

Daily Islamabad POST

Saturday, July 11, 2020

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Price Rs. 20

Kohala, Pattan
projects to generate
cheaper electricity

China to hit US
with reciprocal
measures: Zhao



Iran ready
to work with
Pakistan: envoy



Briefs

**IMF predicts
recovery in
Pakistan**

FIAZ CH.

ISLAMABAD: International Monetary Fund (IMF) has predicted recovery in Pakistan's economy during financial year 2021. In a report titled "Policy Actions Taken by Countries," IMF said a gradual recovery is expected in Pakistan's economy in Fiscal Year 2021 as the economy reopens. The report highlighted the measures taken by the present government to contain spread of COVID-19. It says since mid-April, the federal government, in coordination with provinces, gradually eased lockdown allowing low-risk industries to restart operation and small retail shops to reopen with newly developed Standard Operating Procedures. In addition, restrictions on domestic and international movements have been lifted with resumption of domestic flights, train services, and international flights.

**Rs 1.5 bln
for Afghan
students**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister's Special Representative for Afghanistan, Ambassador (R) Muhammad Sadiq said that government of Pakistan has released RS 1.551 billion to Higher Education Commission to meet expenses of Afghan students who are currently studying under Pakistan's scholarship program.

In his tweets, he stated that "Government has released Rs.1.551 billion to HEC to meet expenses of Afghan students who are studying under Pakistan's scholarship program."

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PM approves phase-II locust control plan

Prime Minister appreciates timely
and coordinated response of federal
and provincial governments

DNA / IBRAR KHAN

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Friday accorded in-principle approval for Phase-II of the National Action Plan for Locust Control. It was also decided that the affected farmers would also be compensated through this package. The Prime Minister made this announcement during his visit to locust center. Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa also accompanied the prime minister. Prime Minister highly appreciated timely and coordinated response of federal and provincial governments, including Pakistan Army, for effectively controlling locust attack and use of indigenously developed equipment. Prime Minister stated that locust attack combined with COVID-19 was a huge challenge for the Pakistan. PM said that the Government would under-

take every possible effort for locust control since it involved food security of the country. The Prime Minister emphasized that a coordinated national response of federal and provincial governments and organisations is required to cope with the expected locust swarm so that crop production is not affected. The Prime Minister was informed that National Action Plan for Locust Control Phase-I has been completed. Earlier, Engineer-in-Chief Pakistan Army / National Coordinator NLCC Lt Gen Moazzam Ijaz gave a detailed briefing on locust control measures in affected areas of the country. The Prime Minister was also briefed about the coordinated efforts being made for monitoring, survey & control, inter-organizational coordination, resource allocation & mobilization and awareness campaign for locust control at national, provincial and districts' levels.

— Picture on Back Page

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Pak-US response units inaugurated

These organizations also trained nearly
1,000 physicians on the use of a smartphone
app to expedite COVID-19 case reporting

ADNAN YOUSAF

ISLAMABAD: The governments of Pakistan and the United States inaugurated ten COVID-19 monitoring and rapid response units yesterday to help fight the spread of this deadly pandemic. These new units reflect a partnership between the two countries to advance the COVID-19 response in all 158 districts across Pakistan. Pakistani health officials and non-government organizations, in partnership with and funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), trained 126 local government health workers in the districts of Bagh, Bhimber, Hattian Bala, Haveli, Jhelum Valley, Kotli, Mirpur, Muzaffarabad, Neelum Valley, Poonch, and Sudhniot on COVID-19 case investigation, data collection and analysis, and personal protection. These organizations also trained nearly 1,000 physicians on the use of a smartphone app to expedite COVID-19 case reporting.

"The establishment of these COVID-19 monitoring and rapid response units reaffirms a mutual priority for both Pakistan and the United States to find and treat everyone who has COVID-19. While this pandemic is unprecedented, our partnership with Pakistan is built on a strong foundation and a shared vision of development," said USAID Mission Director Julie Koenen during remarks at the event.

Health and Finance Minister Dr. Sardar Najib Naqi Khan, Health Secretary Major General Tahir Sardar, Director-General of Health Services Dr. Sardar Aftab, and other government officials also joined the inaugural event.

Hagia Sophia: Iconic Istanbul museum returns to mosque



INSTABUL: A Turkish court has annulled the museum status of Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, a world-famous cultural site, enabling it to be converted into a mosque. 1,500-year-old Hagia Sophia was founded as a cathedral. Later the Ottomans made it a mosque. In 1934 it became a museum.

It is a Unesco World Heritage site. Unesco earlier urged Turkey not to change its status without discussion. Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan

called for the change. Islamists in Turkey have long called for it to be converted to a mosque, but secular opposition members have opposed the move. The proposal has prompted crit-

icism, from religious and political leaders worldwide. The head of the Eastern Orthodox Church has condemned the proposal, as has Greece - home to many millions of Orthodox followers.

— Page 09

US record 65,000 new virus cases

WASHINGTON: US has posted 65,551 new coronavirus cases, a record for a 24-hour period, according to a tally by Johns Hopkins University. The country, the hardest-hit in the world by the pandemic, has a total caseload of more than 3.1 million, with 133,195 deaths. It has seen a spike in infections in recent weeks, particularly in the south and west, and health experts worry the death rate may soon follow the same trajectory. — DNA



ISLAMABAD: Major General Arif Malik Director General Anti Narcotics Force presenting a souvenir to Ambassador of Japan Kuninori Matsuda during his visit to ANF Headquarters. — DNA

Kohala, Pattan projects to generate cheaper electricity

On July 6, Pak-China had signed an agreement for construction of \$1.5 billion Azad Pattan Hydel Power project under the framework of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC): Asim Bajwa

A.M.BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to Prime Minister (SAPM) on Information and Broadcasting General (retd) Asim Saleem Bajwa said on Friday Kohala and Azad Pattan power projects will generate 1,800 megawatts of cheaper electricity with 8,000 jobs. Taking to the microblogging site Twitter, Bajwa,

who also heads the CPEC Authority, said Azad Jammu and Kashmir Prime Minister Farooq Haider Khan and chief executive officers of China Three Gorges and China Gezhouba separately met him. During the meeting, he added, they thanked him for helping realise Kohala and Azad Pattan power projects and further coordination for their execution, adding that

the projects involving \$4 billion worth of investment will yield 1,800 MW cheaper Hydel power with 8,000 jobs. On July 6, Pakistan and China had signed an agreement for construction of \$1.5 billion Azad Pattan Hydel Power project under the framework of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Prime Minister Imran Khan witnessed the sign-

ing of the agreement with China Gezhouba Group Company Limited for Azad Pattan Hydropower Project at a ceremony in Islamabad.

Prior to that, PM Khan had witnessed the agreement signing of 1124 MW Kohala hydropower project which would be completed at a cost of \$2.5 billion. The signing ceremony of a tripartite agreement was held in Islamabad.

Iran govt denies reports of fresh blast

DNA

LONDON: Iranian officials have denied reports of an explosion west of the capital Tehran on Thursday, the latest in a series of mysterious blasts to hit the country in recent weeks. Social media users reported hearing explosions in the nearby cities of Garmsireh and Qods, state media said. It is not clear where the reported incident took place. Key sites including nuclear facilities and oil refineries have been damaged in recent incidents.

In July Iran's Atomic Energy Organisation confirmed a fire took place at a nuclear plant in Natanz. The incident is reported to have set back Iran's nuclear programme. Rumours of the latest incident began circulating online at around midnight on Thursday, according to reports by state-run IRIB news agency.

Locals reported hearing three or four mortar-like sounds similar to anti-aircraft weapons, reported government-run Press TV. A small number of social media accounts claiming to be from Garmsireh reported hearing sounds, according to analysis by BBC News, but images of fire and damaged buildings circulating online

China donates equipment to 50 schools

Economic Affairs Division Secretary Noor Ahmed thanked the Chinese government for providing the equipment

DNA

ISLAMABAD: China will donate equipment worth Rs. 650 million to Pakistan's vocational schools, supporting the country's socio-economic development.

According to letter of exchange (LOE) signed by the two countries this week, equipment includes diesel generators, computers, printers, projectors and classroom furniture. The donation will go to 50 vocational schools which will directly benefit over 10,000 people, Gwadar Pro reported.

Economic Affairs Division Secretary Noor Ahmed thanked the Chinese government for providing the equipment, adding that the equipment is critical for the upgrading of vocational schools and the improvement of vocational training capabilities of Pakistan.

The project will promote vocational training and enhance Pakistan's productivity, Noor Ahmed mentioned, adding that China is a true friend of Pakistan that always extends a helping hand to Pakistan whenever Pakistan is in need, no matter it is the COVID-19 pandemic or the locust attack.

Chinese Ambassador Yao Jing noted that the equipment donation project is a part of the initial cooperation under the framework of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and CPEC phase II will focus more on vocational training, agriculture, poverty alleviation and health sectors.

China will continue to support Pakistan in the fight against COVID-19 and contribute to the implementation of the people-oriented cooperative projects between the two countries with CPEC as a major platform, Yao added.

NCOC prepares guidelines for Eid

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) on Friday was informed that guidelines have been prepared regarding Eid ul Azha, which were also shared with all the provinces. The NCOC suggested setting up 'Cattle Mandis' outside the cities, compulsory testing of animal handlers, 'Mandi' timing from morning to evening and engaging ulema for implementation of SOPs on eve of Eid. Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Asad Umar chaired the NCOC meeting and reviewed Eid ul Azha/Cattle Mandi Management, Epidemiology, availability of COVID-19 and Non COVID-19 medicines, disease projections and need assessment.

PUBG ban stays

KARACHI: The fate of the online game PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds (PUBG) hangs in the balance as the Pakistan Telecommunication failed on Thursday to come up with a final decision on its ban. A temporary ban was imposed on the battle royale game on July 1. — DNA

WHO to probe into its pandemic response

DNA

GENEVA: The World Health Organisation, which faced fierce US criticism over its handling of the coronavirus crisis, launched an independent panel on Thursday to review its response to the pandemic. The Independent panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response will be headed by former New Zealand prime minister Helen Clark and former Liberian president Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. "Through you, the world will understand the truth of what happened and also the solutions to build our future better as one humanity," World Health Organization chief

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said at the UN agency's headquarters in Geneva. At their annual assembly in May, WHO member states agreed to an independent probe into the UN agency's coronavirus response, following repeated US attacks. President Donald Trump had accused the WHO of botching its han-

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Briefs

PTI Govt to contribute \$200 mn for Education Action Plan

ISLAMABAD: The federal government will contribute around \$200 million as a counterpart to National Education Action Plan Programme for COVID-19. This was disclosed by Deputy Chairman Planning Commission Mohammad Jehanzeb here on Friday while chairing a meeting to discuss the plan. Federal and Provincial secretaries' education participated and senior officials from Planning Ministry participated in the meeting through video conference.

Mohammad Jehanzeb said that Federal Government has taken the lead on the concept of blended education and therefore consulted all provincial government education departments, Planning and Development divisions for their feedback on the initiative. The contributing provinces will get the funding as a grant and will not be liable for the loan repayment. He advised the provincial planning departments, provincial literacy and education departments, and finance to coordinate for laying out a comprehensive provincial response.

Deputy Chairman Planning Commission further emphasized that due consideration has to be given to the exceptional circumstances and unprecedented crisis owing to COVID-19 situation.

The donor support for Education Emergency at the national level has been harnessed.

All provincial governments endorsed the emergency education plan. The DCPC directed Ministry of Education

to have consultative sessions with provincial governments and incorporate their feed-

back. – APP

'Avoid gathering on Eid' a state policy: Chairman CII

ISLAMABAD, Jul 10 (APP): Chairman, Council of Islamic Ideology Dr. Qibla Ayaz on Friday said that the announcement of Prime Minister to avoid gatherings on Eid-ul-Azha should be declared as a state policy. He said that the local administrations should be instructed to take action against the elements involved in violation of SOPs and guidelines, Radio Pakistan reported. He said that on the event of Eid-ul-Fitr, the people violated the guidelines of the government that resulted in a peak in number of COVID-19 cases. On the occasion of Eid-ul-Azha, the government has again issued the guidelines that must be complied with, while the local administration must take action to stop the public gatherings, he added. Chairman suggested that the cattle market must be shifted away from populated areas. He also appealed to the Ulema that they have to play their role to ensure limited gatherings at mosques. – APP

Reports on two legislative proposals presented

ISLAMABAD: Two reports on as many legislative proposals and six periodical reports of various standing committees were presented in the National Assembly on Friday. A report of Standing Committee on Finance, Revenue and Economic Affairs on the Loans for Agricultural, Commercial and Industrial Purposes (Amendment) Bill, 2019 was presented.

Another report of Standing Committee on Law and Justice about the Code of Civil Procedure (Amendment) Bill, 2020 was also laid in the House. Both reports were presented in the House by a member of both committee Syed Naveed Qamar. A total of six periodical reports of Standing Committees on Climate Change, Public Accounts Committee, Defence Production, Human Rights, National Food Security and Research and Government Assurances were presented in the House for the period of January – June, 2019 as required by rule 234-A of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the National Assembly, 2007. – APP



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Reforms Asad Umer offering dua on the death of Haji Ghulam Nabi Bakhtawari, gold medalist of Pakistan Movement with his son Zafar Bakhtawari and grandsons Ahsan Bakhtawari & Waqar Bakhtawari. Chaudhary Nadeem Uddin, Jamshaid Mughal, Ghulam Hussain and Khalid Chaudhary were also present at this occasion. – DNA

Seven Punjab cities undergo 15-day smart lockdown

"There shall be a complete ban on movement of people to and from these areas by public and private transport except for limited movement of one person per vehicle to and from the exempted facilities"

DNA

LAHORE: Seven cities of Punjab will undergo a 15-day smart lockdown that commenced from (Friday) and would last till July 24. The Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department (P&SHD) Thursday issued a

notification under the Punjab Infectious Diseases Ordinance 2020 about enforcement of lockdown in Lahore, Multan, Faisalabad, Gujranwala, Sialkot, Gujrat and Rawalpindi, till July 24, 2020 midnight.

In Lahore, the lockdown will be enforced in A2 Block Township, EME Society, Main Bazaar Chun-

gi Amr Sadhu, Punjab Government Servants Housing Scheme, Wapda Town, C-Block Jauhar Town and Green City.

"All markets, shopping malls, restaurants, offices (public and private) shall remain closed in these areas," read the notification from the P&SHD about Lahore.

"There shall be a complete ban

on movement of people to and from these areas by public and private transport except for limited movement of one person per vehicle to and from the exempted facilities."

The notification added that there shall also be a complete ban on gatherings of all kinds for social, religious, or any other purpose

at any place, public or private throughout these areas. The basic necessities of life will remain available in smart lockdown areas. "The purpose of the smart lockdown is to minimise movement of people in hotspots of positive coronavirus cases," said Capt (retd) Muhammad Usman, Secretary P&SHD.

IHC directs interior ministry to decide Cynthia deportation plea

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) asked the interior ministry to take a decision, according to law, on a PPP petition seeking to deport US blogger Cynthia D Ritchie. IHC Chief Justice Athar Minullah was

conducting the proceedings of a petition filed by a PPP supporter Iftikhar Ahmed who is seeking Ritchie's deportation on grounds that her visa has expired.

Deputy Attorney General Syed Mohammad Tayyab Shah submitted an interim report on behalf of the federal government, telling

the court that the petitioner has not appeared before the interior ministry about his plea.

To which, Justice Minullah remarked: "This is a sovereign state, we are watching the conduct of the ministry".

He further said that there was no reason for proceed-

ings as "the law should take its own path".

Justice Minullah asked the interior ministry to decide upon the plea according to law.

The court directed the parties in the case to appear before the ministry on Wednesday at 1pm and record their statements.

'Previous govt maintained prolonged loadshedding'

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs, Ali Muhammad Khan

said the prolonged power loadshedding had observed in the country during the previous governments of Pakistan Peoples' Party and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz and many people had lost their lives due to heat and shortfall in Karachi.

The main reason behind loadshedding was poor transmission system as previous governments had not improved it, he said talking a private news channel.

Whenever Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government had taken a notice of such crisis, he said the mafia had resisted it which were created and empowered in the last regimes.

The minister said the PTI government was not against anyone but it had mandate to ask the questions from provincial governments and they should reply rather than politicizing it. – APP

PM Imran should resolve media's issues through consultations: Shujaat

LAHORE: PML-Q chief Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain advised Prime Minister Imran Khan to solve all problems relating to media with consultations. "One should forget everything else and try to solve the country's problems," he said.

Shujaat added that information minister Shibli Faraz can play a leading role when it comes to addressing the problems faced by the Pakistani media. The PML-Q chief spoke about last year's JUIF Azadi Dharna, revealing that when Maulana Fazl-ur-Rahman came to Islamabad with his caravan of supporters, some people were in favour of cracking down on them hard.

"No one was willing to go to Imran Khan and talk to him [about the dharna issue]," he said, adding that people were asking each other to speak to the premier but not willing to do it themselves. He said that former Punjab chief minister Pervaiz Elahi was not even a member of the government's negotiating committee yet he was asked to speak to the prime minister. – DNA

All agree on educational institutions opening: Wajihah Akram



ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Secretary on Federal Education and Professional Training Wajihah Akram

Thursday said the federal and provincial governments were on the same page for opening the educational institutions by strictly adopting standard operating procedures (SOPs).

Talking to a news channel, she said all steps would be taken to save the people's lives and provincial governments had to develop SOPs in the provinces soon.

The schools would not be opened in one step, she said and added that masks

and sensitizers should be provided to schools and management in order to protect the students from COVID-19.

Wajihah Akram said the people should adopt SOPs during Eid-ul-Azha in the country to contain the spreading of the pandemic and they should behave with responsibilities during Eid celebration.

This challenge had given us opportunity as it promoted the digital connectivity, she said adding it had also helped schools and universities for online classes in the country. – APP

Hot, humid weather forecast, rain at isolated places

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Meteorological Department has forecast hot and humid weather in most parts of the country on Saturday. However, rain-thundershowers (with dust-storm/gusty winds) are expected in upper-central Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, eastern Balochistan, Islamabad, Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. According to synoptic situation, seasonal low lies over north Balochistan. Monsoon currents of moderate intensity from Arabian sea are penetrating upper parts of the country and likely to continue during next 48 hours.

Noor-ul Haq Qadri for adopting collective sacrifice

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Religious Affairs Noor-ul Haq Qadri Friday urged the people for adopting the option of collective sacrifice of the animals on Eid-ul-Azha instead of performing individually amid at to contain the spread of coronavirus.

Talking to PTV News channel, he said the government has already in consultation with provinces and religious leader for SOPs of cattle markets and congregations of Eid-ul Azha to ward off the COVID-19 in the country.

It was important to strictly follow the SOPs both by

buyers and traders of animals market and administration have to ensure the people should adopted the SOPs, he said.

He said that It was the government plan to set up cattle markets outside city limits in different places to avoid threat of spreading of virus and requesting the people to cooperate with the administration for the same.

Minister for Religious also appealed to the masses to celebrate upcoming Eid-ul-Azha with simplicity and not to grow careless and follow government health guidelines to keep corona-

virus at bay. He said the cleanliness during Eid-ul-Azha is a big challenge for city administrations. The concerned authorities with the cooperation of the public must make an extra effort for clean-up after the sacrifice of the animals to counter the prevailing threat of coronaviruses.

"Sacrifice of animals on Eid-ul-Azha is a religious obligation and the government will ensure every possible facility in this regard to manage the occasion safely and contain the risk of COVID-19 outbreak", he assured. – APP

PSE revises trading hours

DNA

KARACHI: The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) on Friday revised trading hours according to which the market would begin trading from 9:30am to 3:30pm from Mondays to Thursdays. However,

there will be two sessions on Friday. The first session will begin from 9:15am to 12pm, whereas, after Juma prayers, the second session would resume at 2:30pm and would continue till 4:30 pm in the evening. The new timings will be implemented from Monday, July 13.

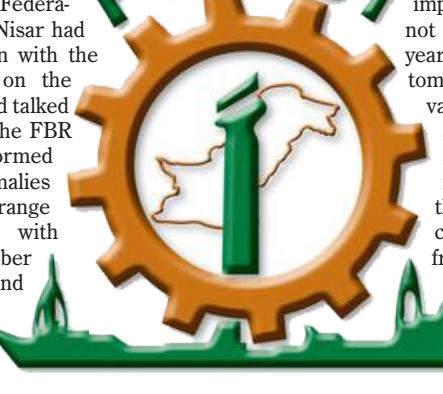
FPCCI committed to resolve commercial importer's problems

"The valuation ruling of imported goods and said that the customs department is committed to revise the valuation ruling in 3 months but the valuation ruling has not been revised for many years"

DNA

KARACHI: Anjum Nisar, President Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI), has expressed deep concern over the inclusion of chemicals & dyes raw materials in Part 2 to Part 3 which is for finished goods in the federal budget 2020-21 and assured the commercial importers to raise their voice in front of decision makers. FPCCI president demanded chairman FBR Javed Ghani to include the raw materials of chemicals & dyes in part 2 instead of part 3 and restore 2pc income tax on commercial importers and withdraw the decision to increase the income tax rate to 5.5pc, so that the industries can get cheap raw material. Otherwise, the production cost of industries will increase significantly.

He was talking during a meeting with Amin Yousuf Balgamwala, chairman, Pakistan Chemicals & Dyes Merchants Association (PCDMA) and former director, Karachi Stock Exchange at Federation House. Anjum Nisar had a detailed discussion with the chairman PCDMA on the budget anomalies and talked on phone call with the FBR officials. He was informed about budget anomalies and requested to arrange an online meeting with Chairman or member FBR. In order to find the problems facing commercial im-



porters, it is expected that an online meeting with the Chairman or member FBR may be convened. FPCCI president also assured to solve the issue of valuation ruling of imported goods, which has not been revised for many years and stressed the customs officials to revise the valuation ruling in 90 days according to the prices available in the international markets as per the law, so that to protect commercial importers from losses.

Amin Yousuf Balgamwala, chairman PCDMA pointed out that in the

budget 2020-21, raw materials of chemicals & dyes have been included in part 2 to part 3 i.e. finished goods and the income tax has risen from 2pc to 5.5pc, which is nothing but losses. This move will make industrial raw materials more expensive, which will increase production costs and exporters will lose the ability to compete in global markets. "The valuation ruling of imported goods and said that the customs department is committed to revise the valuation ruling in 3 months but the valuation ruling has not been revised for many years", he drew attention. Chairman PCDMA further said that the prices of imported items in the valuation guideline of the customs department are not in line with the prices available in the international market, causing huge financial loss to the importers while the industries are also facing higher production cost due to high cost of raw materials.

Islamabad POST METROLITE

Saturday, July 11, 2020

Briefs

Rescue-1122 expanded at tehsil level: Rashid

RAWALPINDI: Following the special directives of the Punjab Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar, the Punjab Emergency Service (Rescue-1122) is being expanded to 62 tehsils out of 146 throughout the province with the cost of Rs. 4160 million.

Raja Rashid Hafeez, Provincial Minister for Literacy and Non-Formal Basic Education expressed these views while talking to delegation of the different UCs area here on Friday. Rashid said motorbike ambulance service has already been launched in 27 districts including Rawalpindi, Lahore and South Punjab and for the purpose Rs. 1030 million has been allocated in fiscal budget 2020-21 to provide better health care facilities during emergency cases. Rashid Hafeez said that by expanding motorcycle ambulance service in more areas, problems like late arrival of patients in hospitals due to traffic rush would be solved. He said that emergency care is the fundamental human right and the Service is working to ensure provision of this basic right.

The minister said that despite the extremely difficult economic and financial constraints due to COVID-19, the Punjab govt presented a tax-free budget and even abolished the taxes of Rs 56 billion that were already being collected in Punjab. - APP

IHC accepts sugar mills appeal for hearing

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Friday accepted for hearing an intra court appeal of sugar mills association against formation of sugar inquiry commission. The court declared the case as maintainable but rejected the petitioners' request for grant of a stay order on actions against sugar mills in light of the commission's report. A division bench comprising Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb issued a written order on ICA filed by sugar mills' owners challenging the decision of single member bench. The court served notices to Ministry of Interior, members inquiry commission, federation, Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and other respondents to seek their comments on the matter. It may be mentioned here that earlier a single member bench comprising Chief Justice Athar Minallah had turned down the petition of sugar mills against the inquiry commission. - APP

Student accidentally kills himself

DNA

ABBOTTABAD: A 10th grade student accidentally shot and killed himself while shooting a video for TikTok, a highly popular Chinese social media app, police said on Friday. They said the incident took place in Bagan neighbourhood of Abbottabad where Abdul Samad was filming video with a pistol. He accidentally squeezed the trigger, fatally injuring himself.

The body was shifted to a nearby hospital for medico-legal formalities. The craze for the free video-sharing app that allows users to create and share short 15-second videos, has resulted in a number of such incidents in the country. Lately, an 18-year-old boy in Narowal lost his life while making a video for the app.

The teenager drowned in a Narowal canal while filming video. The deceased, identified as Husnain, went to the canal along with three of his friends to record video. He slipped and fell into the canal. On June 21, a teenage boy had shot himself dead while making a video for TikTok in Karachi.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Inter-faith Harmony Noor-ul-Haq Qadri visiting the unique and antique handwritten copies with Gold and Silver Water of The Holy Quran from 15th Century onwards at Safa Gold Mall. 0 DNA

8 million EOBI beneficiaries to get upto 10 percent subsidy

"The partnership between EOBI and USC is a landmark initiative for giving an impetus to the government departments' efforts in materializing the vision of Prime Minister Imran Khan to transform the country into a Madina-like welfare state"

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (OP&HRD) Sayed Zulfikar Abbas Bukhari on Friday said the government would soon launch 'EOBI Sahulat Card' to provide up to 10 percent subsidy to its 8 million beneficiaries on purchase of staple food from the utility stores.

The agreement to this effect was signed by the heads of Employees' Old-Age Benefits Institution (EOBI) and Utility Stores Corporation (USC) here to materialize the initiative of the OP&HRD ministry. "The partnership between EOBI and USC is a landmark initiative for giving an impetus to the government departments' efforts in materializing the vision of Prime Minister Imran Khan to transform the country into a Madina-like welfare state," he told the media here.

Zulfikar Bukhari said under the project, the card holding EOBI pensioners and insured person would get a subsidy of about Rs 1,000 per month on five essential food items such as wheat flour, oil, rice, grains and pulse. He said within just 20 months of its term, the government had increased the annuity of EOBI pensioners from Rs 5,250 to 8,500 which would be further

upped to Rs 15,000 till end of its tenure.

The SAPM said the collaboration between the two organizations was meant to serve low-income people by giving them ration at the low rates.

The card holders might even get more than 10 per cent discount on some edibles out of the selected food staples.

Zulfikar Bukhari urged the EOBI registered person to avail the card after its launch as the USC intended

to add more facilities under this initiative.

He said an extensive awareness campaign would be launched on electronic, print and social media to aware the EOBI pensioners and insured persons on it to make them get maximum benefit from the opportunity. EOBI Chairman Azhar Hameed said the 'EOBI Sahulat Card' would be launched by early next month (August). "In a first, there will be a soft launch of initiative and hundreds of people would be provided the card."

Later, the EOBI would start issuing cards to all of its beneficiaries, verified by the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA). The USC Chairman Zulqarnain Ali Khan said the initiative was taken on the instruction of Prime Minister Imran Khan who had been strong proponent of uplifting the living standard of downtrodden segment of the society.

"Pak-China cooperation in agriculture sector vital for growth"

ISLAMABAD: The agricultural cooperation between China and Pakistan have a huge role in agricultural up-gradation and technological transfer to Pakistan. The memorandum of understanding (MoUs) between the two countries have provided the right kind of framework that needs to be vigorously pursued the goals of collaboration and cooperation in agriculture sector, said Mr Muhammad Mudassir Tipu, Director-General China at Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, while sharing his views at online dialogue 'China-Pakistan Agriculture Cooperation' organized by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) here on Friday.

Mr Tipu, while highlighting various aspects of the cooperation in agriculture sector and MoUs in this context, said that the decision-making on implementing this vision has been institutionalized through a consultative pro-

cess covering various dimensions of the cooperation. With the help of technology, hybrid seeds and training to farmers, he said, the productivity of wheat and other crops in Pakistan could be enhanced tremendously. He added further that China has lent valuable support to Pakistan in locus control efforts including the provision of pesticides, drones and other technological support. Agricultural Commissioner at the Embassy of China in Pakistan, Dr Gu Wenliang on the occasion said that there is a lot of potential in Pakistan to enhance agricultural productivity through the use of better technology. The Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan had shown keen interest in enhancing cooperation and collaboration between the two countries during his visit to China and MoUs signed between the two countries reflect the same approach on both sides. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Visitors visiting the unique and antique handwritten copies with Gold and Silver Water of The Holy Quran from 15th Century onwards at Safa Gold Mall. - DNA

IDCLC kicks off 'Green Neighbourhood' for improved environment

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Youth from the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad consolidated 'Green Neighbourhood' initiative here Friday in a virtual consultative meeting of the Islamabad Devcom Centennial Leo Club (IDCLC). Objective of the initiative is to engage young people and their families and friends to add value to the ongoing campaigns of clean and green cities. Speaking about the concept of 'Green Neighbourhood', the IDCLC president Haares Munir said, Green Neighborhood means that the young citizens and their families and friends would be engaged to take care of their neighbourhood by keeping it clean from

littering, domestic solid waste and flowing out sewage. The second part of the initiative, Haares Munir said, is to engage the citizens of all ages to make their own neighbourhood green by protecting the green cover around them and add more sustainable plantation of saplings. Streets and the neighborhood area that meets the needs of peoples' daily activities and allows communities to control pollution and water abuse, and to promote energy conservation and developing neighbourhood bonding to improve social security. It would surely improve natural and social environment. Environmentalist Mome Saleem appreciated youth for chalking out a citizens' centric initiative to improve local environment.

She said different parts of Rawalpindi especially need citizens interventions to keep in clean and green. The local youth could play a pivotal role in it. Shanzay said Citizens are doing good in Islamabad, the IDCLC volunteers shall focus on the congested areas in Rawalpindi where littering, domestic waste management and garbage collection are the main issues. Neighbourhood is widely recognised as a fundamental building block of a city, and a good starting point to create a truly sustainable community. A green neighbourhood assessment system is a tool that evaluates sustainability performance of a given neighbourhood against a set of criteria. This paper evaluates 20 major inter-

national green neighbourhood assessment systems in according to their sustainability coverage and features. The results of this study show that community, resources and ecology are the three major sustainability aspects that applied in 18, 17 and 16 out of 20 assessment systems respectively. However, after assessing the sustainability aspects by their weightings in the assessment systems, the differences among them are reduced and their rate of importance in all the assessment systems became closer. Ecology, energy, transportation, resources and economy receive the highest weightings after affecting by their weightings and incredibly community dropped to the very low importance of weightings. Regarding regional distribu-

tion of the systems around the world, initiative of green neighbourhood assessment system was first started in United Kingdom and European Union in 2000 and 2004 respectively and this trend reached to United States in 2005. Meanwhile, LEED (ND) with 184 certificates/projects is the main well-known systems in the world followed by Envirodevelopment in Australia and SPeAR in the United Kingdom with 100 certificates/projects each. It is also found that the highest certification fee (minimum) is LEED (ND) with US\$30,000 followed by Green Star (Buildings) and CASSBEE and the highest evaluation fee (maximum) goes back to DGNB followed by LEED (ND) and Green Star (Communities).

IHC issues duty roster for vocations

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Friday issued a duty roster for its judges during the summer vocations from July 13 to 17. According to the duty roster issued by the registrar office, seven single member benches while three division benches would hear the important cases during the vocations. The first division bench comprises of Chief Justice Athar Minallah and Justice Ghulam Ahmed Qambrani, second would comprise Justice Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzen while Justice Mohsin Akhter Kiyani and Justice Fayyaz Ahmed Jan-dran would be part of the third bench. - APP

Briefs

Theater Wallay to arrange music event

ISLAMABAD: Art group Theatre wallay will arrange a musical night featuring a sitar performance by Wajih Nizami at The Farm on Saturday evening with exclusive audience of 15 people only. According to management, the Farm has been opened for cultural activities with strict SoPs after being shut down for three months, due to COVID-19 with only a limited number of people. Pre-registration would be mandatory for attending the event and the tickets will be sold on a first come first served basis. Only 15 seats are available for this particular event. All the performances would be held in outdoor courtyard space keeping physical distance and WHO suggested guidelines. No one would be allowed to attend the event without masks which need to be worn all the time while any group of more than 4 people will not be allowed the entry. For appropriate arrangements and precautions, it will be mandatory to pre-register and pre-pay through online payment options. – APP

Residents demand to shift Asphalt plant

ABBOTTABAD: Residents of Mangal Abbottabad Friday demanded of the provincial government to immediately shift the Asphalt mixing plant set up by the department of Communication and Works (C&W) posing a serious threat for the people, environment and wildlife of the area. The mixing plant was constructed just 200 yards away from the freshwater source which is being used by the dozens of villages of two union councils including Bandha Peer Khan and Baldheri. Babar Khan a local journalist told APP that people are also worried about the use of bituminous-bound materials, crushed rock, sand, gravel, or slags material and their wastes that are polluting the environment and clean drinking water which is the only source for the many villages of the area. Three years back the administration of the Asphalt plant have dumped tons of waste material which was highly contaminated in the water reservoir resulting in a large number of fishes found dead and the same water was in the use of the people, he adding said. – APP

60pc Covid-19 beds in Pindi vacant: commissioner



ISLAMABAD: Major General Arif Malik Director General Anti Narcotics Force and Ambassador of Japan Kuninori Matsuda holding bilateral talks during Ambassador's visit to ANF Headquarters. – DNA

ICCI for promoting industrialization

ICCI could play role to bring more investors from the private sector in order to exploit the potential opportunities of business partnerships in CPEC projects

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) led by Muhammad Ahmed Waheed President called on Mathar Niaz Rana, Federal Secretary, Ministry of Planning and Development and discussed with him various proposals for promoting industrialization in the region. Tahir Abbasi Senior Vice President ICCI and Malik Sohail Hussain Chief Coordinator UBG FPCCI were in the delegation, said a press release. Welcoming the delegation, Mathar Niaz Rana,

Federal Secretary, Ministry of Planning & Development briefed them about the various initiatives of his ministry and shared detail of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects that offered a great opportunity for JVs and investment to the private sector. He said that ICCI could play role to bring more investors from the private sector in order to exploit the potential opportunities of business partnerships in CPEC projects. He said an Industrial Zone has been planned in Islamabad under CPEC project and desired that ICCI should share its proposal for the industrial zone that would be given due consideration.



He further said that sector-specific industrial clusters were required in Islamabad to facilitate the potential foreign and local investors in exploring JVs and investment opportunities in

such clusters. Speaking at the occasion, Muhammad Ahmed Waheed, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry said that ICCI had been making efforts since long for the establishment of a new industrial estate in Islamabad to promote industrialization as there was no more space in existing industrial areas to set-up new industries due to which the potential investors were facing problems.

He urged the Planning Ministry to cooperate for materialization of this important project that would give boost to industrial activities and create plenty of new

jobs in the region. Muhammad Ahmed Waheed said that ICCI should be taken on board for the establishment of industrial zone in Islamabad under CPEC project and added that ICCI would send its proposal for the said project to make it an industrial zone that could exploit the comparative advantage and human talent of the area and emerge as a hub of industrial activities in the region. Tahir Abbasi Senior Vice President ICCI and Malik Sohail Hussain Chief Coordinator UBG FPCCI also shared various proposals for industrial development in the region. – APP

PIA air hostess served notice for 'misbehaving' with medic

PESHAWAR: A Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) air hostess has been served a notice to explain her position about her alleged misbehaviour with an on-duty doctor at Bacha Khan International Airport (BKIA), Peshawar. Benish Sadiq misbehaved with lady doctor Shehnaz when the latter asked the former for samples for a Covid-19 test upon her arrival at the airport from Abu Dhabi on-board the national flag carrier's PK-9218 flight. "Yet another serious complaint has been received from in charge Airport Health Establishment, BKIA, vide A.H.D/2019-2020/340 regarding your misbehaviour with an on duty Doctor (Dr Shehnaz) upon arrival of flight PK-9218 on 05-07-202 AUH-PEW," read the notice served on the air hostess by Bashirud Din Behroze, Base Incharge Flight Services Bacha Khan International Airport. He asked the PIA flight attendant to explain her stance about the incident within 24 hours of the receipt of this notice. – APP

2 Motorway officers died in accident

ISLAMABAD: An inspector and a head constable of the National Highways and Motorway Police were martyred while a sub-inspector was seriously injured while on duty. According to the details, a car's tire burst near Burhan on Peshawar Islamabad Motorway in the middle of the road the motorway police officers rushed to the spot to help him to keep the vehicle safe from an accident. But another vehicle, which was coming from behind lost control and collided with police officers. – APP

Delegated Legislation Committee briefed on FBR policy board

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Senate Committee on Delegated Legislation in its meeting discussed the Federal Board of Revenue Act, 2017 with particular reference to Section 6 of the Act regarding creation of Policy Board. The meeting was held under the chairmanship of Senator Kauda Babar here at the Parliament House on Friday and was attended among others by Senators Mian Attae Shaikh, Dr. Asad Ashraf, Kalsoom Parveen, Rubina Khalid. The officials from FBR briefed the Committee about policy board, its values, missions, policies and guidelines.

The Committee stressed upon the need of holding meetings of the policy board more frequently as the act also provides a time frame of 3 months in which one meeting shall be held. The Committee Chairman Kauda Babar who was nominated a member of the board had earlier resigned from the board because no meetings were held despite repeated requisitions and reminders.

Pakistan Post App crosses 100,000 downloads

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Post Mobile App has downloaded by more than 100,000 users which was allow customer to track and trace their articles online on their android mobile devices. An official told APP on Friday that Pakistan Post take up all the complaints through this Mobile App to enhance customer experience and continually improve the system. "The application has several features that makes use of the wide array of services. Pakistan Post already offers such as track and trace, complaint handling, e-commerce, parcel collect, delivery, complaints, post office locations, tariff, postcodes and information about postal services", he said.

Pakistan app 'WorthyWalk' among ten google winners

ISLAMABAD: WorthyWalk, an app available on Google Play since December 2019 was ranked among the top ten global winners from more than 400 submissions from around the globe by Google Developer Student Club (DSC) students from 69 countries. Google hosts a DSC challenge every year to nurture talent by inviting student developers from all over the world to use Google products or platforms to develop solutions for challenges faced by their local communities. The developers of WorthyWalk are students from FAST - National University of Computer & Emerging Sciences (NUCES) Uni-

versity, Islamabad. This winning team of developers used Google Cloud, Android, Firebase, Google-Analytics and Google-Maps API to develop their app. The app helps individuals achieve health goals by walking, running, or cycling. It rewards its users with 'Knubs' (in-built currency coins); to be redeemed as discount coupons from partner businesses, local shops

and startups. The long term concept behind WorthyWalk is to reduce obesity – a health-issue that has nearly tripled worldwide since 1975, especially in South Asia, where malnutrition is also prevalent.

It inspires the users to adopt a more active lifestyle by gamifying it using promotional opportunities involving local businesses.

Download the app from Google Play here. – APP

QAU VC calls for collective efforts to overcome challenges

DNA

ISLAMABAD: VC QAU Emphasizes over collaborative efforts to overcome challenges in Higher Education. Dr. Muhammad Ali Shah Vice-Chancellor Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU) Islamabad and Chairman Vice-Chancellors Committee Pakistan has emphasized over collaborative efforts and close university linkages to overcome various challenges confronted by the higher education institutions in Pakistan especially

support, QAU could win more laurels for the country both at regional and international levels. He suggested declaration of education emergency to overcome the financial and other challenges being faced by higher education institutions. He also highlighted various initiatives to facilitate QAU students and improving quality of teaching & research including establishment of first ever directorates of student affairs & academics and strengthening of incubation, career counseling & job placement centers.

RDA approves alignment of Ring Road project

RAWALPINDI: The 48th meeting of Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) Governing Body held here on Friday in the conference room of RDA approved alignment of 65.8 km Rawalpindi Ring Road project which will start from Radio Pakistan, Rawat N-5 and terminate at Sangian N-5. The Governing Body meeting, chaired by Chairman RDA Tariq Mahmood Murtaza also approved construction of special zones including Industrial, Educational, Recreational, Medical Health, Residential and Aerotropolis etc along with the Ring Road to decongest the city and set a new direction for growth of the city which is a key component of the ring road project. The Director General (DG) RDA presented the annual budget for fiscal year 2020-21 worth Rs 3520.836 million of RDA which was approved by the Governing Body. Out of the total Budget, an amount of Rs 2395.22 million has been allocated for various development projects. The meeting was informed that the authority adopted the policy of strict financial discipline and austerity measures during last financial year. The Governing Body also approved Rs 2059.929 million deficit budget of Water and Sanitation Authority (WASA) Rawalpindi for the fiscal year 2020-21 which was presented by Managing Director (MD) WASA. This year, WASA is expecting to generate revenue amounting to Rs 1589.079 million while total expenditures of the authority will be of Rs 3649.008 million. Major portion of the expenditures allocated will be spent for improvement of water supply network, electricity bills, improvement of sewerage lines etc. The meeting also approved various other agenda items. – APP



RAWALPINDI: A young street vendor displaying hair bands to attract the customers in Saddar area. – APP

Four POs including two most wanted netted

RAWALPINDI: Police on Friday claimed to have arrested four Proclaimed Offenders (POs) including two most wanted criminals who was alleged perpetrators of heinous crimes.

According to Rawalpindi police Spokesman, special raids on the directive of City Police Officer (CPO) Muhammad Ahsan Younas were conducted by police to net POs, court absconders and other outlaws while Wah Cantt and Sadigabad police managed to net two A category accused namely Ijaz and Numan Baseer.

Similarly, Wah Cantt police arrested a B category criminal namely Jabar Suleman while Waris Khan police nabbed Qasim Ali, a B category PO.

He said, the police crackdown against criminals would continue and the outlaws would be sent behind the bars.

He said, the CPO had directed the police to launch a crackdown against POs and strict action in accordance with the law should be taken against criminals, particularly the most wanted. – APP

Police arrest kite seller; recover 750 kites

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi police in a crackdown against kite sellers and kite flyers managed to net a kite seller besides recovering 750 kites and eight kite flying string rolls from his possession.

According to a police spokesman, police on the directive of City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi Muhammad Ahsan Younas conducted raids and netted kite flying ban violators.

He said, Civil Line police taking action against kite sellers and kite flyers netted Moaz Ahmed and recovered 750 kites and eight kite flying string rolls from his possession. – APP

Uncertain future

EVEN after 20 years of US troop presence in Afghanistan and a far longer period of conflict and uncertainty, Afghanistan's future is still not secure. President Donald Trump has been indicating for weeks that he is eager to pull all American troops out of the country before November this year when the presidential campaign gets fully underway.

Trump obviously sees a complete withdrawal as a possible winning slogan for a campaign which is in some trouble. But a violation of the agreement reached with the Taliban in Doha in February this year of a phased withdrawal spread out over 14 months would leave Afghanistan in an extremely precarious situation.

The intelligence reports of Russian attacks on the US military simply add to the complications in a country that has almost forgotten what peace and normalcy look like. There are now just over 8000 US troops in Afghanistan, and Pentagon officials who have urged President Trump not to speed up the withdrawal continue talks with the White House. There is a very real possibility that Trump may disregard advice and order an immediate pullout.

The problem is that in this scenario the people of Afghanistan would be left ignored. The elected Afghan government led by President Ashraf Ghani has limited control over the country. The Taliban hold large swathes of territory across the country but are themselves under pressure from the IS which is said to be moving rapidly into the war-torn country. Afghan warlords continue to play their own games to maximize control.

The reality is that policies pursued by the US and its allies put Afghanistan in the miserable situation it faces today. It is therefore the duty of Washington and other Western powers to ensure that they leave Afghanistan in a stable situation. Power must be transferred fully to the people of Afghanistan and not to any other agents supported by external forces or those that work against the interests of the Afghans. The people of the country have suffered endlessly. Afghanistan cannot be left in this situation indefinitely. The US must work to find a way to offer a lasting peace to its people and also hand back control over Afghanistan that it snatched away many decades ago. It is this factor that must top priorities and President Trump has to be made aware of the US's responsibilities in this respect.

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Visa nightmare

THE US government has announced that international students taking classes fully online for the fall semester would have to transfer to an institution with in-person classes or leave the country. This policy change will affect hundreds of thousands of international students in the US immediately as the Covid-19 pandemic has forced many educational institutions to suspend in-person classes for the rest of the year.

If fully enforced, this policy will result in the deportation of unsuspecting students who had come to the US to pursue their educational goals, and now are being punished for something that is beyond their control. A majority of such students are in the US on F-1 or M-1 visas enabling them to enroll and study anywhere in America. If they are forced to go back to their countries across the continents, for them remote learning could mean attending classes in the middle of the night.

In many cases they will have to deal with patching internet access or no connection at all. This policy may also result in the loss of funding for students to continue their education in the United States. Some students are also working as research or teaching assistants and they will now be unable to participate in such activities and the upshot will be a cancellation of such assistantships for them. Any such policy that results in more difficulties for students anywhere in the world must be resisted. If students end up leaving their education programmes for whatever reasons, humanity loses a potential citizen who could be an artist, a community worker, a doctor, an engineer, or any other responsible professional. The Trump administration must take this announcement back before this policy starts taking its toll in terms of lost careers and even lives.

As many developing countries, and even the developed ones, are beset by a deep economic crisis – and in some cases also political strife – people are already living off their savings. A majority of students are likely to come home to a struggling family that will hardly be able to withstand the pressure of their wards discontinuing their education just because of this senseless policy of the Trump administration. Even in America, most foreign students don't find a level playing field due to their different backgrounds. This policy will have serious implications for their personal and professional future. Young people are already at a loss to navigate through this unexpected crisis not seen in over a century. They need support rather than bullying in this manner. This is a time when governments the world over should try to give more options to students, and here we have a Trump administration that is bent upon reducing the wriggle room for those who are already in a tight bind.

World in search of an effective Vaccine

Abbas Sarwar Qureshi



India's spiralling discrimination against Muslims has received even harsher criticism in the 'International Religious Freedom Report' for 2019 released by the US State Department. The report says "Mob attacks by violent Hindu groups against minority communities, including Muslims, continued throughout the year" in India and "Issues of religiously inspired mob violence, lynching and communal violence were sometimes denied or ignored by lawmakers".

THE world is on pins and needles, waiting for the magical drug to step into a post-Covid era leaving an awful chapter written in pain, sorrow and fear behind. A coveted slot next to Louis Pasteur, Edward Wright and Green Morton is vacant for another Messiah who would rescue millions from horrible lockdowns and thousands more from being ended up on ventilators. In the absence of an effective vaccine, however, nations have been relying on lockdowns and confinements to counter the surge of virus. It has helped but at a very high cost. Two months long lockdowns have wreaked havoc on economies; crumpling markets and surging unemployment besides a number of other factors have caused an unprecedented global recession. On the other hand, lockdowns have taken a serious toll on mental well-being of the people. Reportedly, psychological illnesses leading to suicides, domestic violence and separations among the people locked-in have multiplied. Surprisingly, on the same planet, a community of 8 million people has been braving an inhuman lockdown since 5th August, 2019 when RSS inspired BJP Government in Delhi annexed Jammu and Kashmir. A comprehensive enslavement plan encapsulating sweeping administrative changes aiming at altering the demographic structure of the IOK and stripping its people of their rights was devised and enforced brutally. The constitutional rampage began with abrogation of Article 370, which accorded a special status to Jammu and Kashmir and continued with revocation of Article 35 (A), division of Jammu and Kashmir into two union territories; and most recently revision of Hereditary State Subject laws and implementation of Domicile Certificate Rules 2020. Since the start of the illegal annexation of Jammu and Kashmir in August 2019, the beleaguered people of Kashmir have been undergoing most brutal suppression by 900,000 Indian occupation forces. Communication black-out, night raids, physical torture, sexual assault, forced disappearances and indiscriminate use of pellet guns against the unarmed people raising voice for their legitimate right to self determination and liberation from perpetual tyranny of Indian fascism are a few cruel tactics employed by the ultra-national BJP Government to eliminate Kashmiris from international screen. Emboldened by the initial deafening response of the international community, the siege of Kashmir wasn't enough for Prime Minister Modi. Instead, it played favourably for providing him an opportunity to give

free rein to his deep-seated hatred towards Muslims. Just four months after the colonization of Kashmir, another plot was hatched to reduce Muslims to second-grade citizens within their homeland. Longstanding fear of the Indian Muslims to become stateless within a state came true when the Citizenship Amendment Act, contrary to the 14th Article of Indian Constitution, was introduced in December 2019 depriving only Muslims among all minorities from citizenship. This time, however, the Government remained unlucky to escape world's eye. International community along with several Human Rights Organisations lambasted Indian Government's discriminatory policies. Amnesty International termed CAA as a "bigoted law that legitimises discrimination on the basis of religion". Human Rights Watch published an 82-page report "Discrimination Against Muslims under India's New Citizenship Policy", detailing how violence against Muslims was callously allowed to happen by the local administration.

India's spiralling discrimination against Muslims has received even harsher criticism in the 'International Religious Freedom Report' for 2019 released by the US State Department. The report says "Mob attacks by violent Hindu groups against minority communities, including Muslims, continued throughout the year" in India and "Issues of religiously inspired mob violence, lynching and communal violence were sometimes denied or ignored by lawmakers". Regrettably, all this fell on deaf ears. Standing nonchalant, the Government's agenda to completely disenfranchise Muslims in India by subjecting them to unprecedented religious persecution is continuing unabated. Labelled as "Traitors" and "Cow Eaters" Muslims have become aliens in their own country while the Indian media continues to regale India as a secular state. The quick succession of anti-Muslim events in Indian occupied Kashmir and India especially, during Modi's 2nd term as Prime Minister and the frenzy behind these activities is a matter of grave concern. Putting things into their right perspective, demolition of Babri Masjid in 1990, Gujarat pogrom in 2002 when Modi was Chief Minister of Gujarat, annexation of Kashmir and the current escalated brutal persecution of Muslims in India reflect systemic cleansing of Muslims to achieve a long cherished objective of RSS to establish a 'Brahminical State' purported by Sadhvi Saraswati that India would be 'Hindu Rashtra' by 2023. The flurry and scheme of events show that with the annexation of Kashmir, the march towards that end has entered

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A multicamera and multicultural film shoot

Aurélie Gonin

Pakistan has five peaks over eight thousand meters, including the famous Nanga Parbat, nicknamed the 'Killer Mountain' for reasons that are easily understood. It is located in the Himalayas, in the same region where we were filming. The region is home to a number of very high peaks, so much so that the locals only call those that exceed six thousand metres 'mountains', and the other, lower peaks 'hills'. Since helicopters struggle and human beings suffer at high altitude, we remained lower down, at around four thousand metres

THERE are destinations that make one dream, that evoke adventure, discovery, exoticism. For me, Pakistan was in this category. I was particularly attracted to the country because of its grandeur – it has some of the highest peaks in the world – and also for its culture. I was sure that I would have an authentic experience, far from beaten tourist track. Therefore, when Brice Lequierre, of Elite Ski Travel, invited me to accompany him to Pakistan to film a big heli-skiing operation, I did not hesitate for a second to embark on this exciting project. The initiative came from the company Afiniti, whose founder, originally from Pakistan, wanted to invite his collaborators around the world with the idea that we would all gain from knowing each other better, especially if the meeting were to be held in such a powerful venue, surrounded by the high mountains.

I believe adventures are richer if they are shared, and we were a team of around sixty guests: fifteen guides from Canada, the United States, France, Chile, Italy and the Canaries, assisted by an equal number of Shimshalis, the formidable mountaineers who accompany expeditions on the highest peaks, like the Sherpas in Nepal. There were also many crew members present for logistics and filming. There were three cameramen and a photographer, specialised in filming in the mountains: Grego Campi, an Argentinian, Jonathan Viey, a Franco-Swiss, Philippe Rebreyend, a French photographer, and myself. Nisar Malik, whose work can be admired in BBC's documentary series *Planet Earth*, was there also with five Pakistani cameramen with whom we worked closely. On some days, one of the helicopters was requisitioned for the Cineflex shots, operated by a British team. We formed an international team, sharing the same passion!

For a film shoot of this type, efficiency and mobility are key. Cameras have therefore to be reactive, quick to set up, requiring few accessories.

Ideally, one should have a camera with one constantly. To be able to keep your camera on you all day long when you are in the mountains, it must be as compact and light as possible.

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It is located in the Himalayas, in the same region where we were filming. The region is home to a number of very high peaks, so much so that the locals only call those that exceed six thousand metres 'mountains', and the other, lower peaks 'hills'.

Since helicopters struggle and human beings suffer at high altitude, we remained lower down, at around four thousand metres. However, temperatures in February in these areas are below freezing and therefore lower than the operating temperatures indicated by camera manufacturers. With this type of shoot, we learned to pick out those that resist better in a cold environment. The same goes for batteries, whose reliability is paramount.

For the night scenes at the camp, the cameras and drones created exceptional images.

Pakistanis are among the warmest and most welcoming people I have ever met and they love to have photographs taken of themselves. It is therefore not problem to travel around villages with a camera, but if it is a small model, that makes the relationship even easier.

I have spoken about the technical aspects of this shoot, but it was the human aspect of this experience that was the most rewarding. Our group brought together people from all over the world. We may have been from different cul-

tures, but we quickly realised that our way of thinking was similar.

I love teamwork, which is a learning experience and creates real energy, and I had a lot of fun working closely with Grego, Jon and Philippe and also with Nisar's team.

While we all do the same job, it was interesting to see the difference in the way we work. We Westerners tended to keep an eye on the budget, whereas the Pakistanis filmed continuously all day long, accumulating hours of rushes. This saved me more than once because I would have missed footage if they hadn't been there, with their cameras rolling.

On the other hand, our images of skiing on the mountain slopes were essential for their film project, which deals with the development of this activity in Pakistan. At the base camp, we teamed up to film interviews using several cameras and then translated them from Urdu or French into English. It was really a good collaboration, which I think and hope was the first in a long series.

While people who only know this country through what the Western media show had warned me before this trip, the impression I got on the spot was extremely positive. Pakistan has a tradition of hospitality which is still very vibrant today. Wherever we went, people, mostly men, but sometimes also women, came to meet us to welcome us, shake hands, offer mila tea, take selfies together and exchange a few words in English.

Here's an example: the area where we were skiing was very isolated, half an hour by helicopter from the village of Shogran. Intrigued by our arrival, a group of men waded through waist-high snow from their remote village to greet us and say "Welcome to Pakistan". I doubt if a group of Pakistanis coming to ski in a lost valley of the Alps would get such a warm welcome.

Briefs**UAE to become first Arab country to launch Mars probe**

DNA

DUBAI: The oil-rich United Arab Emirates which has developed its first nuclear power programme and sent a man to space, now plans to join another elite club by sending its first Mars probe. Only the United States, India, the former Soviet Union, and the European Space Agency have successfully sent missions to orbit the Red Planet, while China is preparing to launch its first Mars rover later this month.

The UAE – a collection of sheikdoms better known for its skyscrapers, palm-shaped islands and mega attractions – is now pushing to reach its target in February after being launched on July 15 from Japan's Tanegashima Space Centre.

While the mission objective is to provide a comprehensive image of the weather dynamics in Mars' atmosphere and pave the way for scientific breakthroughs, the probe is a foundation for a much bigger goal – building a human settlement on Mars within the next 100 years. Dubai has hired architects to imagine what a Martian city might look like and recreate it in its desert as "Science City", at a cost of around 500 million dirhams (135 million dollars).

PNF trying to rope in foreign coach

ISLAMABAD: With an eye on next year's world cup, Pakistan Netball Federation (PNF) is trying to rope in a foreign coach to prepare the athletes for the all-important international event. "We're in talks with some foreign coaches. Hopefully, we'll be able to hire the services of the one by the end of ongoing year," Mudassar Arain, president of the PNF told APP on Friday.

Pakistan men team has already earned a spot in the Netball World Cup after claiming silver medal in the Asian Netball Championship in 2018. The flagship event will take place in Australia in October-November, next year.

Although Arain did not reveal the names of the coaches with whom the PNF top brass was in talks, he tilted his support in favour of a female Australian coach. "We'd a very good experience with an Australian woman coach in the past. Nothing can be said with sure at this time as who will be our foreign coach, but I personally believe an Australian woman coach has very good credentials for that. She can better prepare our team for the mega event", Arain added. – APP

Leclerc warned after breaking virus protocol

SPIELBERG: Charles Leclerc escaped with a warning after breaking Formula One's strict coronavirus protocol by flying home to Monaco for three days this week. The Ferrari driver was pictured on social media socializing with friends outside his designated 'bubble' in the short break between last Sunday's season-opening Austrian Grand Prix and this week's Styrian event at Spielberg.

A spokesperson for the sport's ruling body, the International Motoring Federation (FIA), said: "Ferrari have been issued with a reminder and warned that any further breaches of the COVID-19 Code of Conduct could be referred to the stewards."

Leclerc, who finished second behind Mercedes' Valtteri Bottas in last Sunday's race, said he had undergone two negative tests after going home to Monaco. Bottas, who also travelled back to Monaco, said he had not gone outside his bubble. – APP



MONTREAL: Kelyn Rowe of New England Revolution takes a shot against Montreal Impact during a Major League Soccer match.

COVID-19 Pandemic chill upends solar power industry

DNA

LOS ANGELES: The booming rooftop solar panel industry nosedived overnight when the coronavirus forced homeowners to rein in spending and keep their distance from would-be installers.

Now, in their struggle to survive, companies on both sides of the Atlantic are turning to online marketing rather than knocking on doors, using drones to inspect roofs, arranging digital permits and coming up with attractive new financing plans, according to interviews with 12 executives.

At stake is the future of a key driver of the global transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy: solar power was the second-fastest growing renewable source

after wind in 2019, according to the International Energy Agency. And rooftop installations, which generate electricity used by homes or businesses rather than feeding into the grid, made up more than 40 percent of the market before COVID-19 struck.

Energy research firm Wood Mackenzie has slashed its rooftop solar installation forecasts for Europe and the US by a whopping 30 percent this year, while lifting its forecast by 3 percent in Asia, where China provides strong government support.

Joana Palau, 42, a council worker on the Spanish island of Ibiza, was one of the few in her neighborhood who pressed ahead with plans to install 12 solar panels on her farmhouse in June: "If I had not been

working and did not have the stability of a salary every month, I definitely wouldn't have done it."

A housing estate with solar panels in Duesseldorf, Germany, European firms are offering innovative finance plans to entice wary clients amid rising job insecurity.

(AFP) By contrast, large-scale solar installations that power the grid have fared relatively well. Wood Mackenzie trimmed its forecast by less than 10 percent for Europe and barely touched its US outlook as rock-bottom prices, subsidies and government mandates helped insulate larger projects from the pandemic. In the US, the third biggest rooftop solar market after China and Japan, about 80 percent of the 100,000 job losses in the solar sector so far have been at rooftop installers, the Solar Energy Industries Association said.

Many of the staff who were not laid off, however, began to focus on one of the industry's most persistent challenges: How to cut the cost of identifying homeowners with suitable roofs, and then persuading them to buy panels, executives said.

Leading US installers SunPower Corp., Vivint Solar Inc. and Sunrun Inc. said that reassured potential clients worried about the virus. It also cut the cost of acquiring customers, which Wood Mackenzie puts at nearly \$4,000, or 22 percent of the average \$18,000 cost of a US system.

Sunrun bought Vivint because of its focus on direct selling, a model Sunrun CEO Lynn Jurich said had become even more durable during the COVID-19 pandemic: "Both companies are delivering above where we expected."

water said. By early May, sales were down only 30 percent. "It was a radical shift," said Bywater, adding that it had hastened Vivint's plan to diversify sales strategies and cut costs: "I hope we never lose that and we accelerate that."

In fact, the strategy was so successful that larger rival Sunrun announced on July 7 that it had agreed to buy Vivint in an all-stock deal valued at \$3.2 billion, saving \$90 million a year and creating a solar player with half a million customers.

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Kim's sister says 'no need' for another US-North Korea summit

DNA

SEOUL: The powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said Friday there was "no need" for another summit if it could help his re-election chances in November.

But in a statement carried by the official Korean Central News Agency, Kim Yo Jong – who has emerged as one of her brother's closest advisers – said: "There is no need for us to sit across with the US right now."

If a summit was held, she said, "it is too obvious that it will only be used as boring boasting coming from someone's pride."

Denuclearization, she added, was "not possible at this point," and could only happen alongside parallel

"irreversible simultaneous major steps" by the other side – which she emphasized did not refer to sanctions lifting.

She did not go into specifics, but Washington stations 28,500 troops in the South to defend it against its neighbor, and has a range of military assets in Japan and the wider Pacific region.

Pyongyang insists that it needs its nuclear arsenal to deter against a possible US invasion.

Kim Yo Jong's statement was only her personal view, she said, but the lengthy declaration appeared intended to send multiple messages.

She said she had watched

the July 4 Independence Day celebrations in the US on television and had been given permission by her brother to "personally obtain, for sure, the DVD of the celebrations ... in the future."

Her brother had "entrusted me with conveying his wishes to President Trump that he would certainly achieve great successes in his work," she added.

Kim Jong Un declared in December an end to moratoriums on nuclear and ballistic missile tests, and Pyongyang has repeatedly said it has no intention to continue talks unless Washington drops what it describes as "hostile" policies toward the North.

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"Haider is a young player and everybody is talking about him. I hope he starts performing, in all three formats, like Babar Azam and become one of the top batsmen in the world," Yousuf said.

Yousuf also spoke about the importance of scoring runs in England, as far as the Men in Green batsmen were concerned.

"Babar has performed really well in the recent past and all eyes will be on him. He has kept himself fit and always seems focused on the field" he said. Asad Shafiq and Azhar Ali have also scored runs in England, during previous tours, and hopefully they will do the same this time around," he said. – APP

Pakistan bowlers can challenge English batsmen, says Yousuf

ISLAMABAD: Former Skipper Muhammad Yousuf believes Pakistani bowlers can challenge the English batsmen, saying this was a good opportunity for players to make a name for themselves.

"Pakistan's bowling attack is very good. Mohammad Abbas has done well in the past, even on dead pitches in UAE. Shaheen Afridi is consistently improving, while Naseem Shah, despite being young, has started his career on a high," cricketpakistan.com.pk quoted him as saying.

Pakistan was scheduled to take on England in three Tests and as many Twenty20s, which would be played from August 5 to September 1. Old Trafford, Manchester, would host the first Test of the series starting from August 5. The final two Tests would be played at the Rose Bowl, Southampton, from August 13 and August 21.

The three T20s would take place at Old Trafford on August 28, August 30 and the final match of the tour on September 1.

He said Shaheen and Naseem can both hit the 150 kph mark, which would come in handy. "Abbas is slightly on the slower side but he makes the ball talk through his immaculate line and length. This is a good opportunity for players to make a name for themselves because scoring runs



is England is not an easy task by any stretch of the imagination," he said.

He also considers England's pace bowling attack as major threat, ahead of the series. "England has a very good bowling attack with the likes of James Anderson, Stuart Broad, Jofra Archer, Mark Wood and Chris Woakes. Anderson will be major threat as he has close to 600 Test wickets and if the conditions favour him, he will be very

tough to handle," he said.

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Yousuf pinned high hopes on rookie bats

Briefs

HK police arrest seven over stabbing an officer

DNA

BEIJING: Police in Hong Kong have arrested seven people for "assisting" a man suspected of stabbing a police officer during a protest against China's new national security law for the city. Authorities arrested five men and two women, aged between 24 and 71, on suspicion of offences including helping the suspect buy an air ticket and arrange transportation to the airport, police said at a press briefing on Friday. "We do not rule out the possibility that more people will be arrested afterwards," said Yau Kin-hung, a senior police officer. The stabbing took place during a July 1 protest, hours after the law - which bans secession, subversion, terrorism and collusion with foreign forces - came into effect. Hong Kong police posted images on Twitter of the officer with a bleeding arm saying he was stabbed by "rioters holding sharp objects".

Biden unveils \$700 billion recovery plan

DUNMORE (US): Joe Biden unveiled a \$700 billion plan Thursday to create jobs and invest in new technologies in an aggressive challenge to President Donald Trump on economic policy, as the warring sides clashed in key election battleground Pennsylvania. The Democratic challenger presented his sweeping "Build Back Better" proposal, a contrast to Trump's "America first" agenda, during a speech at a metalworks plant in a swing state critical to either candidate's victory in November. Vice President Mike Pence was simultaneously barnstorming Pennsylvania, defending his boss's handling of the coronavirus pandemic and assuring voters that Trump was best qualified to revive the sputtering economy. Biden's manufacturing and innovation plan aims to bring back positions lost during the coronavirus pandemic, and create more than five million new jobs by investing in domestic production and research and shrinking foreign supply chains.

The multi-pronged approach also tightens "Buy America" guidelines, promotes new tax rules including hiking the corporate tax rate to 28 percent from 21 percent, and expands union access to empower American workers. - APP

Britain urges Houthis to allow oil tanker access

LONDON: The UK urged the Houthi militia to allow UN inspectors access to a derelict tanker and remove the oil it contains on Thursday. FSO Safer has been moored 7 km off the coast of Yemen since 1988 and fell into the hands of the Houthis in March 2015. The UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office said the 1.14 million barrels of oil onboard could leak into the Red Sea "if nothing is done" and that the tanker is an "environmental disaster waiting to happen." The Houthis have actively prevented international engineers from boarding FSO Safer to carry out essential repairs. There are fears that the oil it contains will start to seep out as the vessel's condition deteriorates. - APP

Seoul's mayor found dead

DNA

SEOUL: The mayor of Seoul - considered the second-most powerful official in South Korea - has been found dead on a mountainside within the capital city. Park Won-soon's body was found on Bukak mountain in Seoul's Seongbuk-gu neighborhood, just after midnight on Friday local time. The area is very close to his official residence in Jongno-gu. Police did not reveal how the mayor died, in order to protect his privacy, but they have ruled out foul play. No suicide note was left behind, and his belongings were found nearby, said Choi Ik-soo, an official at Seoul Metropolitan Police Agency's Crime department, during a briefing on Friday.

Negative trend in EU-Turkey relations must stop: Borrell

Turkey is an important partner, candidate country, and a NATO ally. The current negative trend in our relations needs to be stopped and reversed

NEWS DESK

BRUSSELS: Negative trend in EU-Turkey relations must stop, EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said. Speaking at a European Parliament session called by the conservative European People's Party, Borrell said: "Turkey is an important partner, candidate country, and a NATO ally. The current negative trend in our relations needs to be stopped and reversed."

Borrell said he recently visited Turkey after visiting Greece and the Greek Cypriot administration, adding that "stability and security in the Mediterranean requires collective engagement." Conflicts in Syria and Libya directly affecting the security and interests of EU in terms of terrorism, migration, and political stability in the region, he added.

Borrell said Turkey and EU have had some important disagreements over Syria, as EU members opposed Turkey's anti-terror operation Peace Spring in October 2019. "Yet we must also know-



ledge where our interest coincide [with Turkey]."

"In the eastern Mediterranean Turkey has been showing a warden assertiveness," Borrell said, adding

they are ready to work with Ankara for a political solution in Libya.

The high representative also stated that they are committed to implement UN arms embargo to Libya. "Dynamics of retaliation does not make the Mediterranean a more secure and stable zone. This will

only be achieved through dialogue and negotiations where discrepancies exist," he also said.

For his part, Nacho Sanchez Amor, the EU Parliament's Turkey rapporteur, said Turkey-EU relations have been through a difficult period. He said there is a lack of trust that affects the basis

of bilateral relations, adding that EU member states should stand with Greece and the Greek Cypriot administration. Manfred Weber, chairman of the European People's Party, said they have called the session to raise their concerns about recent developments in the Medi-

terranean.

He said, problems between Turkey, Greece and the Greek Cypriot administration are not only affecting these countries but the whole European Union. Weber argued that it is wrong to continue membership talks with Turkey under these conditions.

Xinjiang: US sanctions on Chinese officials

Politburo member and Xinjiang Communist Party Secretary Chen Quanguo among four officials sanctioned over rights abuses

WEB DESK

BEIJING: The United States on Thursday imposed sanctions on Chen Quanguo, a member of China's powerful Politburo, and three other senior officials, accusing them of serious human rights abuses against the Uighur Muslim minority in a move likely to further increase tensions between Washington and Beijing.

Chen is the Communist Party Secretary in the far western region of Xinjiang, where the UN estimates about one million Uighurs have been detained in re-education camps that China describes as vocational skills training centres necessary

to combat "extremism".

He is the most senior Chinese official ever to have been blacklisted by the US. "The United States calls upon the world to stand against the CCP's acts against its own minority communities in Xinjiang, including mass arbitrary detention, forced labour, religious persecution, and forced birth control and sterilisation," a White House official told reporters, saying the blacklisting was "no joke". The Chinese embassy in Washington did not immediately respond to Reuters news agency request for comment.

The sanctions were imposed under the Global Magnitsky Act, a law that allows the US Treasury Department said Chen

government to target human rights violators around the world with freezes on any US assets, US travel bans and prohibitions on Americans doing business with them. The other officials targeted are Zhu Hailun, a former deputy party secretary in Xinjiang; Wang Mingshan, the director and Communist Party secretary of the Xinjiang Public Security Bureau and former party secretary of the bureau Huo Lijun.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said he was also imposing further visa restrictions on Chen, Zhu, and Wang, barring them and their immediate family from the United States. The US Treasury Department said Chen

implemented "a comprehensive surveillance, detention, and indoctrination program in Xinjiang, targeting Uighurs and other ethnic minorities" through the Xinjiang Public Security Bureau.

Chen was born in the rural, central province of Henan and rose quickly within the Communist Party, according to research by Adrian Zenz and James Leibold published by the Jamestown Foundation. He took control in Tibet in 2011 developing an extensive network of police surveillance and control to quell unrest and restore stability. Chen moved to Xinjiang in 2016, 'accomplishing in a single year what took him five years in Tibet,' the researchers wrote.

NUR SULTAN: A new "unknown pneumonia" that is potentially deadlier than the novel coronavirus has reportedly killed more than 1,700 people this year in the Central Asian country of Kazakhstan, according to a warning issued by Chinese officials Thursday.

"Kazakhstani Health Department and other agencies are conducting comparative research and have not defined the nature of the pneumonia virus," said the Chinese Embassy in Kazakhstan in a statement to its citizens there.

New cases of the unidentified pneumonia have been increasing significantly since mid-June across the country, said the embassy, adding that in some places, authorities are reporting hundreds of new cases a day.

Sudan PM Abdalla replaces ministers

KHARTOUM: Sudan's prime minister has replaced the finance, foreign, energy and health ministers and three other senior cabinet post-holders as part of a sweeping reshuffle, the government said on Thursday. Authorities had said a reshuffle was coming, but few had expected the exit of Ibrahim al-Badawi, who as finance minister led efforts to steady Sudan's crisis-stricken economy and liaised with foreign donors.

In a statement, the government said transitional Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok had dismissed the health minister and accepted the resignation of al-Badawi and the others. It named interim replacements to lead all seven ministries. Sudan protesters return to streets to demand more reforms (2:38) Hamdok leads a government of technocrats under a 39-month power-sharing agreement between the military and civilian groups that was reached following the removal of the country's longtime ruler Omar al-Bashir last year.

Al-Badawi's interim replacement will be Heba Ahmed Ali, a senior finance ministry official, the government statement said. The reshuffle comes nine days after one person was killed and several others injured during largely peaceful demonstrations in Sudan demanding faster reform and greater civilian rule in the country's transition towards democracy.

Tens of thousands of protesters took to the streets in Sudanese cities despite a coronavirus lockdown to demand a transition towards democracy after al-Bashir's removal last year. Al Jazeera's Hiba Morgan, reporting from Khartoum, said the transitional government had come under increased pressure in recent months over its handling of the country's coronavirus outbreak and economic conditions. - DNA

Pentagon chief confirms Russian bounty reports

DNA

WASHINGTON: Secretary of Defense Mark Esper confirmed Thursday that he had been briefed on information regarding Russian payments to the Taliban, seemingly acknowledging that Russia's support for the militant group in Afghanistan is not a "hoax," as President Donald Trump has claimed. However, Esper also made clear that he has not seen intelligence that corroborates claims that American troops were killed as a result of the "bounty" payments, walking a delicate line between acknowledging a well-known threat and potentially clashing with the President.

Esper's comments came during a long-awaited appearance before the House Armed Services Committee.

tee, where lawmakers had their first opportunity to ask the defense secretary and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley about their knowledge of intelligence on Russia offering bounties to the Taliban for killing US troops in Afghanistan.

It was clear that both men attempted to carefully navigate questions from lawmakers, but Esper admitted exercising particular caution while addressing inquiries about whether he had been briefed on the matter and when. Responding to a very narrow line of questioning from Rep. Mike Turner, an Ohio Republican, Esper initially told lawmakers that he did not recall a briefing that included the word "bounty," but less than an hour later he clarified that answer when pressed by a Democratic member of the panel.



HONG KONG: CG Mr. Bilal Ahmad Butt visited Chinese Chamber of Commerce HK & met Dr Jonathan Choi Chairman. Possibilities of JVs between HK & Pak companies in apparel, chip manufacturing, IT, and Infrastructure Dev sectors were explored. - DNA

Saudi-led coalition in Yemen says explosive-laden boats destroyed

Last year, Saudi Arabia was targeted with dozens of attacks using ballistic missiles and drones, including a devastating assault on two facilities of oil giant Saudi Aramco that temporarily knocked out half the kingdom's crude output

The boats were destroyed 6km (3.7 miles) south of the Yemeni port of Salif.

Arabic media cited a spokesman for the Saudi-led coalition, Turki al-Malki, as saying the Houthis' boats had posed an "imminent threat to sea lines of communication, international trade and regional and international security." "[The boats] were prepared to imminently execute hostile and terrorist actions in the Bab Al Mandab Strait and Southern Red Sea," said al-Malki.

Al-Malki added the operation had not violated recently agreed ceasefire deals, and "all precautionary measures" were taken to protect civilians. However, Yahya Sarea, a Houthi armed forces spokesperson, said on Twitter the boats were civilian vessels and called the coalition attack a "major aggression" which violated the Stockholm peace deal, a UN-brokered agreement reached in December 2018.

The latest developments come after the kingdom announced the

start of a new military operation in Yemen earlier this month, with fighter jets belonging to the Saudi-led coalition launching dozens of air raids on several Yemeni provinces. Saudi television reported at the time the coalition had begun a military push against the Houthis after the group stepped up cross-border missile and drone attacks on the kingdom.

The Houthis denounced the air raids and pledged to continue military operations inside Saudi Arabia, as Houthi-run Al Masirah

Media Network reported air raids on the capital, Sanaa, as well as Marib, al-Jouf, al-Bayda, Hajjah and Saada provinces.

Last year, Saudi Arabia was targeted with dozens of attacks using ballistic missiles and drones, including a devastating assault on two facilities of oil giant Saudi Aramco that temporarily knocked out half the kingdom's crude output. Yemen has been locked in conflict since 2014 when the Houthi

Ford: Mexico's virus curbs hurt US plants

DNA

MEXICO: Ford Motor Co said new staffing restrictions imposed on plants producing car parts in the Mexican state of Chihuahua are "not sustainable," the latest sign United States-based automakers are still reeling from coronavirus lockdowns in Mexico. Mexico is a key part of a wider international supply chain crucial to US carmakers, many of which operate factories across the border in Mexico due to lower labour costs. Chihuahua, where the state government has limited employee attendance to 50 percent in plants, is home to a Ford engine plant and many car parts producers.

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Briefs

Afghanistan gets \$200 million grant

KABUL: The World Bank has approved \$200 million in aid to help Afghanistan tackle economic losses from the coronavirus pandemic, as confirmed cases top more than 34,000 in the conflict zone. The country's war-ravaged economy has been severely impacted due to a month-long lockdown, with thousands of people losing their jobs in the economic fallout. Afghanistan has also grappled with increased militant violence in recent months that has diverted vital attention and resources away from the fight against the disease. – APP

CEO PIA meets PM

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Friday directed the Chief Executive Officer of PIA, Air Marshal Arshad Malik to expedite restructuring plan of the national flag carrier and present him a framework in a week's time.

Talking to the CEO of Pakistan International Airlines, who called on him here Friday, the Prime Minister asked him to undertake the restructuring in consultation with his Advisor on Institutional Reforms Dr. Ishrat Hussain.

Air Marshal Arshad Malik briefed the Prime Minister regarding ongoing negotiations with European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) to ensure PIA flight operations for Europe. The CEO also briefed the Prime Minister regarding restructuring of PIA so as to make it a profitable and leading airline. The Prime Minister emphasized that the Government was pursuing an across-the-board reforms agenda to make institutions efficient and service oriented.

England's gyms, pools, theatres to reopen

LONDON: Gyms, swimming pools and outdoor theatres will reopen later this month in England as the government announced on Thursday a further easing of coronavirus restrictions. Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden said outdoor pools will be able to reopen from July 11 with other sports facilities – including indoor swimming pools – from July 25. Outdoor art performances will resume from July 11 but with strict control on audience numbers.

"The reopening of gyms is the news millions across the country have been waiting for with many people desperate to jump on a spinning bike or dive into a pool," said Dowden. – APP

Pak, China agree on 130 research projects

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The preliminary plans for 130 joint research projects were approved by Pakistan Science Foundation (PSF) and National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC), Gwadar Pro reported on Friday.

There are four categories of research projects: Fossil energy conversion and materials, Utilization of renewable energy and resources, Scientific ground of new energy utilization and technologies and Safety evaluation and adaptive mechanism research on water-energy-food nexus under CPEC in the context of climate change. According to the official list released by NSFC, 149 proposals were submitted to the two Foundations this year and currently 130 joint research projects were approved. PSF and NSFC signed a MoU on October 30, 1992 for joint research between Academic Institutions in both countries. The MoU with NSFC was re-activated in 2015.

CFPD promotes Pakistan-China cooperation in education sector: Xu

"Our foundation have funded projects to help improve the level of local basic education, improve local labor quality, promote local economic and social development, and maintain social stability"

for local teachers and students," said Amjad Basham, the principal of China-Pakistan Gwadar Faqeer Middle School, adding that the expansion project of this middle school built in Gwadar under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) framework would empower local kids to receive education.

Xu Jianguo, Secretary-General of CFPD, believes that education is the best gift one can give to a child. "Our foundation have funded projects to help improve the level of local basic education, improve local labor quality, promote local economic and social development, and maintain social stability," he noted.



Gwadar Faqeer Middle School and other educational institutes in Gwadar, and organize culture/education tour for local teachers and students to visit China. On top of that, CFPD will continue to carry out projects on basic education and vocational

al training under CPEC, so as to benefit the locals, Xu further mentioned.

"The project has been welcomed and supported by the governments, enterprises, individuals, medias from both countries," said Zhang Baozhong, honorary rector of China-Pakistan Gwadar Faqeer Middle School and Chief Executive Officer of China Overseas Port Holding Company (COPHC) which operates Gwadar Port and Free Trade Zone. He noted that the expansion project of the middle school has become the flagship project of CPEC in terms of people's livelihood, and the Chinese Embassy in Islamabad has funded scholarship

for the school.

The expansion project was handed over to Pakistan's education department on June 24. Supervised by Gwadar Development Authority (GDA), the expansion project is funded by CFPD and constructed by CCCC-FHDI Engineering Co., Ltd.

Covering an area of 1,600 square meters, the middle school is equipped with two teaching buildings and supporting facilities after the expansion. Local kids are proud of going to this school. It will not only fulfill local kids' educational aspirations, but also strengthen the China-Pakistan friendship, the report added.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan along with Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa arrives at National Locust Control Center. – DNA

Iran ready to work with Pakistan: envoy Hosseini

"This role has also been applied for countering with destabilizing and insecuring elements through suppressing terrorist groups"



condems and rejects any effort to destabilize this country," noted Ambassador Hosseini. He said as repeatedly mentioned in high military and security bilateral meetings, Iran has ultimate readiness to cooperate with their Pakistani brothers for eliminating any possible security threat in common borders.

The ambassador stated Tehran emphasizes on essential and urgent need for removing any possible misunderstanding which mainly happens due to the deceptive and malicious efforts of third parties.

"For sure, developing relations between Tehran and Islamabad don't comply with their desire," said the envoy.

a positive and effective role in producing, protecting and assuring regional security.

"This role has also been applied for countering with destabilizing and insecuring elements through suppressing terrorist groups," he said.

The ambassador went on

Pakistan becomes 11th worst hit country

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has overtaken Italy when it comes to the number of COVID-19 cases reported in the country, becoming the 11th worst-affected country by the pandemic, data from the John Hopkins University revealed on Friday.

According to the NCOC, the number of positive cases in the country jumped to 243,599 after 2,751 cases were reported on Thursday. On the other hand, Italy's positive cases stand at 242,363 as per data from the university's resource center.

Pakistan reported 75 deaths over the past 24 hours, taking the nation's COVID-19 death toll past the 5,000 mark. According to the NCOC, currently,

the total number of people who have succumbed to the virus stand at 5,058.

USC to facilitate EOBI beneficiaries

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Utility Stores Corporation will facilitate Employees Old-Age Benefits Institution beneficiaries through a Sahulat Card to procure basic food items on subsidized rates. An agreement to this effect was signed in Islamabad today (Friday) in the presence of Prime Minister's Special Assistant on Overseas Pakistanis Syed Zulfiqar Bokhari and Chairman USC Zulqarnain Khan. Sahulat Card holders will procure basic food items like flour, rice, pulses, cooking oil, and sugar. Meanwhile, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Overseas Pakistanis Zulfiqar Abbas Bukhari says Sahulat Card is in line with the Prime Minister's vision for the state of Madinah which will benefit around 8 million people.

China to hit US with 'reciprocal measures'



BEIJING: China said Friday it will impose tit-for-tat measures on US institutions and individuals who "behave badly" on Xinjiang-related issues after Washington slapped sanctions on Chinese officials over a crackdown on Uighurs and other Turkic Muslims in the region.

The Chinese response came after the US announced visa bans and an assets freeze on three officials, including Chen Quanquo, the Chinese Communist Party chief in Xinjiang and architect of Beijing's policies against restive minorities.

"The US actions seriously interfere in China's internal affairs, seriously violate the basic norms of international relations,

and seriously damage China-US relations," foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said in a briefing.

"In response to the wrong actions of the US, China has decided to impose reciprocal measures against the relevant US institutions and individuals who behave badly on Xinjiang-related issues," Zhao said without providing details about the sanctions.

TRUMP'S PRESIDENTIAL IMMUNITY

US Supreme Court rejects argument

DNA

WASHINGTON (DNA): The United States Supreme Court rebuffed President Trump's arguments of sweeping presidential immunity, ruling that a New York prosecutor can obtain his financial records as "the public had a right to every man's evidence".

However, the order prevented - at least for now - Democratic-led House of Representatives committees from getting similar documents.

The twin 7-2 rulings authored by conservative Chief Justice John Roberts

marks another milestone in Trump's tumultuous presidency and in the short term prevent details of his finances from becoming public because lower courts must resolve lingering issues. The businessman-turned-politician, seeking re-election on Nov. 3, has fought tenaciously to keep his tax returns and other elements of his finances secret - and the rulings spare him of any major revelation at a sensitive time. But looking further ahead, Trump faces possible future criminal prosecution in his native New York, perhaps after he leaves office.

IMF, WB to hold fall meetings virtually

WASHINGTON: The IMF and World Bank Group announced Thursday that their annual fall meetings will be mostly virtual due to the coronavirus pandemic.

"As we continue to monitor the situation of COVID-19 around the world, and given the ongoing health concerns related to the pandemic, the Managements of the IMF and World Bank Group recommend that the 2020 IMF-World Bank Annual Meetings, to take place in the week of October 12-18, be held in a primarily virtual format this year," the two organizations said in a joint statement.

IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva and WBG president David Malpass said they will be "flexible with the format of the meetings in light of developments."

"Our goal is to serve our membership effectively while ensuring the health and safety of Annual Meetings' participants, staff, and the local community in the Washington DC area," they said in the statement. – DNA

ML-1 track will help control railways accidents: Rashid

SHAEEN QURESHI

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Railways Sheikh Rashid Ahmed says Main Line-1 track will help control railways accidents and generate jobs for hundreds and thousands of youth. Addressing a news conference in Islamabad on Friday, he said Executive Committee of National Economic Council will likely to approve ML-1 project this month. He said it will be a crossing free track, which will reduce travel time from Karachi to

Promotions in Pakistan Air Force

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Government of Pakistan has promoted Air Vice Marshal Aamir Masood to the rank of Air Marshal; while, 10 Air Commodores have been promoted to the rank of Air Vice Marshal. The promoted Air Officers from GD(P) branch include:

1. Air Vice Marshal Amir Rashid
2. Air Vice Marshal S Faiz Masud Hatmi
3. Air Vice Marshal Muhammad Jamal Arshad
4. Air Vice Marshal Zaffar Aslam
5. Air Vice Marshal Muhammad Sarfraz
6. Air Vice Marshal Kazim Hammad
7. Air Vice Marshal Shakil Ghazanfar



Whereas promoted Air Officers from the Engineering branch are:



1. Air Vice Marshal Irfan Zaheer
2. Air Vice Marshal Asif Maqsood
3. Air Vice Marshal Muhammad Amir Hayat