seats, by Ireland and Norway, despite a long and star-studded campaign, a result likely to be a blow to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. In the Asia-Pacific region, India - which has been trying unsuccessfully to win a permanent seat in an expanded Security Council - ran unopposed to win 184 votes out of the 192 countries that participated in the election.

The result means that India will now have a seat at the same table as China, just days after the two nations disputed their Himalayan border, trading blame for a brawl that left at least 20 Indian soldiers dead. Mexico, which also ran unopposed, earned 187 votes. African nations have in the past picked their own candidate but were unable to put forward a single country this time. Kenya received 113 votes against Djibouti, which got 78. Kenya boasts of enjoying the support of the African Union, but Djibouti says it should have the seat due to Nairobi's past participation on the Security Council and the principle of rotation. French-speaking Djibouti and English-speaking Kenya are both highlighting their roles in seeking peace on the Horn of Africa, as well as their contributions to UN peacekeeping options. Kenya has pointed to its welcome to refugees from Somalia and South Sudan, as well as to its support to the two countries' fragile governments.

## Developing Asia to grow just 0.1% in 2020: ADB

"Economies in Asia and the Pacific will continue to feel the blow of the COVID-19 pandemic this year even as lockdowns are slowly eased

BEIJING: Developing Asia will barely grow in 2020 as containment measures to address the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic hamper economic activity and weaken external demand, according to a new set of forecasts from the Asian Development Bank (ADB). In a regular supplement to its annual flagship economic publication, the Asian Development Outlook (ADO) 2020 released in April, ADB forecasts growth of 0.1% for the region in 2020. This is down from the 2.2% forecast in April and would be the slowest growth for the region since 1961. Growth in 2021 is expected to rise to 6.2%, as forecast in April. Gross domestic product (GDP) levels in 2021 will remain below what had

been envisioned and below pre-crisis trends, according to a press release issued here on Thursday. Excluding the newly industrialized economies of Hong Kong, China; the Republic of Korea; Singapore; and Taipei, Developing Asia is forecast to grow 0.4% this year and 6.6% in 2021. "Economies in Asia and the Pacific will continue to feel the blow of the COVID-19 pandemic this year even as lockdowns are slowly eased and select economic activities restart in a 'new normal' scenario," said ADB Chief Economist Yasuyuki Sawada. "While we see a higher growth outlook for the region in 2021, this is mainly due to weak numbers this year, and this will not be a V-shaped recovery.

## Govt makes first formal contact with Akhtar Mengal

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal government has made first formal contact with chief of Balochistan National Party-Mengal after he announced withdrawal from coalition government. According to details, Chairman Senate Sadiq Sanjrani called on Sardar Akhtar Mengal to convey message of government's negotiating committee which is headed by De-

fence Minister Pervaiz Khattak. The Senate Chairman informed BNP-M chief that negotiating committee will soon hold a meeting with him. However, according to sources, Akhtar Mengal stood by his position and said that he has done what he had to do, now government has to make progress on its commitments. Sadiq Sanjrani, while assuring him of conveying his message to the com-

mittee, said that we can more effectively solve the problems of Balochistan if we work together. Talking to media after the meeting, Sardar Akhtar Mengal said: "Chairman Senate is not part of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and he visited to know the reasons behind my decision to leave the ruling alliance. I have told him to ask the government why it is not implementing points of agreements." Earlier on Wednesday,

Balochistan National Party-Mengal (BNP-M) President Sardar Akhtar Mengal announced his party's withdrawal from its alliance with the PTI-led federal government over its failure to implement accords with the party. Speaking during a session of the National Assembly, he said: "I am officially announcing that our party is ending its alliance with the PTI. We will stay in Parliament and will keep talking about issues."