



Islamabad POST

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Japanese ambassador greets Pakistanis on Eid-ul-Adha

Forced decoupling of economies will hurt both: China

COVID-19 can be knocked out with sacrifice: UK envoy

Briefs

Oxford University vaccine trials in Pakistan

DNA

LAHORE: The University of Health Sciences (UHS) Punjab has collaborated with the United Kingdom (UK)'s renowned Oxford University to conduct trials for the latter's coronavirus vaccine in Pakistan. According to UHS Vice-Chancellor Dr Javed Akram, registration of volunteers for the COVID-19 vaccine trial has already begun and about 20,000 people will be registered in total. He added that it could take two months for the vaccine to be tested in Pakistan, adding that permission would be sought from the Government of Pakistan upon confirmation of the vaccine being dispatched from the UK. With surging cases of coronavirus, efforts are being made across the world to develop an effective vaccine against the deadly virus, but so far scientists have not been able to achieve complete success in this regard. Various drugs are being tested on humans and animals by different countries all over the world.

Re-opening of tourism sector after Eid

FAIAZ CH

ISLAMABAD: The National Tourism Coordination Board (NTCB) will put forward a proposal for re-opening of the tourism sector to the National Command and Operation Center (NCOC) after Eid-ul-Azha. The decision to this effect was taken by the Board in a meeting in Islamabad, with Special Assistant on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Sayed Zulfikar Abbas Bukhari in the chair. All provincial and regional governments attended the consultative meeting to discuss appropriate time to re-open the tourism sector of the country. The meeting also deliberated on safety measures and preparedness for re-opening tourism services.

Pakistan reports 903 cases, 27 deaths

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has confirmed 27 deaths in a single day by novel coronavirus as the number of positive cases has surged to 278,304. The nationwide tally of fatalities has jumped to 5,951. According to the latest figures by the National Command and Operation Center (NCOC) 903 persons have been tested positive for COVID-19 in 24 hours.

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Qureshi says entire Pakistan with Kashmiris

FM Says PM Imran Khan in his speech at UN General Assembly awakened the world and gave a new life to Kashmir dispute

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi has said on 5th August, last year, Modi government launched demographic apartheid in illegally Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir and divided the region into three parts. Addressing a news conference in Islamabad on Friday, he said Indian government tried to divide the Kashmiri people through this illegal act. The Foreign Minister said that Kashmiri people are facing immense difficulties, pain and persecution under the continued mili-

tary siege for the last one year. He reiterated government's resolve that entire Pakistani nation stands by with their Kashmiri brethren in their just struggle for right to self-determination. Shah Mahmood Qureshi said the Prime Minister Imran Khan in his speech at UN General Assembly awakened the world and gave a new life to Kashmir dispute. He said Pakistan's political leadership is united on the Kashmir issue and Indian attempts to jeopardize this unanimity have been frustrated. The Minister said Corona lockdown realized the world about difficulties being faced by the Kashmiri people who were in lockdown even before virus outbreak.

Japanese ambassador greets Pakistanis on Eid

A.M.BHATTI

ISLAMABAD. MATSUDA Kuninori, the Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, has extended his heartfelt and sincere wishes to the people of Pakistan on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha. The Ambassador, in his Eid greetings message, has said "On behalf of the Government and the people of Japan I would like to convey our warm greetings and best wishes to all the people of Pakistan on the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha and the Hajj pilgrimage".



Pilgrims perform final haj rituals

DNA

MAKKAH: Small groups of pilgrims performed one of the final rites of the hajj on Friday as Muslims worldwide marked the start of the Eid Al-Adha holiday amid a global pandemic that has impacted nearly every aspect of this year's pilgrimage and celebrations. Around 1,000 pilgrims made their final journey to the Jamarat wall to stone the three pillars, before heading to Mak-

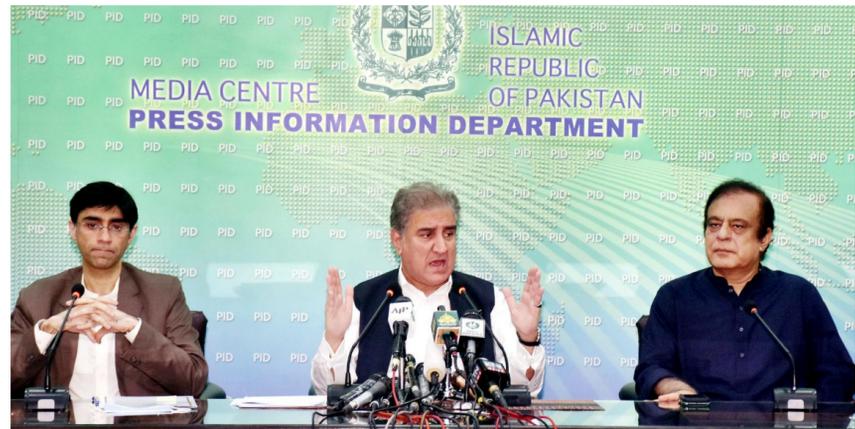
kah to perform prayers at the Grand Mosque and complete their hajj. The last days of the annual pilgrimage to Makkah in Saudi Arabia coincided with the four-day Eid al-Adha, or "Feast of Sacrifice," in which Muslims slaughter livestock and distribute the meat to the poor. Pilgrims arrived in Muzdalifah last night to rest after spending the day in Arafat where they had scaled Mount Arafat to pray and repent. This year's pilgrimage is the smallest in modern times after the number of participants was greatly restricted to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. During the last days of hajj, male pilgrims shave their heads and remove the terycloth white garments worn during the pilgrimage. Women cut off a small lock of hair in a sign of spiritual rebirth and renewal. Meanwhile 1.8 billion Muslims around the world celebrate Eid in the age of social distancing amid the pandemic that has so far infected more than 16 million people.

COVID-19 can be knocked out with sacrifice, says UK envoy

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: British High Commission in Islamabad Christian Turner on Friday while greeting the people of Pakistan on the eve of Eidul Azha, said the festival reminded the importance of sacrifice which could only lead to knocking out the COVID-19 pandemic. The high commissioner, in his video message in Urdu on his Twitter handle, said the people had already sacrificed a lot due to the pandemic including their sports and traveling activities.

"We have sacrificed sports like this empty ground shows. The upcoming Pakistan and England cricket series is very important. It shows that we will knock the disease for six," he commented while standing in an empty playground with no player around. He said though he was sad for not traveling whole of Pakistan, the same sacrifices were paying off with lower COVID-19 cases in Pakistan and called for extra caution on Eidul Azha. The high commissioner also announced that British Airways was resuming its flights from Pakistan what was the manifestation of Pak-UK friendship.



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi addressing a press conference along with Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Senator Shibli Faraz and SAPM on national security Dr Moeed W. Yousaf. - DNA

'No NRO to those involved in corruption'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf (PTI) government working under dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan would never grant National Reconciliation Order(NRO) to those elements found involved in money laundering and corruption cases. Expressing these views on a private news channel, Minister for Science and Technology, Chaudhry Fawad Hussain said no NRO like favor would be possible under Imran Khan's regime adding the people had elected his government after heavy mandate thus the nation wanted to witness accountability process against the corrupt elements without discrimination, he added. Commenting on slow pace of work of NAB, he said the leaders of Pakistan Peoples Party had made corruption cases against its rival party leaders representing Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, during their regimes. He said the most of the employees from lower to higher ranks of national accountability bureau were inducted by former PML-N governments. Chaudhry Fawad Hussain said that Chairman NAB was selected by Opposition parties and now, the leaders of PPP and PML-N, wanted to amend laws to avoid cases being tackled by the NAB. - APP

ACTION AGAINST SUGAR MAFIA

FIA constitutes inquiry team

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Following the directives of Prime Minister (PM) Imran Khan, Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) on Friday has formed an 11-member team to launch inquiry on the report submitted by the sugar commission. According to details, the team will investigate the matter of illegally exporting sugar to Afghanistan while it will also find ev-

idence regarding money laundering. Earlier, PM Imran Khan had directed Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) and FIA to initiate inquiry on the sugar commission report. Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Accountability and Interior Mirza Shahzad Akbar had forwarded a letter to governor State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), Competition Commission of Paki-

FBR surpasses revenue target by Rs57 bln

The collections during first month of the current fiscal year are 125 percent of the assigned target, according to data released by the board here

DNA/APP

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has collected revenues of Rs.300 billion during the month of July against the set target of Rs243 billion, surpassing the target by Rs57 billion. The collections during first month of the current fiscal year are 125 percent of the assigned target, according to data released by the board here. According to the data, the Inland Revenue over-shot the target by Rs52 billion, whereas the Customs Wing exceeded the target by Rs.5 billion despite Rs25 billion relief given in Customs duty. It is worth mentioning that in July 2019, the net collection of Inland Revenue had remained Rs.236 billion, said FBR in a statement.

To redress the hardships of the business community caused by COVID-19, an unprecedented amount of refunds to the tune of Rs15 billion have been disbursed during July 2020, as compared to refunds of Rs.7 billion during July 2019. The Sales Tax refunds are being issued under centralized and automated system i.e. FASTER, which has been clearing refunds to exporters within 72 hours for the first time as committed by the government in July, 2020. This has facilitated the exporters and the industry easing off their liquidity crunch, the statement added. According to the official figure, total customs duty collected during July, 2020 was over Rs42 billion which is 6% higher than that collected in same period of July, 2019.

Work on Thar power plant in full swing: Asim Bajwa



ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Information and Broadcasting Lt Gen (ret'd) Asim Saleem Bajwa on Friday said the work on the 330 MW Thar Block-2 MW power plant was in full swing. Asim Bajwa, who is also CPEC Authority chairman, in a tweet, the work that was being executed by Thar Energy Limited and HUBCO, was unaffected by COVID-19. The project had brought an investment of US\$500 million and created 805 local direct jobs, he said, adding its financial close was done on January 31, 2020. - APP

Shibli urges to observe Yaume-Istehsal

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Senator Shibli Faraz on Friday appealed to the masses to observe Yaum-e-Istehsal on August 5 in a befitting manner so that India could realize that its illegal action in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) could not be tolerated anymore. Addressing a press conference flanked with Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on National Security Dr Moeed Yousuf, he said Prime Minister Imran Khan's address to the United Nations General Assembly last year had imbued a new spirit to the Kashmiris freedom struggle. The nation had reinvigorated their solidarity with the Kashmiris under the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan, he added. He said that Pakistan has redesigned its concept of solidarity with the Kashmiris under the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan. - APP

Pak, China win war against COVID-19: Chinese Scholar

DNA

BEIJING: Chinese scholar Prof. Cheng Xizhong said, that Pakistan, China's friendly neighbor will eventually win the war against the pandemic and embark on a path of economic recovery. He said the smart-lockdown in Pakistan has brought good result. Recently, Pakistan has set a revenue target of 4.963 trillion Rupees for the fiscal year 2020-2021. There is a prerequisite for this revenue target that is the economy will have basically recovered from COVID-19 by October 1. He quoted the relevant departments of the Federal government as having said that if the pandemic cannot be controlled before the end of September, it will be difficult to achieve the revenue target, and then the budget may have to be adjusted. Cheng Xizhong who is visiting professor at Southwest

University of Political Science and Law, senior fellow of the Charhar Institute was of the opinion that it is quite difficult for Pakistan to achieve this revenue target, unless the federal government and the people of Pakistan have the determination to devote themselves to pandemic prevention and control and economic recovery. He added: "There is an idiom in China, "Nothing is impossible", which means that under certain conditions, whether things can be done mainly depends on how people play their subjective initiative. Pakistan is densely populated, with a high proportion of poor people and a large number of daily-income labors. So, it is difficult to impose a complete lockdown. So, Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan has launched the strategy of "smart lockdown", and the relevant government departments have formulated a series of standard operation procedures for pan-



demetic prevention. Judged from the current situation, this strategy has achieved initial good results. The data show that the growth curve of confirmed cases tends to gradually level off, with more than 81% of confirmed cases recovered. With the advent of the Corban Festival, PM has called on the people to celebrate simply and abide by the standard

operating procedures for pandemic prevention. If COVID-19 can be controlled well during the festival, it will help Pakistan rebuild economic growth in an orderly manner, so the economic development will become normal. Due to the appropriate policies of the government to respond COVID-19, the people of all walks of life have been making concerted

efforts to overcome various economic difficulties. There is a saying in the investment circle that "Profit and loss are from the same source", which means that the reason for which you make money and lose money is likely to be the same. The catering industry, retail industry and tourism industry are the most hit ones by the COVID-19. These industries will surely take the lead in recovery, once the pandemic is over. The reason is very simple. Due to the COVID-19, many cities have adopted close-off management. If it is over, people may rush out to enjoy delicious food in restaurants, experience offline shopping and travel to other places or foreign countries. The flow of people and logistics will drive the recovery of the transportation industry, so I think the transport industry will also be among the first batch of industries to recover."

Briefs

Zulfikar for tourism promotion as a brand

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Zulfikar Bukhari Thursday called for the promotion of tourism as a brand, saying that Pakistan was declared as "best tourist destination for 2020". He said it was a great achievement that 2019 was the safest year for Pakistan and for the reason the country was declared as "best tourist destination for 2020" adding it was a great achievement in terms of security. He said in order to take advantage of this, Pakistan needs to have a brand for tourism. Pakistan is also hosting two major international tourism events in next two years, he informed an online dialogue on "Opportunities in Tourism Sector in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Future Promotion Strategies in a Post COVID-19 Scenario" as a key note speaker. He said investment board has the biggest role to play to get the province ready to grab such upcoming opportunities in tourism sector. - APP

Public places to remain closed

ISLAMABAD: The capital administration on Thursday closed all shrines and graveyards except for burial during the Eid holidays to prevent the spread of Covid-19. Besides, all parks, picnic places like Lake View Park, F-9 Park, Jasmine Garden, Damani-Koh and hill stations will remain closed. Officials said the step was taken to avoid gathering of people at these places during the holidays which may result in further spread of the virus. A notification issued from the office of the deputy commissioner Islamabad stated: "All shrines, graveyards (except burial/funeral ceremonies), parks/picnic places (Lake View Park, F-9 Park, Jasmine Garden, Damani-Koh etc) and hill stations shall remain closed during the Eid holidays." - APP

Over 480 patients recovered

DNA

ATTOCK: Recovered patients outnumbered active patients in the Attock district and Taxila tehsil. According to data, 480 positive patients recovered in Attock district while there are currently 72 active patients of whom 68 are under home isolation and four are under treatment in hospitals. In Taxila, 294 patients recovered and there are 103 active patients in the tehsil of whom 86 are under home isolation and 17 being treated in hospitals.

IRSA releases 253,900 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 253,900 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 341,200 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in the Indus River at Tarbela Dam was 1468.60 feet, which was 82.60 feet higher than its dead level 1386 feet. Water inflow in the dam was recorded as 193,700 cusecs and outflow as 125,000 cusecs. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1229.80 feet, which was 189.80 feet higher than its dead level of 1040 feet whereas the inflow and outflow of water was recorded as 33,600 cusecs and 15,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa and Sukkur was recorded as 174,600, 169,600 and 52,600 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from the Kabul River a total of 48,900 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 33,200 cusecs released from the Chenab River at Marala.



RAWALPINDI: People sitting on the roof of passenger bus to go their home towns ahead of Eid al-Adha. - APP

Inquiry committee formed to investigate deaths of Zoo animals

"A high level inquiry committee, to be chaired by the additional secretary of the climate change ministry Joudat Ayaz, will look into the causes of the recent deaths of zoo animals, including lions, ostriches and other animals"

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam has formed an inquiry committee to investigate the deaths of animals from the Marghazar Zoo. A lioness died upon arrival at a lion breeding sanctuary two days ago, after which the lion, which was also seriously ill, also died, a senior official from the Ministry of Climate Change told media. The animals died on the way to the sanctuary in Kasur. A video shows handlers at the Islamabad zoo poking the lion with sticks to

force it out of its enclosure, and when that failed the handlers lit fires to smoke it out and into special fabricated cages. Ministry officials said it was ill-advised to move animals during extreme weather conditions. They said the stress of the journey was compounded by the extreme weather and suffocation from the fire, killing both lions. Ostriches, a hog deer and pheasants have also died while being moved to sanctuaries. "A high level inquiry committee, to be chaired by the additional secretary of the climate change ministry Joudat Ayaz, will look into the causes of the recent deaths of zoo

animals, including lions, ostriches and other animals," the ministry's media focal person and deputy director Mohammad Saleem said. The Islamabad Wildlife Management Board the responsibility of safely moving zoo animals to wildlife sanctuaries. "It has been brought into notice of the ministry that deaths have occurred due to bad management regarding the shifting of zoo animals and poor feeding arrangements, with which the ministry is seriously concerned, terming it intolerable and inhumane," Mr Saleem said. He added that the inquiry com-

mittee has been tasked with determining who is responsible for the deaths of the animals and proposing disciplinary action against those responsible. In a statement, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Pakistan condemned the mistreatment of the lions at the zoo and expressed "grave" concerns over videos circulating on social media. "It is absolutely abhorrent and unacceptable to treat any animal this way. WWF-Pakistan has expressed its disappointment to the IWMB and hopes that those who are responsible will be brought to justice for this repulsive act. In the wake of this incident, as a

protest, WWF-Pakistan has also stepped down from the board of the IWMB, of which it has been a member for several years," the statement said. It added that WWF-Pakistan is aware that there are risks when moving a wild animal from one facility to another, but there "is absolutely no excuse for the treatment of an animal as seen in the videos." The statement added that WWF-Pakistan has offered support to improve the condition of zoos in the country and has lobbied for zoo standards and legislation, promoting cooperation and capacity building for an overall improved environment for the animals.

Human rights film festival from August 4

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Human Rights, as part of the Huqooq-e-Pakistan collaborative project with the European Union, is launching a Human Rights Film Festival to increase awareness and understanding of human rights issues in Pakistan. The 'Reels for Rights' Festival will be held online between 4th August and 25th August 2020. As lockdown and restriction measures implemented to curb the spread of the coronavirus continue to disrupt normal life, this presents an opportunity to use online platforms to constructively and effectively engage the large proportion of the population that has been confined to their homes, on human rights issues. This film festival is a unique and innovative way to encourage independent thought and foster dialogue about critical human rights issues in Pakistan. It also has the potential to challenge prevailing norms and problematic stereotypes through a creative medium that is easily accessible, engaging and powerful, said a press release issued here on Thursday. The Reels for Rights Festival will feature a collection of 14-15 pre-selected films on themes including child rights, female empowerment, transgender rights, minority rights, access to justice, death penalty and climate change. The Ministry of Human Rights will host 'Live Watch Parties' across social media platforms to promote interaction and engagement. The films will also be available for viewing on the Ministry's website and YouTube page for the duration of the festival. The festival will also include multiple virtual panel discussions to facilitate and encourage dialogue and discourse on various human rights issues that have been explored through the selected films. This includes a panel discussion on the Human Rights Situation in Indian Occupied Jammu & Kashmir, to be moderated by Minister for Human Rights, Shireen Mazari. Panel Discussions will also be held exploring the power of film to create social impact as well as on challenging prevailing gender norms. - APP

PM Imran to celebrate Eid in Nathiagali

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan would celebrate Eid-ul-Azha in Nathiagali. According to details, Prime Minister Imran Khan will spend Eid-ul-Azha with his family in Nathi Gali. Imran Khan will offer Eid prayers as well as offer sacrifices there. After celebrating Eid, PM Imran Khan will return to Islamabad on Sunday. - DNA

Customs launches operation against smuggled goods

ISLAMABAD: In line with the vision of Prime Minister, the Pakistan Customs has launched a country-wide operation against transportation, storage and sale of smuggled goods. The operation is being conducted in coordination with law enforcement agencies i.e. Police, Frontier Corps, Pakistan Rangers & Mari-

time Security Agency, said an FBR press statement issued here. According to the statement, Pakistan Customs has been making all out efforts to protect the economic frontiers of Pakistan and protect local industry. Raids are being conducted on dumping places used for storage of smuggled items and

intelligence based operations are being conducted in all major cities including Quetta, Peshawar, Karachi, Lahore and Multan to root out the network of smugglers. As a result of these coordinated efforts and renewed vigour Pakistan Customs has made historic seizures of smuggled goods during the month of July 2020. - APP



RAWALPINDI: A man washes his sacrificial camel at a service station. - APP

Police devise security plan for Eid-ul-Azha

RAWALPINDI: City police have finalized a comprehensive security plan for Eid-ul-Azha aimed at averting any untoward incident. According to police spokesman, over 3,500 policemen personnel will be deployed on Eid congregations and other important buildings to thwart any untoward incident. Policemen would also patrol in various sectors and police officers of respective circles would ensure proper security at the Eid congregations to be held at various locations of the town. Walk through gates and scanners would also be installed at main Eid congregations for the safety of the citizens. He said that police will perform their duties round the clock. Hundreds of Mosques, Imambargahs and several other religious gatherings would be covered by armed guards and policemen during Eid prayers. Volunteers will also be deployed on Eid congregations, he said adding special pickets have been set up at all the entry and exist points of the city to check suspicious vehicles besides; patrolling is being made more effective to check the criminals. Meanwhile, City Traffic Police also finalized plan to regulate the traffic on city roads during the Eid days. - APP

CTP directs action against one wheelers

RAWALPINDI: City Traffic Police (CTP) to continue campaign against one wheelers on Eid-ul-Azha days and strict action would be taken against those involved in this activity. Talking to APP, Chief Traffic Officer, (CTO) Rawalpindi, Syed Akbar Ali said that strict orders have been issued to all traffic wardens, inspectors, deputy superintendents of police (DSPs) in all sectors in this regard. The motorcycles, especially prepared for one wheeling should be impounded. He said that arrangements were made to curb the activity, particularly at Airport Road, Peshawar Road, Jhelum Road, Ayub Park, and other areas to protect youngsters as the thrilling exercise is a leading cause of death and severe injuries to the riders. The CTO said though the activity was already being checked by traffic officials deputed on the city roads but special arrangements have also been made to control rash and dangerous driving and one-wheeling in the city. He said that one-wheelers were not only playing with their own lives but also a threat for other road users. He urged parents to play their role in curbing the activity as one-wheeling, rash and negligent driving were the main cause of fatal accidents. - APP

SDPI, AIOU form platform to address issues

ISLAMABAD: SDPI in collaboration with AIOU on Thursday launched a think-tanks and academia joint venture named Council for the Advancement of Sustainable Policy, Education and Research (CASPER), to address the critical challenges for the academia and education sector in after Covid19 scenario. The online launch held by Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) and Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), was participated by a large number of senior academicians including the Vice-Chancellors of various public and private sector universities and senior researchers. The newly formed platform that comprises on several leading public and private sector universities and academic institutions, aimed to find new and innovative solutions and to make collaborative efforts to improve the quality of research and to promote dialogue for the policies related to higher education in the country. Besides, CASPER would initiate a number of joint initiatives and would provide an active and vibrant platform to quality of education, policy research, new ways of learnings and faculty development in the new paradigm. - APP

Lockdown restrictions and effects in conflict zones

Sumaira Khan, a correspondent for Indus World television was full of praise for the Pakistani government for its handling of the pandemic

ISLAMABAD: An international non-governmental organization, YFK-International Kashmir Lobby Group, based in Islamabad, Pakistan, which works with the United Nations mechanisms and human rights organizations, brought together international journalists to talk about the future of journalism and human rights. Journalists from several countries Thursday came together in a webinar to discuss the lockdown restrictions and future of journalism in varied countries and conflict zones, including Iraq, Israel and Palestinian territories, Azerbaijan, and Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu Kashmir (IIOJK). The webinar was also a rare occasion to have journalists working in different conflict zones to sit on

one table and learn from each other's perspectives and experiences. Award-winning Iraqi photojournalist Ali Arkady, the whistleblower who uncovered torture cells run by security forces in Iraq, joined Nelofer Abdullah, a journalist who lives and works under the world's longest lockdown in IIOJK, and Daniela Donges, who works with journalists and activists as Country Director Israel and Palestinian territories for German Voices for Peace. Journalist Efsane Elesgerli, a correspondent for the Voice of Karabakh newspaper, described to the participants the circumstances under which journalists and civilians are coping with renewed clashes with Armenia over the Karabakh region, where residents are opposed Armenian presence.

Nelofer Abdullah described incidents where Indian occupation soldiers harassed her at checkpoints during her normal media coverage work. She explained in detail how Kashmiris are coping with the ban on fast-speed internet and are adjusting their lives around 2G speed. Kashmir has around eight million people who have to live with 2G. This has affected IT industry, online education, and some medical services. Daniela Donges, Country Director Israel and Palestinian territories for German Voices for Peace, just completed her two-year stay at the city of Bethlehem, which is part of occupied Palestinian lands in dispute between Israel and the Palestinians. She described how the health

emergency, the lockdowns, and the occupation have combined to create an economic crisis that could explode in the face of both Palestinian and Israeli authorities. To one question, Ali Arkady declined to reveal where he is living in asylum in Europe due to security and safety reasons. Arkady said some security officials in Iraq have affiliations to extremist militias and are covertly working for other countries. He said he is optimistic that the coverage his work has received in international media will act as an instrument of accountability for everyone involved in human rights violations in Iraq. Sumaira Khan, a correspondent for Indus World television was full of praise for the Pakistani government for its handling of the pandemic.

She called for regulation to stem disinformation in a health crisis. The situation for the media in the Gulf region is different in that there is a mushrooming of modern digital and broadcast media but not as much difficulties for journalists under lockdown "thanks to the availability of high-speed internet," said Shahad Al-Matrouk, the Kuwait correspondent for the Dubai-based Al-Arabiya. She explained in detail her experience working under lockdown. YFK-International Kashmir Lobby Group (Youth Forum For Kashmir) is a non-partisan International NGO, working for the peaceful resolution of Kashmir Conflict in accordance with United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions. - APP

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A case of murder

THE smuggling of a pistol into a courtroom at a local court in Peshawar raises a number of key questions about security at our courts. In this case, it also raises some very old and unresolved questions of where Pakistani society stands. The pistol could have been used to shoot even a judge. Instead it was used by a man identified as Khalid to kill a person standing trial for blasphemy. The accused had been charged in April 2018. We still do not know the full details.

A case of murder has been lodged against Khalid by police. Some reports on social media suggest that the accused may have belonged to the Ahmadi community, while other reports say he later changed his religion. Some reports also say that he was psychologically unwell. The question of how a pistol was brought in the court is still being investigated.

The case, which will need to be pursued by the state as the victim appears to have no immediate relatives to stand for him, is a reminder of the increasingly frequent misuse of the blasphemy law in our country. No individual has the right to murder another without a hearing and without a fair and free trial. Such incidents have become increasingly commonplace. According to some media reports, over the last decades scores of murders on similar grounds have taken place. Most of us will remember the brutal killing of student Mashal Khan. While the police have started taking a slightly stronger stance in the matter, the fact remains that it is extremely easy to bring a blasphemy charge against another individual and by doing so put his/her life at risk.

Blasphemy accusations have also been used as a weapon by politicians and certain sections of the media. And on social media, anonymous accounts routinely level charges of blasphemy. The only way to prevent this is by not only aggressively pursuing those who use blasphemy to commit violence but by taking on everyone who falsely accuses others of blasphemy. The key issue is that of violence and the willingness to take lives over accusations that have not been proven in a court of law.



Constant chaos

SINCE it came to power in 2018, the PTI government has undergone an almost constant series of upheavals and crises of various kinds – within the party. These have ranged from accusations that senior members of the party with close links to the PM have been involved in major scandals to other kinds of confusion concerning the day-to-day governmental affairs. We now have the latest upheaval. Two special assistants to the prime minister – SAPMs – Tania Aidrus and Dr Zafar Mirza have suddenly stepped down from their posts, leaving behind only short messages concerning their reasons for doing so.

This comes soon after the prime minister followed demands that the assets, tax returns and nationality of the large number of SAPMs that play a prominent role in his government be made public. In her brief resignation letter Tania Aidrus, who is also a Canadian national, has said she is and always will be a loyal Pakistani. The rumours that are inevitably swirling around Islamabad say that the real problem arose after Aidrus, who was in charge of Digital Pakistan, set up a firm of her own which she said was funded by money from overseas Pakistanis. To many observers, this was a quite obvious conflict of interest.

There have also been questions over whether Aidrus had obtained the PM's approval to set up her organization. The case of Dr Zafar Mirza who holds Pakistani nationality is different. He has said in his tweet that he chose to resign because he had left a senior position within the WHO to serve Pakistan and tried to do so to the best of his abilities helping bring Covid-19 under control and was saddened by the fierce criticism directed against SAPMs. Other sources in Islamabad say Dr Mirza had come under scrutiny initially for bringing in drugs from India, violating a ban and later when questioned about the recent increase in the prices of essential medicines saying that he had no idea about this. Political observers and senior journalists have also said that both the SAPMs were asked to step down – and that this was not entirely their own choice.

There is conjecture that more resignations and more internal party turmoil may follow. This would not be good for a government that has already developed a reputation for mismanagement and mishandling of affairs. It is also unusual for a government to be run with so many unelected members in key positions. The absence of a health minister, a ministry held by the PM himself during the Covid-19 pandemic, is also unusual. This is also why there have been serious concerns over the timing of Dr Mirza's resignation, and how the Covid-19 challenge will fare. It is difficult to predict where things will go from now and if the PTI can smoothen out the waters its ship sails on.

International Friendship Day is a celebration of all people of SCO

Vladimir Norov



The pandemic has shown that no one can fight the virus alone. Coronavirus is by no means the latest global test. I think that all countries should understand this fact and make efforts for cooperation on the principles of mutual support, joint development, and the creation of common goods. I believe that in the current conditions of humanity's struggle against the pandemic of coronavirus, the principles of multilateralism are becoming more relevant

ON 27 April 2011, the 65th Session of the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on the International Day of Friendship, which has since been celebrated annually around the world on 30th July.

The International Day of Friendship aims to strengthen friendly relations not only between individuals, but also between peoples, countries, continents, and different communities. The main idea of the holiday is to recognize the relevance and importance of friendship as a manifestation of a noble feeling common to all people.

The world is facing challenges ranging from poverty and hunger to intolerance of some people to others. That is why there is the International Day of Friendship, which encourages people from all over the world to unite against social and other problems and to be tolerant of each other. On the International Day of Friendship, the UN called on states, international organizations, and international public opinion to hold events and initiatives aimed at promoting dialogue and solidarity among civilizations.

This holiday is very relevant for the SCO family countries. For the peoples of the SCO space, its main meaning is to develop tolerance and promote friendship between countries and peoples.

One of the founding documents of the SCO, the Treaty on Neighbourhood Friendship and Cooperation signed in 2007, notes that strengthening and deepening relations of good neighborliness, friendship, and cooperation among the SCO Member States is in the fundamental interests of their peoples and contributes to the cause of peace and development in the SCO space and around the world.

In the same sense the SCO Member States', focus on building joint efforts to prevent common challenges and threats, and to preserve the diversity of forms of socio-economic, and cultural development, is of particular importance.

Formed in the process of creation of the SCO - the "Shanghai Spirit" characterized by mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, mutual consultations, respect for multiculturalism, desire for joint development, has become a key norm of the SCO model of multilateral cooperation.

Over the past 19 years, United in the Shanghai spirit, Member States have presented to the world a new model of genuine partnership, the important elements of which are mutual understanding, equality, and coordination.

The modern world is becoming more multifaceted, and the processes taking place in it are becoming more complicated. However, one thing is becoming increasingly clear: modern humanity is united by a common destiny and the abandonment of dividing lines can become a powerful impetus of the new stage of the development of world civilization.

In this regard, the rapprochement of countries and peoples requires not just their constant dialogue, but mutual knowledge of cultures and traditions, a deep mutual understanding of civilizational characteristics in the name of universal progress and prosperity, for the sake of peace and stability in the world.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization now unites 18 countries with a population of about 44% of the world's population. The palette of ethnic groups, nations, reli-

gions, and civilizations of SCO countries gives a particularly bright multicultural facet.

The SCO Development Strategy to 2025 states that the SCO countries, being multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies, are interested in ensuring an internal inter-ethnic and inter-religious peace, strengthening centuries-old traditions of harmonious co-existence of different nationalities and religions, and the development of inter-civilizational dialogue.

The humanitarian heritage of the SCO relates to the names of the greatest thinkers, outstanding discoverers who have made an invaluable contribution to the development of human civilization. One in nine UNESCO World Heritage Sites is in the SCO space.

The SCO consistently and purposefully implements its main civilizational mission - promotes mutual understanding between peoples, mutual knowledge, penetration, enrichment, and rapprochement of cultures and civilizations, promotes the traditions and customs of peoples.

Only through familiarity with ancient history, rich and unique cultural traditions and heritage, the customs of each other can form mutual respect and trust between states and peoples, as well as ensure the education of the younger generation in the spirit of friendship, respect for the cultural characteristics of other peoples.

The SCO Member States, because of their enormous potential for humanitarian cooperation, have active bilateral and multilateral cultural ties on a regular basis. Their main goal is to practically promote the strengthening of friendly ties and rapprochement of the peoples of the SCO countries.

The SCO Secretariat is working to strengthen the friendly contacts of the SCO countries. As part of the complex cultural and humanitarian project "SCO our common home" held various activities that are aimed at bringing cultures closer together and promoting the dialogue of civilizations. Within the framework of this project, from September 2016 to the present, the Days of Culture of China, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Belarus, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Moscow Day, an Evening dedicated to the 90th anniversary of Kyrgyz writer C.Aitmatov, exhibitions of paintings and children's paintings had been held, including a series of classical concerts "Nine Magic Notes" with the participation of pianists of SCO countries.

These events were held at a high level and has contributed to strengthening the "Shanghai Spirit" and the positive image of the SCO, as well as helped popularize the culture, history, traditions, and customs of the peoples of the SCO countries.

Events of this format provide many opportunities to bring together the creative teams of all SCO countries on one platform, demonstrating achievements reflecting the unique national flavor of each country.

Also, every year the SCO Secretariat together with the embassies of member states widely celebrates the holiday of Nowruz, which is accompanied by the presentation of national musical art and clothing, the exhibition of objects of applied art and tasting of the national cuisine of the peoples of the SCO countries.

It is safe to say that an additional incentive for the dis-

semination of the rich historical and cultural heritage of the SCO Member States is the SCO Secretariat's project of "Eight Wonders of the SCO" which aims to demonstrate the cultural diversity of the SCO Member States and its tourism potential.

Youth is an important factor in strengthening friendship between peoples. One of the objectives of the International Friendship Festival is to involve young people in social activities aimed at respecting different cultures.

In the 21st century, when the world is changing at a fantastic rate, young people demonstrate the originality and freshness of ideas, act as an initial part of society, offers innovative solutions for a better life. Our task, therefore, is to teach young people to be friends and to serve the ideals of world peace. The SCO youth policy is aimed at actively involving young men and women in the creation of a decent future, promoting the physical, mental, and spiritual development of the younger generation, ensuring their active participation in the political, economic, and cultural life of the SCO countries.

The SCO sees a huge intellectual potential in the younger generation, capable of mastering modern knowledge; science and technology, art, and literature, with high legal culture and a strong immunity against extremism and fanaticism, striving for peace and development.

The most important task today is to overcome political confrontation, protectionism on a global and regional scale, and to resist attempts to divide humanity by politicizing the problem of the coronavirus pandemic.

The pandemic has shown that no one can fight the virus alone. Coronavirus is by no means the latest global test. I think that all countries should understand this fact and make efforts for cooperation on the principles of mutual support, joint development, and the creation of common goods. I believe that in the current conditions of humanity's struggle against the pandemic of coronavirus, the principles of multilateralism are becoming more relevant.

All States and international organizations are now closely linked to each other and the key to defeating this invisible enemy, which knows no borders, is global solidarity and international cooperation.

It should be noted that the coronavirus pandemic not only poses challenges and threats to peace but also creates new opportunities and perspectives.

In this sense, it is important to analyze the experience of cooperation in an emergency. In particular, we are talking about the positive factors of interaction, solidarity, moral and material support between our countries, not only at the official level but also between representatives of different sectors of society, business circles, the cultural and scientific community and young people, which demonstrates the great potential of friendship between ordinary peoples and people's diplomacy in the SCO countries as a whole.

In general, the joint fight against the coronavirus strengthens the "Shanghai Spirit" and brings the SCO Member States together. Working closely with each other, they reaffirm their commitment to a philosophy of open development and a community based on shared responsibility.

- The writer is the Secretary General of SCO.

Battling the 'hunger virus'

Shahzad Waseem



The complete lockdown policy, as we have also seen in India and other parts of the world, did not turn out to be socio-economically viable or sustainable. The New York Times, in an article, outlined the failure of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's govt in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic

THE deadly and disruptive Covid-19 pandemic has brought to the fore the fragility of human life as well as the fissures and weaknesses in the global economic, trade and healthcare systems, social fabric and disaster response mechanisms.

The pandemic also spawned socio-economic ramifications as the 'hunger virus'. A significant proportion of the world's population living close, on or below the poverty line struggled even to get food, let alone other necessities. This view is also supported by a July 9 Oxfam publication, 'The hunger virus: how Covid-19 is fuelling hunger in a hungry world', which says that Covid-19 is deepening the hunger crisis in the world's hunger hotspots and creating new epicenters of hunger across the globe.

The complete lockdown policy, as we have also seen in India and other parts of the world, did not turn out to be socio-economically viable or sustainable. The New York Times, in an article, outlined the failure of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic. Also Tim Sebastian, in one of his 'Conflict Zone' segments on DW TV, severely berated the Indian government for the hasty and ill-planned March 24 lockdown that left millions of workers in cities stranded without jobs, shelter, food and means of transport.

However, Pakistan, as per Prime Minister Imran Khan's vision, quite early on realized that a complete lockdown was not a sustainable and viable solution. Therefore, the PTI government, keeping in view the economic challenges as well as hardships being faced by the common citizen, prioritised providing relief to the common man, labourers, daily-wage earners, poor people, traders and the business community. In this regard, the policy of 'smart lockdown' was strategically implemented, based on real time data and targeting only those localities where a higher incidence of the disease was observed or reported. A 'testing, tracing and quarantining' (TTQ) strategy is being employed

as part of the containment strategy.

The 'smart lockdown' was not an easy decision, and proved to be a test of strong leadership and nerves amidst scathing criticism from different quarters. However, as the world also acknowledged later on, it proved to be the most effective and pro-people approach to tackle the pandemic. The Bloomberg news agency also termed the smart lockdown approach the only hope of returning to a more normal life as the world awaits a vaccine. Also, Business Standard, a Bangladesh-based news platform, while lauding Prime Minister Imran Khan's policy of smart lockdown, stated that "But now as the results show that the measure works, many developing nations are also promoting the policy".

Pakistan, despite meager resources and economic difficulties, efficiently handled the pandemic situation through visionary leadership, realistic and futuristic policies, self-reliance and effective coordination between federal and provincial health authorities despite 'health' being a devolved subject post the 18th Amendment.

When the PTI government came to power, the health sector in general, and epidemic and disease surveillance and response mechanisms in particular, were in a shambles. The incumbent government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan, made hectic efforts to ameliorate the situation and set right the wrongs of the past. This progressive approach proved very conducive to effectively and efficiently handling the Covid-19 pandemic.

Through tailor-made strategies, the capacities of our healthcare institutions were enhanced along with our testing capabilities and number of laboratories. Indigenous capacities were built, as a result of which Pakistan is now not only manufacturing ventilators and personal protective equipment (PPE), but also exporting the same.

The National Command and Operations Centre

(NCOC) proved to be a nerve centre to synergize and articulate unified national efforts against Covid-19. Taking another step in the right direction, Prime Minister Imran Khan launched the Ehsaas Emergency Cash programme in order to provide cash assistance to millions of poor people who lost their jobs due to the outbreak. The driving idea behind the economic stimulus initiative was to support small businesses and protect the livelihoods labourers and other workers.

The Covid-19 pandemic also proved to be a test of leadership around the world. In the South Asian context, Prime Minister Modi's weak leadership and mishandling of the situation was severely exposed and widely criticized. On the other hand, Prime Minister Imran Khan's visionary leadership, his bold pro-people policies, timely decisions and very apt handling of the situation were well appreciated worldwide.

The key takeaway based on Pakistan's handling of the crisis is that health forms an integral part of a country's national security matrix, and, hence, must be prioritized as such as being done by the PTI government. Strategic implementation of the 'smart lockdown' proved crucial to minimizing disease prevalence, human suffering and the socio-economic impact of the pandemic. However, we must not let our guard down and become complacent. Strict observance of SOPs, maintaining social distancing and adopting precautionary measures as defined by the government will see Pakistan home and dry.

As they say: "The tests we face in life's journey are not to reveal our weaknesses but to help us discover our inner strengths. We can only know how strong we are when we strive and thrive beyond the challenges we face".

While the Covid-19 pandemic has posed many challenges, it has also given us all an opportunity to discover and tap our hidden potentials and strengths.

- The writer is the leader of the House in the Senate.

Briefs

No health issues reported among Hajj pilgrims

DNA

MAKKAH: There have been no health problems so far among pilgrims during Hajj, Ministry of Health spokesman Mohammed Al-Abd Al-Ali said on Thursday. "It is reassuring ... that no cases of coronavirus or any other diseases that affect public health have been reported," he said during his daily Hajj briefing in Makkah. He added that the health services are fully prepared and remain on high alert to respond to any problems that arise. There are 1,456 hospital beds available, including 272 for intensive care, 331 for isolation, and more than 200 in emergency departments. Lt. Col. Talal Al-Shalhoub, security spokesman for the Ministry of Interior, said that the pilgrims were escorted safely to Mount Arafat to perform their rituals, and then to Muzdalifah. He added that security officers are supervising pilgrims to ensure that social distancing and other precautionary health measures are followed. In addition, he said, they have prevented a number of unauthorized individuals from gaining access to the holy sites.

WHO warns over virus risk to youth

GENEVA: The World Health Organization warned Thursday that spikes in coronavirus transmission in a number of countries were being driven by young people "letting down their guard". "Young people are not invincible," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a virtual news conference in Geneva, stressing that "Young people can get infected and young people can die... Young people must take the same precautions." - APP

Russia jails US Ex-Marine for 9 years

DNA

MOSCOW: A Moscow court sentenced former U.S. Marine Trevor Reed to nine years in prison Thursday for endangering "life and health" of Russian police officers in an altercation, state-run news agency reported - a sentence that drew swift condemnation from the top US diplomat in Russia. Reed, 29, was taken into custody last year after a night of heavy drinking during a visit to Russia to visit a longtime girlfriend Alina Tsybulnik, according to TASS and Reed's family. Police told state-run news agency RIA-Novosti that Reed was involved in an altercation with two women and a police unit that arrived at the scene following complaints of a disturbance and took him to a police station. Police alleged Reed resisted the arrest, attacked the driver, hit another policeman, caused the car to swerve by grabbing the wheel and created a hazardous situation on the road, RIA stated.

France sees record 13.8 percent GDP plunge

DNA

PARIS: France's economy contracted by a record 13.8 percent in the second quarter under the impact of coronavirus lockdowns, the national statistics institute INSEE said. The seasonally-adjusted quarter-on-quarter drop in gross domestic product (GDP) was better than forecast but worse than the performance of most of its eurozone peers. "GDP's negative developments in first half of 2020 is linked to the shut-down of 'non-essential' activities in the context of the implementation of the lockdown between mid-March and the beginning of May," INSEE said in a statement.

Pak, China urged to establish direct business links, enhance trade

He identified construction, food processing, automobile, textiles, logistics, information technology, and tourism as priority sectors for Chinese investors in Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and China should focus on promoting direct business linkages between their entrepreneurs to further enhance bilateral trade and explore JVs in potential areas of mutual interest between the two countries. This was stated by Muhammad Ahmed Waheed, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry while delivering his message to China. Gwadar Pro reported on Friday that Fujian - Pakistan Two-Way Trade Online Promotion Conference that was organized by the Department of Commerce of Fujian Province of China in collaboration with the Consulate General of Pakistan in Guangzhou and Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry. Ahmed Waheed added, organizing such online video conferences between the private sectors of both coun-

tries was very important to explore prospects for business matchmakings and trade promotion, especially at a time when the Covid-19 pandemic has restricted international travels. Huang Dezhi, Deputy Director-General of the Department of Commerce of Fujian Province in his address said that Pakistan and China were strategic partners and the leadership of both countries was determined to further strengthen economic ties. Fujian Province wanted to diversify cooperation with Pakistan to further expand bilateral trade. The CPEC was creating new opportunities for long-term cooperation between the two countries, he further said added Fujian was ready for increasing industrial cooperation with Pakistan in technology transfer to further develop its industrial sector. Speaking at the occasion, Dr. Diyar Khan, Consul General of Pakistan in



Guangzhou said that organizing online conferences between the entrepreneurs of Pakistan and Fujian Province of China in post-Covid-19 scenario was a good initiative to explore bilateral trade and investment cooperation. He said Fujian was a gateway for southeast China

and Pakistan could achieve beneficial results for its economy by strengthening cooperation with it. Pak-Fujian Province bilateral trade was around USD 1 billion, which could be further enhanced by more efforts from both sides. He said that China-Pakistan Joint Business and Invest-

ment Council should be activated to further strengthen trade and investment relations between the two countries. Muhammad Irfan, Trade and Investment Counselor of Pakistan in Guangzhou gave a presentation on trade, investment, and tourism opportunities in

Pakistan. He identified construction, food processing, automobile, textiles, logistics, information technology, and tourism as priority sectors for Chinese investors in Pakistan. Muhammad Shakeel Munir, former Senior Vice President ICCI highlighted the potential of Pakistan's marble and granite sector and stressed that Chinese investors should explore JVs and investment in Pakistan to produce value added finished marble products that have great potential for exports around the world. Representatives of Nan'an and Fu'an Municipal Bureau of Commerce, Nan'an Stone International Trade Enterprises Association and Fujian Chamber of Commerce for Import and Export of Mechanical and Electrical Technology Products also spoke at the occasion. They highlighted the need for promoting mutual cooperation between Pakistan and Fujian Province.

'Forced decoupling' of economies will hurt both, China warns India

'Beijing was not a strategic threat to New Delhi and that the general structure that we can't live without each other remains unchanged'

DNA

NEW DELHI: Chinese Ambassador Sun Weidong has warned India that a "forced decoupling" of their economies would only lead to a "lose-lose" outcome. The Chinese ambassador said Beijing was not a strategic threat to New Delhi and that the "general structure that we can't live without each other remains unchanged". The statement came after New Delhi's recent moves to ban or sideline Chinese business interests in one of the world's biggest markets, even as the border remains tense with many more troops on the ground than usual. "China advocates win-win cooperation and opposes a zero-sum game," Ambassador Weidong wrote on Twitter. "Our economies are highly



complementary, interwoven and interdependent. Forced decoupling is against the trend and will only lead to a 'lose-lose' outcome." Officials of the nuclear-armed neighbours have been talking regularly to de-escalate the border standoff after the June 15 clash in the Galwan Valley of India's Ladakh region when the Indian officials said soldiers were beaten to death with rocks and clubs. Indian officials say Chinese troops have intruded onto its side in the remote west-

ern region, while China says it has not breached the disputed border and has asked India to restrain its frontline troops. India's Ministry of External Affairs said in an online briefing that a troops disengagement process as agreed by the two sides had yet to be completed, and that another round of commander-level talks would be held soon. "We expect that the Chinese side will sincerely work with us for complete disengagement and de-escalation and full restoration of peace and tranquility in the border areas at the earliest," spokesman Anurag Srivastava said. Analysts say the worst fighting between the giant countries in decades is likely to push India closer to the United States, both strategically and in trade.

'Opposition welcome to bring no-confidence motion'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Shahbaz Gill has said that the opposition can try and bring no-confidence motion against PM Imran Khan if they wish, they will never be successful. The person who banded together with Fazl-ur-Rehman to overthrow the government is giving lectures on democracy, Gill said. In response to Bilawal Zardari's statement, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Dr Shahbaz Gill said that Bilawal has inherited the politics of protecting looted wealth instead of the national interest. The SAPM said that fiddling with national security for personal gain was nothing new for the Zardari family, democratic values are something Bilawal has no relation with. The Zardari and Sharif families have only used the slogan of democracy to loot the nation, he added.

Uzbek President greets people on Eid

TASHKENT: Shavkat Mirziyoyev sincerely, wholeheartedly congratulated the entire Muslim Ummah of the country and all the people on the holy holiday Qurban Hayit (Eid al-Adha), expressed his best wishes. The President noted that this wonderful holiday, which has a special place in our spiritual life, is a symbol of kindness, mutual understanding and tolerance. He wished all people of Uzbekistan health, happiness, peace and prosperity. "Today, good deeds, mutual assistance, charity and generosity, preservation of peace and tranquility are particularly relevant. It is these high spiritual values that give all of us even more strength and energy, endurance and perseverance", Shavkat Mirziyoyev noted. Despite the necessary measures taken by the state and society, unfortunately, there are cases of death from coronavirus infection. The President expressed his sincerest condolences and deep sympathy to families and

relatives of compatriots whose lives were taken by this insidious disease. "We are all well aware that due to the pandemic, we have had to impose certain restrictions on holding mass events, including religious ceremonies on the occasion of Eid al-Adha. "Generosity and Support" Nationwide Movement organized in Uzbekistan has become a truly powerful force. This is clearly evidenced by the huge charity work and numerous events carried out within the framework of the movement in a short period of time. As a logical continuation of all this work and to further strengthen the state's support for low-income segments of the population and families that do not have a permanent source of income and need assistance, as well as economy, I have signed a Decree according to which about 2.5 trillion UZS will be allocated from the national budget for these purposes in addition to 10 trillion UZS previously allocated.

President of Uzbekistan signs decree

DNA

TASHKENT: President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev signed a decree to increase the size of pensions and benefits. According to the decree, Uzbekistan plans to increase pensions and benefits by 10% from 1 September. The basic amount of the pension calculation from 1 September will be 262,470 soums per month, the minimum old-age pension - 513,350 soums per month, benefits for disabled people from childhood - 513,350 soums (466,680 soums). The minimum allowance for the elderly and disabled citizens who do not have the required work experience will be 315,030 soums per month. The head of Uzbekistan instructed to double the number of recipients of benefits for families with children under 14 years old - from 345 thousand to 700 thousand, recipients of benefits for childcare up to 2 years old - by 20% from 333 thousand to 400 thousand and recipients of material assistance - by 13% from 89 thousand to 100 thousand. In accordance with the decree, the payment deadlines are automatically extended by six months, which end in July-September. Addressees are not required to reapply for child care benefits and other documents.

French Pakistanis remember Kashmiris during Eid

DNA

PARIS: Charge D'Affaires a.i. Embassy of Pakistan, Paris Mr. Muhammad Amjad Aziz Qazi has extended his warm wishes to Pakistani diaspora in France on the occasion of Eid ul-Adha. In a message issued today, Mr. Qazi called upon the community members to celebrate this Eid while observing health safety guidelines of the French government on coronavirus pandemic. He urged them to demonstrate solidarity and support with Kashmiris in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, whose fundamental human rights are being grossly violated by the Indian security forces, with even greater intensity after the military siege imposed on the region since August 5 last year. He also said that Pakistan's government and its people remain fully committed to the Kashmiris in their demand for self-determination in accordance with the resolutions of Untied Nation Security Council. Pakistan will also remain the voice of conscience in the world for the rights of Kashmiris brothers and sisters. - DNA

PM directs to implement reforms

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan has directed to devise an action plan for timely implementation of reforms strategy in the energy sector. Addressing a meeting to review ongoing reforms in the energy sector in Islamabad today, he said reforms in the energy sector are essential for stability of the economy. The Prime Minister directed to take strict action against the elements involved in creating unnecessary hurdles to consumers and doing corrupt practices in power sector. The Prime Minister was briefed on the ongoing reforms in the energy sector, power generation as per requirement of the country, modernization of transmission and distribution systems.



PARIS: Pakistani citizens offering Eid-ul-Azha prayer in the French capital. DNA

Xinjiang to enhance ties with Pakistan

"Xinjiang is leading the recovery and return to growth in the whole of China in these difficult times, of pandemic" says Irfan Shahzad Takalvi, founding president of ECI

SPECIAL REPORT

URUMQI: China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region bordering Pakistan has registered 3.3% growth in its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) during first half of 2020, despite COVID-19 related impacts all across the world including on Chinese economy. This continuity of positive momentum signals that economic and commercial linkages be-

tween Pakistan and Xinjiang are all set for further expansion and betterment in months and years ahead. Islamabad-based Eurasian Century Institute (ECI) researching on Xinjiang and the region's ties with Pakistan sees this growth translating into not only better quality of life for its own people, but also cementing of commercial bonds with regional countries, particularly Pakistan. "Xinjiang is leading the recovery

and return to growth in the whole of China in these difficult times, of pandemic" says Irfan Shahzad Takalvi, founding president of ECI. The institute's research finds that Xinjiang's GDP growth in first six months of the calendar year stands at second highest amongst all Chinese provinces and regions, second only to 5.1% of Tibet. However, as overall volume of Xinjiang's GDP is almost six times that of Tibet's - 3.3% growth means

Xinjiang is adding much more to China's national GDP. ECI's research also forecasts that volume of trade between Pakistan and Xinjiang is heading fast towards \$ 1 billion mark. As CPEC related infrastructure particularly upgradation of Korakoram Highway moves towards completion, a big jump in trade and commerce as well as people-to-people movement between the two sides is around the corner. Further, China's central and

region's local authorities are working on a comprehensive plan to enhance Xinjiang's connectivity with the rest of China on one hand and Pakistan, Russia and Central Asian republics on the other hand. This means a lot of new opportunities for Pakistan in China and in the wider region, and also so vice versa. It may be noted here that Xinjiang covers almost 1/6th of total landmass of China, thus making up twice the size of Pakistan.