



Islamabad POST

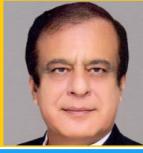
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The covid-19 battle still not won; PM Imran Khan warns

Shibli Faraz unveils Marconi Transmitter Memorial in Capital



Indiscriminate sanctions regime from the US admin



Palestine rejects UAE-Israel deal

The Palestinian leadership considers this step to blow up the Arab Peace Initiative and the decisions of Arab and Islamic summits, and international legitimacy

DNA / NEWS DESK

RAMALLAH: The Palestinian leadership announces its strong rejection and condemnation of the surprising American, Israeli, and Emirati tripartite declaration on a complete normalization of relations between the Israeli occupation state and the United Arab Emirates, in exchange for claiming a temporary suspension of the plan to annex Palestinian lands and extend Israeli sovereignty over them, and in light of the occupation state's insistence on establishing an occupation and annexation of parts of the Palestinian territories, especially the city of Jerusalem, and violating the sanctities of religious sanctities, especially the blessed Al-Aqsa Mosque. The Palestinian leadership considers this step to blow up the Arab Peace Initiative and the decisions of the Arab and Islamic summits, and international legitimacy, as an aggression against

the Palestinian people, and as neglecting Palestinian rights and sacred things, especially Jerusalem and the independent Palestinian state on the borders of June 4, 1967. The Palestinian leadership rejects what the United Arab Emirates has done as a betrayal of Jerusalem, Al-Aqsa and the Palestinian cause, and recognizes Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, and demands that it immediately withdraw from this disgraceful declaration. It also refuses to barter an illegal annexation suspension for Emirati normalization and to use the Palestinian cause as a cover for this purpose. Bowing to American pressure, following in the footsteps of the UAE, and free normalization with the Israeli occupation state at the expense of Palestinian rights. The leadership affirms that the UAE, or any other party, has no right to speak on behalf of the Palestinian people, and does not allow anyone to intervene in the Palestinian affairs or

report on their behalf about their legitimate rights in their homeland. The Palestinian leadership also affirms that the Palestine Liberation Organization is the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, and that the Palestinian people stand today in every place united behind their legitimate leadership, headed by President Mahmoud Abbas in the face of this brutal tripartite declaration. In the face of these dangerous developments, the Palestinian leadership calls for an immediate emergency session of the Arab League, as well as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, to reject this declaration. The Palestinian leadership also calls on the international community to adhere to international law and resolutions of international legitimacy that form the basis for resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and that peace can only be achieved through the complete end to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories.



ISLAMABAD: A large number of people come out from Faisal Masjid after offering Friday prayers on the eve of Independence Day. - APP

The COVID-19 battle still not won; PM warns

"We have avoided a huge crisis because we didn't default [payments]. But I know it hasn't been easy for the people, I understand the difficulties they faced and still are"

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan, in a televised address to the nation on Independence Day, said that the past two years were difficult, but things were now "improving". "We had a very difficult two years. We didn't have foreign exchange and couldn't pay our debts," he said on Friday. "We have avoided a huge crisis because we

didn't default [payments]. But I know it hasn't been easy for the people, I understand the difficulties they faced and still are. But the good news for you is that the situation is improving." However, the economy has improved, the premier said. "Despite the pandemic, our tax collection in June exceeded our targets," he said, adding that exports have gone up. The premier said that Pakistan was "a glorious dream"

of an Islamic welfare state where law was supreme and everyone had equal rights regardless of their race, caste or religious beliefs. Hard work and determination was needed to realise this dream, the premier said, adding that the government was now working towards achieving the vision of the forefathers. He also congratulated the nation for coming together and "fighting against the coronavirus" and said:

"Hardly any other nation was able to successfully balance" between economy and the virus. He pointed out that the number of confirmed coronavirus cases had reduced and economy had started an upward journey as well. "This does not mean we have won this battle," he cautioned and urged people to continue taking precautions, the most important and basic of which is to wear a mask while leaving the house.

Briefs

Punjab reports 128 new virus cases

DNA

LAHORE: Punjab reported 128 new coronavirus cases and one death over the last 24 hours, taking the total number of infections in the province to 94,993 and fatalities to 2,180. A spokesperson for the Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department said that as many as 80,8169 samples have been tested for COVID-19 across the province, out of which 94,993 turned out to be positive. In last 24 hours a patient died of COVID-19 in the province, spokesperson said. A total of 86,404 patients have recuperated from the disease thus far, the statement said. The National Command and Operation Centre (NCO) in a statement said that as many as 626 more people tested positive for the novel coronavirus during the past 24 hours across the country, taking the total number of confirmed cases to 287,300.

Erdogan threatens to suspend ties with UAE

ISTANBUL: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Friday said Turkey could suspend diplomatic relations with the UAE after a landmark deal between Israel and Abu Dhabi. "I gave an order to the foreign minister. I said we could suspend diplomatic relations with the Abu Dhabi administration or withdraw our ambassador," Erdogan told reporters. In the deal, Israel pledged to suspend its planned annexation of Palestinian lands in exchange for a normalisation of ties with the UAE. - APP

China greets Pakistan on 74th Independence Day

DNA

BEIJING: A Chinese foreign ministry's spokesperson on Friday congratulated Pakistani nation on the 74th Independence Day and expressed the confidence that Pakistan would attain greater achievements in the national development. "Today is the Pakistan's Independence Day and we warmly congratulate you on that," Zho Lijian said during his regular briefing held here. "We believe Pakistan will achieve greater achievements in the national development and we hope the China-Pakistan friendship will continue blossoming," he added. Responding to a question regarding the Chinese support to help Pakistan fight

the COVID-19 pandemic, he said since the spread of COVID-19, China and Pakistan had been standing together and offering each other assistance, a telling example of two people's deep traditional friendship. He said, the Chinese Government attached high importance to supporting Pakistan in combating the epidemic, adding, "Our anti-virus cooperation shows solidarity and cooperation is the most powerful weapon to deal with global challenges." Zhao Lijian remarked that statistics showed that the Chinese Government had provided Pakistan with seven badges of supplies this year including masks, protective gowns, testing reagents, ventilators, protective goggles, surgical gloves

and thermometer guns. "All together weigh more than 100 tonnes." He said, China would continue to fight COVID-19 alongside Pakistan and expand the cooperation in the areas like material resistance, experience sharing, traditional medicines and vaccine until we vanquish the virus. The spokesperson informed that a batch of 1,000 ventilators donated by China were handed over to the Chairman of National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) in Islamabad yesterday. The chairman expressed thanks for the Chinese government and people and said this huge amount of assistance flowing in from China helped Pakistan to contain the epidemic.

Shibli Faraz unveils Marconi Transmitter Memorial

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Senator Shibli Faraz has unveiled Marconi Transmitter Memorial as part of the Independence Day celebrations at National Broadcasting House (Radio Pakistan), Islamabad on Thursday. This antique transmitter was installed at Manawan Lahore in 1937, broadcast

creation of Pakistan on the midnight falling between August 13 and 14, 1947. At a ceremony, the announcements of creation of Pakistan in English by Zahur Azar and in Urdu by Mustafa Ali Hamdani "Tal-e-Subh-e-Azadi" were played in which they gave the news to millions across the Subcontinent that a new Muslim state had born.

Addressing the ceremony, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Shibli Faraz says Radio Pakistan is voice of the nation and played historic role in commanding the information flow with easy access all over the world since the Independence Day. He said the government is committed to restore the past glory of Radio Pakistan. - DNA

Guards changing ceremonies held

DNA

KARACHI: August 14, 2020, marks the 73rd independence anniversary of Pakistan, which on Friday began with prayers for the motherland in the mosques, thirty-one gun salute in the federal capital and twenty-one gun salute in the provincial capitals. Graceful change of guards ceremonies were held at the mausoleums of Pakistan's founding father Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and the Poet of the East Allama Iqbal. Cadets of the Pakistan Naval Academy took over guard duties at the Quaid's Mausoleum in an exquisite ceremony. Sindh Governor Imran Ismail and Chief Minister visited the tomb and hoisted Pakistan's flag.

China to supply Covid-19 vaccine to Pakistan

The supplies, once proven effective and safe, will be used to vaccinate close to one-fifth of the country's population

DNA

ISLAMABAD: China has agreed to supply coronavirus vaccines to Pakistan to conduct tests. If the results prove effective, Pakistan will ensure its most vulnerable segment of the population - elderly, health-care workers and people with medical conditions associated with serious cases of COVID-19 - are vaccinated, as per a report in The Wall Street Journal. According to the publication, officials said that the supplies, once proven effective and safe, will be used to vaccinate close to one-fifth of the country's population according to the agreement. The WSJ said that it is one of the first agreements China has reached with any

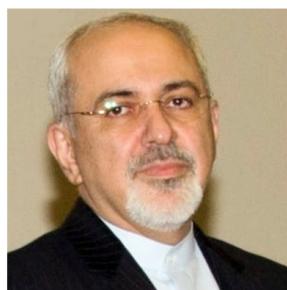
country to test its coronavirus vaccine in populations outside its borders. Officials also said that Pakistan was also negotiating with a second Chinese company to conduct trials of its vaccine in the country. "China hasn't been a major vaccine producer globally. It needs to test its COVID-19 vaccines outside its borders because coronavirus cases in China have dwindled and it is harder to find the population diversity required," read the report. The publication reported that the state-owned China National Pharmaceutical Group, commonly known as Sinopharm, has teamed up with Karachi University's International Centre for Chemical and Biological Sciences to hold the trials in Pakistan.

US to boost ties with Pak: Pompeo

DNA

WASHINGTON: The United States looks forward to strengthening its partnership with Pakistan, Secretary Mike Pompeo has said as he greeted Pakistan on occasion of 74th Independence Day. "On behalf of the Government of the United States of America and the American people, I extend greetings and best wishes to the people of Pakistan as you celebrate your Independence Day," Pompeo said in a message released Friday. For more than 70 years, the US-Pakistan have worked together on issues of "critical importance," he said. "The US looks forward to strengthening our bilateral partnership by expanding US-Pak trade and working together to protect fundamental freedoms in the years to come," he added.

Indiscriminate sanctions regime from the US admin



DR. MUHAMMAD JAVAD ZARIF

WHAT we in Iran—the target of a vicious and indiscriminate sanctions regime—have seen from the current U.S. administration is quite straightforward: there is no grand vision for an alternative global community. The U.S.'s fickleness and unpredictability have nothing to do with masterful implementation of game theory. Rather whether it comes to its (mis)management of COVID-19 at home or its undermining of peace and stability abroad, the current regime in Washington has no real plan except to frontally assault those who stand by the rule of law.

The U.S. handling of UN Security Council Resolution 2231, which endorsed—and is inseparable from—the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, commonly known as the Iran nuclear deal, is a case in point. In July 2015, Iran, the United States, Russia, China, Britain, France and Germany signed a landmark agreement to satisfy any concerns over the exclusively peaceful nature of our nuclear program while relieving the Iranian people of inhumane and unjust sanctions. As part of the JCPOA, the U.S. and other signatories also jointly co-sponsored UN Security Council Resolution 2231, which embraces the nuclear deal—and to which its full 90 pages are attached, thus enshrining the accord into international law. However, in May of 2018 the U.S. administration declared that it had unilaterally opted for "ceasing participation" in the JCPOA. Since then, Iran and the rest of the international community have been left in the extraordinary position of watching the U.S. become the first government in UN history that not just violates a binding resolution it itself sponsored, but also punishes those governments and companies that uphold international law by implementing its provisions. As I warned the Security Council last month, this status quo is neither desirable nor sustainable. We are thus at a crossroads.

The U.S. administration's disinformation campaign—including false and forged claims regarding a regional consensus—about the consequences of the remaining signatories to the JCPOA upholding the deal's provisions—including normalizing Iran's defense cooperation with the world in October—is a ruse to disguise its real, more malevolent motivations: having failed to collapse Resolution 2231 after over two years of the most brutal "maximum pressure" ever imposed on a nation—including depriving ordinary Iranians of access to medicines and medical equipment amid the deadliest pandemic the world has seen in many decades—the U.S. now hopes to abuse its malinterpretation of the provisions of the same resolution it abandoned in 2018 to finally destroy it. This deeply malicious U.S. behavior is evident throughout the UN, where it seeks to use the UN itself to effectively destroy the world body. There are several key issues and consequences to consider in this equation. First and foremost, one may wonder why or how the collapse of a single UN Security Council resolution on a niche subject relates to the bigger picture. It does, for most notably it would be a generational setback for the cause of multilateralism should the Security Council be bullied into torpedoing its own resolution. Unless all powers

respect the principles which the Council was created to embody, it cannot perform its duties, nor can any nation acknowledge its authority. We should not forget that the same U.S. regime has fatuously also withdrawn from the WHO amid the worst global pandemic, but now seeks to lead the WHO reform process, to the chagrin of its closest Western allies. If the U.S. is allowed to continue on this path, the world will slide backwards toward a "might makes right" standard. And while this may sound appealing to Cold Warriors looking for new targets, even that standard has its limits. For both superpowers of the past century witnessed the unraveling of their international influence in their military defeat in Afghanistan, a country with a GDP that is 14 times smaller than Apple Inc.'s annual revenue. We have also seen in past years how the U.S. administration has—in parallel with its assault on international institutions and accords—sought to supplant international law with its own domestic laws. In practice, this has meant that it is now the U.S. Treasury and not European national governments which decides with whom European companies can do business—be it under Resolution 2231 or their own North Stream gas lifeline. While it has so far primarily been the

U.S. that has sought to expand the jurisdiction of its domestic laws, there is nothing to suggest that it will retain a monopoly on it. With the opening of this Pandora's box and with complacency on the part of some national governments, it is not difficult to imagine a future where ordinary citizens and private enterprises alike may end up having to contend with the extra-territorial application of multiple and growing series of domestic laws—debilitating international travel, trade and investment in a retrograde step for our globalized world. Thus, the international community in general—and the UN Security Council in particular—face an important decision: do we maintain respect for the rule of law, or do we return to the law of the jungle? While Iran has proven its resilience and decisive response to coercive bullying, I am confident that—in the next few critical weeks and months—members of the Security Council will refute the campaign struggle of a beleaguered U.S. administration to turn what was the diplomatic achievement of the 21st Century into an exercise in futility, and in the process annihilate what is left of multilateralism and international law. - Dr. Muhammad Javad Zarif is the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Islamic Republic of Iran

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Briefs

WAPDA Chairman visits Nai Gaj Dam Project

ISLAMABAD: In the wake of recent floods, the Pakistan Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) Chairman Lt Gen Muzammil Hussain (Retd) Friday visited Nai Gaj Dam project area located in Dadu District of Sindh Province with a view to assess the situation on ground and damages to the project caused by the flood. During the visit, the Chairman had a detailed round of various components of the project, said a press release. WAPDA General Manager (Projects) South and Project Director Nai Gaj Dam were also present on the occasion. The WAPDA Chairman, on the occasion, assured his full support to the civil administration of Dadu and Sindh to tackle the situation that has arisen out of the recent floods. He also appreciated WAPDA engineers and officials for their efforts to protect the structures of Right Bank Outfall Drain (RBOD) Project during the flood. Earlier, the Chairman was briefed by the General Manager (Projects) South about the water flows in the project area during the floods, along with status and the loss done to the project components. The Chairman was apprised that the upstream protection dyke (Coffer Dam) to secure construction area of the Main Dam affected due to the floods, however, part of the Main Dam built so far remained safe. — APP

Flag hoisting, cake cutting ceremony held at PCA

RAWALPINDI: Punjab Council of the Arts (PCA) arranged flag hoisting and cake cutting ceremony to mark Independence Day with zeal and zest here on Friday. Director Punjab Council of the Arts Waqar Ahmed hoisted the flag and cut the cake of Independence Day along with staff and students. The ceremony was hosted by Deputy Director Sajjad Hussain and Bushra Syed. The singers include Hafsa Rehman, Bushra Syed, Maheen Chaudhary, Razia Kanwal, Hamza Ali, Zaib Qureshi, Wazir Ali, Sohaib Abbasi, Ehtsham Khan, Rameez Raja, Shahid Mughal and Tugral presented national songs on the occasion. Addressing on the occasion, Director Waqar Ahmed said that our ancestors rendered unmatched sacrifices for the sake of Pakistan. He said that Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah turned Allama Muhammad Iqbal's dream for separate homeland into reality with his dynamic leadership. — APP

IESCO notifies power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Friday issued a power suspension programme for Saturday and Sunday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period on Saturday from 05:00am to 09:00am, Pothohar, Behakri, Milat Chowk, Mureed, PAF, Mulhal Mughlan, Sahala, RCC-1, RCC-II, RCC-III, Dhudial City, CTM (Independent), Syed Kasran, Jand Awan, Rehmatabad-1, Sector-4, APHS, VVIP, PAF, Chaklala, MES, Chairing Cross, Range Road feeders. On Sunday from 05:00am to 09:00am, Old Kalam, Khan Abad, Munir Abad, Pourmiana, Lala Rukh, Lala Zar feeders and surrounding areas. — APP



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning and Development is hoisting Pakistan's flag at ICCI as chief guest to celebrate the 74th Independence day of Pakistan. Muhammad Ahmad Waheed, President ICCI, Tahir Abbasi Senior Vice President, Saif ur Rahman Khan Vice President and others are also present. — DNA

Pakistan will not leave Kashmiris alone, says President Arif Alvi

“An effective campaign was launched against corruption, which reflected the vision of Prime Minister Imran Khan. Pakistan has largely controlled corona pandemic as a result of its effective smart lockdown strategy

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi Friday said Pakistani nation surmounted numerous challenges since independence and learnt a lot through difficult times to take the country to a brighter future. Dr. Arif Alvi was addressing the main flag hoisting ceremony at the President House and wished 74th Independence Day to the nation. The President said, “The country has reached the tipping point where improvements are being witnessed in various areas. “We have overcome the menaces of terrorism and extremism. While other countries avoid hosting refugees,

Pakistan generously hosted 3.5 million Afghan refugees for decades, and 2.7 million of them are still living in Pakistan. “Pakistan gave a message of peace in reply to Indian aggression and sacrificed thousands of lives in fight against terrorism. “An effective campaign was launched against corruption, which reflected the vision of Prime Minister Imran Khan. Pakistan has largely controlled coronavirus pandemic as a result of its effective smart lockdown strategy. “Unlike some other countries, PM Imran Khan did not resort to complete lockdown, realizing that it will badly impact daily wagers. Several countries wanted to replicate Pakistan's policies vis a vis Coronavirus pandemic.”

“I pay tribute to the prime minister for his vision and laud role of the Ulema and the media as well as services of doctors and paramedics for combating Covid-19. “The President said under Ehsaas Programme, cash assistant was distributed among 16.9 million needy people during the difficult days of Coronavirus. The health facilities proved more than sufficient during the pandemic. Education was also imparted to students at their homes during the pandemic. “The government is also preparing a uniform curriculum, which will further strengthen national unity and upgrade education

standard. Pakistan's economy has also shown positive signs despite Covid-19 negative impacts, and Moody's has recognized it. “Pakistan will not leave Kashmiris alone. The Kashmir issue has been debated at the UN Security Council for four times during the last one year, which is a big success of Pakistan's foreign policy. “Pakistan has also released its political map, reflecting true aspirations of its people as well as Kashmiris. The new map shows Pakistan's principled stance on Kashmir issue. “The peace agreement between Afghanistan and the United States will lead to peace and stability in Afghanistan. Pakistan is the sec-

ond largest beneficiary of peace in Afghanistan. “The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is not merely a project between Pakistan and China, but it will contribute to promoting transit trade in Central Asia and also help in establishing peace.” Earlier, the President hoisted national flag at the ceremony. Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani, National Assembly Speaker Asad Qaiser, NA Deputy Speaker Qasim Suri, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Information Minister Shibli Faraz, federal ministers, parliamentarians, three services chiefs, special assistants and other senior officials were present on the occasion.

PM pays tribute to the writers and intellectuals

DNA / SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: The Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan on the occasion of Independence Day celebrations of the Pakistan Academy of Letters, while paying homage to the services of writers and intellectuals, said that I am feeling happy to know that the Pakistan Academy of Letters Celebrating Independence to configured a series of programs to highlight the role of writers in the Tehreek-e-Pakistan. I personally think that the writers played the most important role in awakening the Muslims of the subcontinent from their slumber. He said that a poet or a writer dreams and a politician interprets it. The dream of Pakistan was also seen by a poet, who was put into practice by a politician and thus Pakistan came into being.

I am most pleased that the Pakistan Academy of Letters has represented Pakistani language writers in these weekly events, He said that all these languages are the flowers of this bouquet. Language is a means of expression and literature is the internal history of a nation and a society. The Prime Minister said that living nations honour their writers, poets and intellectuals like their national heroes. The present government is serious about the promotion of literature and the welfare of writers. That is why the government has handed over the leadership of the Pakistan Academy of Letters, Pakistan's largest national body working for the promotion of literature and writers, to a scholarly and literary figure who himself was valued in the literary community. Our writer is connected to his land and

is well aware of the challenges facing the country, nation, society and is expressing them in his writings with full artistic creativity. There is a need to bring them to the notice of the common man so that he can use the ideas of writers to play his role in the development of society. I hope that these events will not only highlight the services of the writers in the independence movement but will also help in the completion of Pakistan. He said that I sincerely pay tribute to the services of my friend and Federal Minister for Education Shafiqat Mahmood and Chairman of the Pakistan Academy of Letters Prof. Dr Yousuf Khushk and writers and intellectuals from across the country. And I pray for their success. These Independence Day celebrations will surely be a milestone in our literary history. — DNA

President confers Nishan-e-Pakistan on Syed Ali Gillani

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi Friday conferred Nishan-e-Pakistan, Pakistan's highest civil award on noted Kashmiri leader Syed Ali Gillani to recognize his decades-old struggle for Kashmiris' right to self-determination. The award was conferred at a special investiture ceremony held at Aiwan-e-Sadr, during the flag hoisting ceremony to mark the 74th Independence Day of Pakistan. The award was received by Convenor All Parties Hurriyat Conference Muhammad Hussain Khateeb along with other Hurriyat leaders. The ceremony was attended by First Lady Samina Alvi, Senate Chairman

Sadiq Sanjrani, National Assembly Speaker Asad Qaiser, federal ministers and services chiefs. While reading out the citation, Secretary Cabinet Division Ahmed Nawaz Sukhera, who also moderated the ceremony, said Syed Ali Gillani started his political career in 1953 and formed APHC to provide a joint platform to Kashmiri leaders for their right to self-determination. From 2001 to June 2020, Ali Gillani headed the APHC and fought the case of Kashmiri people bravely despite facing house arrests, travel restrictions and other hardships from the Indian government. — APP

IRSA releases 270,900 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 270,900 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 383,400 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in the Indus River at Tarbela Dam was 1518.54 feet, which was 122.54 feet higher than its dead level 1386 feet. Water inflow in the dam was recorded as 230,800 cusecs and outflow as 130,000 cusecs. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1234.90 feet, which was 194.90 feet higher than its dead level of 1040 feet whereas the inflow and outflow of water was recorded as 21,700 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs respectively. — APP

RCCI holds flag hoisting ceremony to mark Independence day

DNA

RAWALPINDI: A national flag hoisting ceremony was held here at the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) to mark the 74th Independence Day of Pakistan. Chairman Punjab Board of Investment (BOI) Sardar Tanveer Ilyas and Deputy Commissioner Rawalpindi Anwar-ul-Haq were the chief guests on the occasion. RCCI President Saboor Malik, group leader Sohail Altaf, representatives from the trade associations, Senior Vice President Noshwan Khalil Khan, Vice President Hamza Sarosh, former presidents, members of the executive committee and a large number of traders attended the ceremony.

Speaking on the occasion, Chairman BOI said that the Punjab government and Punjab Investment Board despite the Corona epidemic, fruit and vegetable exports have increased. Economic indicators are turning positive. We will provide all kinds of help and relief for the promotion of business. The role of Chamber of Commerce Rawalpindi has been significant during lockdown. Referring to Independence Day, he said that freedom is a blessing. Deputy Commissioner Anwar-ul-Haq said that during the lockdown best coordination was shown by the Rawalpindi Chamber and the Anjuman-e-Tajir. We will continue to move forward with support, cooperation and consultation. Our elders have

made great sacrifices for Independence Day. Saboor Malik said, “It is a day of happiness, a day of bowing down our heads before Almighty Allah in thankfulness and a day of renewing our pledge that we will continue to struggle with unity for the objectives, for which Pakistan was created. “The RCCI chief urged the business community to adopt modern techniques to meet the challenges of the new era. “Let us pledge that we, in line with the philosophy of Allama Iqbal and the ideology of the Founder of the Nation, with faith, conviction, unity and discipline, will continue to strive to make Pakistan a strong and prosperous country,” he added. Later, a cake cutting ceremony was also held.

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Islamabad POST
11# Block 18-A, Awan Plaza,
G-8 Markaz, ISLAMABAD-PAKISAN
Ph: 051-2261960, 051-2266165



WFP lauds 'Ehsaas Nash o Numa' initiative

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Country Director of World Food Program (WFP) Pakistan, Arnold Spensan has appreciated the “Ehsaas Nashonuma” initiative of the government saying it would help tackle stunting and improve the nutrition of the poorest children in the country. Talking to media at Dogar Hospital in Bara area of Khyber district, she said that WFP was extending full support in implementation of Ehsaas Nashonuma program in nine backward districts of the country where approximately 350,000 females will be benefited, a private news channel reported. Under Ehsaas Nashonuma program, 31 centers will open in 9 districts while 33 Nashonuma Markaz were being set-up at Tehsil level where all health facilities would be provided under one roof. — APP

Three-day exhibition continues

ISLAMABAD: A three-day photography Exhibition titled “Freedom Struggle for Pakistan” organized by Directorate of Electronic and Media Publication, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting was in full swing here at local hotel. The exhibition was inaugurated by Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Senator Shibli Faraz previous day. Around 100 historical portraits and rare photographs on the life of Quaid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah were displayed at the exhibition. The exhibition was aimed to pay homage to our founding fathers and those who sacrificed everything in creating Pakistan. Like every year, this year also the DEMP, ministry of Information and Broadcasting organized this exhibition to revive the spirit of Independence of 1947 among the people of Pakistan. A book stall was also set up at the sideline of the exhibition. An exhibition officer DEMP said that a large number of people visited the exhibition particularly youth and students. They are taking keen interest in the displays at exhibition. The exhibition will be continued till August 15 at the same Hall. — APP

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Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti
Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

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Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.comWebsite: www.islamabadpost.com.pk

Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960

Off: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad

Polio workers sacked

THE report of an estimated 13000 health workers associated to the national polio campaign being laid off is extremely troubling. For one, with the lack of progress our country has shown in polio eradication in the past few years, sacking a very large portion of the anti-polio workforce is tantamount to shutting up shop and giving up on the fight against poliovirus. It is also ironic that the two provinces with the most cases this year are the ones where workers have lost their jobs. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, with 22 cases in 2020 has laid off roughly 2000, while Sindh, currently standing at 21 cases, has laid off as many as 11000.

The government has now opted for a different strategy; due to the shortage in funds, polio workers will now be hired on the basis of ten-day campaigns, as opposed to the old practice of monthly salaries. For the polio workers however—a large portion of which are women—in far-flung areas of these provinces, this is tantamount to completely disrupting the employment ecosystem, and taking away one of the few options residents of the areas have at working for a reliable salary. Let us not forget that polio workers across the country have faced life-threatening dangers and constant vaccine refusals do not make this an easy task. For them to put their lives on the line all to get unceremoniously sacked is simply unfair.

The inability to secure funding for the polio campaign is undoubtedly challenging; especially when a pandemic has taken up all the global focus of healthcare efforts. For Pakistan however, eradicating polio remains a priority, and international donors must also be made to realise this fact. Even though COVID-19 has captured our collective attention, polio remains a serious problem threatening future generations. Any efforts to revamp the healthcare system of our country must start with eradicating a disease that has all but disappeared from the rest of the world.



Pakistan's economic potential

MUHAMMAD OMAR IFTIKHAR

PAKISTAN has always remained an agricultural country. Its fields have been providing farmers with natural products including raw and edible fruits and vegetables which they sell to earn income. This produce is later sold to the distributors and whole sellers. While there is no harm in being an agriculture-based economy, the government and the concerned authorities need to bring a change in how the economy works. Living in the 21st century, technological advancements can be incorporated into how farmers harvest their produce. The age-old method of using cows to plow the fields should be converted to a mechanical system. Perhaps if the farmers too are given education or more importantly, technical education or vocational training, they can uplift their status. Pakistan's economic potential is in agriculture and it may as well continue to be in this domain. However, now the focus must be to employ other means to bring economic prosperity. According to a survey, Pakistan ranked the fourth country in the global freelance market - at 47% - in terms of achieving a year-on-year growth in its freelancing industry. The first three were the USA (78%), the UK (59%), and Brazil (48%). Pakistan needs to capitalize on the freelancing industry and make it even bigger. This can be done if the digital media companies and organizations related to the tech industry unite on a single platform. They can voice their opinion, share their concerns, present ideas, engage investors, and aspiring freelancers to work towards developing the freelance market of Pakistan. The concerned authorities need to capitalize on the current scenario that revolves around strengthening Pakistan's digital economy. Agriculture will indeed be a revenue-generating profession for the farmers of various provinces, the need of the hour is to focus on the actions that will enrich and elevate the potential of the youth of Pakistan. This will in turn elevate the potential of Pakistan's digital economy.

Kashmiris Struggle to get Rid of Indian Yoke

Iqbal Khan

Former India-appointed interlocutor on Kashmir, Radha Kumar, has said that everything has become worse in occupied Kashmir since August 05, 2019. Narendra Modi-led fascist government in New Delhi had repealed the special status of occupied Kashmir on 5th August, last year, and placed the territory under military siege, which still continues. Radha Kumar in an interview with Arab News, an English-language daily newspaper published in Saudi Arabia, said, "In this one year, everything has become worse. The alienation is worse, anger is stronger, cynicism is more pronounced and the sense that India wants to quash and humiliate Kashmiris is stronger"

GENERATION after generation Kashmiri men, women and children have confronted and contested Indian occupation, brutality and incarceration. Pakistan continues to provide political and diplomatic support to the people of the occupied valley. India is violating international laws in the valley. The World must take note and warn Delhi about the implications of its actions in the region.

Indian siege can't conquer aspiration of Kashmiri people and asks world community to restrain apartheid Indian state's atrocities in held valley. But no amount of brutality can break the will of the Kashmiri people & aspirations for freedom from occupation. We salute their courage. Every Pakistani stands by them in their just struggle for self determination. Former India-appointed interlocutor on Kashmir, Radha Kumar, has said that everything has become worse in occupied Kashmir since August 05, 2019. Narendra Modi-led fascist government in New Delhi had repealed the special status of occupied Kashmir on 5th August, last year, and placed the territory under military siege, which still continues. Radha Kumar in an interview with Arab News, an English-language daily newspaper published in Saudi Arabia, said, "In this one year, everything has become worse. The alienation is worse, anger is stronger, cynicism is more pronounced and the sense that India wants to quash and humiliate Kashmiris is stronger". She cited new measures taken by New Delhi – such as a domicile law where outsiders can become residents of occupied Kashmir, a media policy to control the territory's media and a building law allowing the Indian military to buy land and make a permanent structure – that are fueling strong resentment among people. Radha Kumar is one of the 21 high-profile Indian and Kashmiri activists who prepared a report on Kashmir released a year into India's lockdown of the territory. The 70-page report, "Jammu and Kashmir: The Impact of Lockdowns on Human Rights," which was recently released by New Delhi-based Forum for Human Rights – a rights body comprising prominent jurists, former diplomats and academicians – said that the economic, social and political impact of India's actions had been disastrous.

An informal group of prominent Indian citizens "Forum for Human Rights in Jammu and Kashmir" has asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government to revoke harsh measures in Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJ&K) by balancing security considerations with the public interest. The group including seven former senior judges of the Indian supreme court and chief justices of various high courts, five ex-top bureaucrats, and three senior retired defence officers in a report said the constitutional changes undertaken by the Indian government on Aug. 5, 2019, have bewildered Kashmiris and left them stunned and dumbfounded. The group headed by Justice Madan Bhimarao Lokur, a former judge of the Supreme Court and Radha Kumar, underlined that the absence of a multi-dimensional dialogue for settling the Kashmir issue between the New Delhi and Kashmiri leaders, and India and Pakistan, has given rise to anger, despondency, and despair among people. Group has emphasised that impact of India's actions has been "disastrous". "The economic, social, and political impact of these actions, and their long duration – eleven months thus far – have been disastrous," said the report. The group said the impact on education has been particularly severe. "Schools and colleges functioned for barely 100 days between 2019 and 2020, the bulk of which were pre-August 2019," the report documented. It further said after the Covid-19 related lockdown when schools and universities moved to online classes across the world, in Kashmir the permission of 2G facility instead of 4G did not allow digital learning. The report said the events after August 2019 have plunged the region into a sharp downward spiral. Quoting trade bodies, the eminent citizens' group recorded total losses incurred to the businesses over the last one year from August 2019-June 2020 have reached 400 billion rupees (\$5.3 billion). In the first four months of lockdown, Occupied Kashmir's industries had suffered a loss of 178 billion rupees (\$2.4 billion). Demanding release of all remaining political detainees and juveniles who were taken into preventive detention on or after Aug. 4, 2019, the former judges noted that dozens of public interest petitions challenging human rights violations did not receive the prompt judicial attention.

Kashmiris have been fighting against Indian atrocities and leading a freedom struggle for decades. The IOJ&K has seen at least 229 killings during more than 100 military operations since January 2020, according to a recently released report by the Jammu and Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society (JKCCS). From January 1 to June 30, the region witnessed the extrajudicial executions of at least 32 civilians and the killing of 54 armed forces personnel, the report stated. It also saw 55 internet shutdowns and the destruction of 48 structures. The report said three children and two women were also killed, while at least "107 cordon and search operations and cordon and destroy operations were conducted in the region". A strict lockdown and communications blackout has been in place in occupied Kashmir since August last year. Research Section of Kashmir Media Service has recently issued an analytical report which revealed that over 450,000 Kashmiris have laid down their lives for Jammu and Kashmir's freedom from Indian occupation and for its accession to Pakistan during the last over seven decades. The United Nations must institute enhanced monitoring and documenting human rights abuses being committed by India in occupied Kashmir. Decades of Indian atrocities have failed to suppress insurmountable spirit and legitimate freedom struggle of the Kashmiris, which is destined to succeed. And Kashmiris are not alone in their struggle. Pakistan has raised the issue of Kashmir on every international forum and has stressed that the World must not let Srebrenica-like massacre happen in occupied Kashmir. Entire Muslim Ummah also needs to become the voice of the people in occupied Kashmir.

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– The writer is a freelance contributor, email: Iqbal.khan9999@yahoo.com

Kashmir dispute: A timeline through the years

Shabir Hussain

Article 370 of the Indian Constitution gave special status to J&K after the state was declared as part of India through Article 1 of the Indian Constitution. Elections were held in 1951 which the National Conference won with a clean sweep and Sheikh Abdullah was appointed as the prime minister. In August 1953, Sheikh Abdullah was deposed as prime minister and arrested on alleged charges of hobnobbing with foreign powers to create an independent J&K. His deputy Bakhshi Ghulam Mohammad was put in his place as the prime minister

KASHMIR dispute emerged in 1947 immediately after the Subcontinent got independence from the British rule and India and Pakistan were born as two independent nations. In September 1947, Dogra forces aided by RSS militia and the troops from the neighbouring state of Patiala turned the Jammu city and its peripheries into a killing field in a highly organised pogrom that left more than two hundred thousand Muslims dead and an equal number of them displaced. Meanwhile Muslim rebels create a free state in Poonch area of J&K bordering the newly born Pakistan and called it Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). Rebels defeat the Dogra forces in the Gilgit Baltistan province. This was followed by tribal militia from Pakistan entering Kashmir to fight the Dogra forces. The monarch of J&K Maharaja Hari Singh decided to flee and approached India for help. On October 27, Maharaja Hari Singh signed the accession treaty, a day after the Indian forces landed in Srinagar. India's arrival in Kashmir drew Pakistan into it and the first of the four full-fledged Indo-Pak wars broke out. By the mid-1948, as the war seemed to be going nowhere, Indian prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru went to the United Nations and J&K got recognised as a disputed territory. With immediate effect, UN Security Council passed a resolution recommending ceasefire, withdrawal of Indian and Pakistani troops and a plebiscite under international watch with minimal presence of Indian military. As the ceasefire was declared under the UN aegis in 1949, India held two-thirds of the state while the rest of it remained under Pakistani control. Article 370 of the Indian Constitution gave special status to J&K after the state was declared as part of India through Article 1 of the Indian Constitution. Elections were held in 1951 which the National Conference won with a clean sweep and Sheikh Abdullah was appointed as the prime minister.

In August 1953, Sheikh Abdullah was deposed as prime minister and arrested on alleged charges of hobnobbing with foreign powers to create an independent J&K. His deputy Bakhshi Ghulam Mohammad was put in his place as the prime minister. In 1955, India passed a Presidential Order through Article 370 that gave the Centre more powers than what the Instrument of Accession granted it. In August 1965, the second Indo-Pak war erupted ending in a ceasefire on September 23. India immediately abolished the title of 'Prime Minister' in the state and replaced it with 'Chief Minister'. In 1971, India and Pakistan fought their third war that led to the fall of East Pakistan and the birth of Bangladesh. In 1974, Sheikh Abdullah gave up on his demand of self-determination and dissolved the Plebiscite Front. In 1975 Sheikh Abdullah became the chief minister of J&K through transfer of power under Indira-Abdullah accord. In 1977, Sheikh Abdullah again became the CM after elections were held in the state which the National Conference won with a thumping majority. In 1984, independent Kashmir votary and the prominent rebel leader Maqbool Bhat was hanged in Tihar Jail. Bhat was arrested in 1976. In 1987, opposition parties formed an alliance against National Conference. Massive rigging results in a big win for NC and a widespread arrest of anti-NC voices including polling agents like Yasin Malik who was to become a prominent armed rebel leader a couple of years later. As the government started crushing the dissent, many youths crossed over to Pak-administered for arms training. In 1993, All Parties Hurriyat Conference, a conglomerate of various pro-resistance political parties was formed. In 1996, New Delhi held elections in the state with barely any public participation and National Conference was declared the winner with Farooq Abdullah as the chief minister.

In 1999, 4th Indo-Pak war broke out in Kargil sector after Pakistan captured positions earlier held by India. Pakistan vacated many of the positions under international pressure. In 2006, Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf floated the four-point formula on Kashmir that included self governance for the residents of J&K on both sides of LOC, free cross-LOC movement for the residents of the disputed territory on either side, phased troop withdrawal and a joint Indo-Pak mechanism to create an atmosphere for a permanent resolution. The plan was endorsed by Mirwaiz led Hurriyat Conference but was opposed tooth and nail by Syed Ali Shah Geelani, chairman of his faction of Hurriyat. In 2008, 2009 and 2010 there were three massive civilian uprisings against India that led to the death of hundreds of Kashmiris at the hands of security forces. In 2015 PDP which fought the elections on the anti-BJP plank formed a coalition government with the same party. This was for the first time that a pro-Hindutva party formed government in J&K and unarguably the first step toward the abrogation of Article 370 and 35-A. In 2016, forces killed Burhan Wani, a poster boy of the armed resistance in Kashmir that plunged the valley into a strict curfew that lasted for months after dozens of protesters were killed. In June 2018, BJP pulled out of the coalition government it had formed with PDP and in November, the governor dissolved the state assembly. In February 2019, a suicide bomber attacked a paramilitary convoy in South Kashmir killing more than forty personnel. In response, India claimed its jets dropped bombs inside Pakistani territory. Pakistan responded the very next day and downed at least one IAF jet and captured a fighter pilot. On August 5, Government of India struck down Articles 370 and 35-A, removing with it the last vestiges of Kashmir's autonomy.

– Courtesy: Gulf News

Briefs

Iran, Turkey condemn UAE Israel agreement

DNA

ANKARA: Iran and Turkey lashed out at their regional rival the United Arab Emirates on Friday over its decision to normalise diplomatic relations with Israel in a US-brokered deal, accusing it of betraying the Palestinian cause. Iran's Foreign Ministry called the deal a "dagger that was unjustly struck by the UAE in the backs of the Palestinian people and all Muslims". Turkey said the peoples of the region "will never forget and will never forgive this hypocritical behaviour" by the UAE. The UAE, which has never fought Israel and has quietly been improving ties for years, said the agreement put a hold on Israel's plans to unilaterally annex parts of the occupied West Bank, which the Palestinians view as the heartland of their future state. But the Turkish Foreign Ministry said the UAE had no authority to negotiate with Israel on behalf of the Palestinians or "to make concessions on matters vital to Palestine". The agreement would make the UAE the first Gulf Arab state — and the third Arab country, after Egypt and Jordan — to have full diplomatic ties with Israel. The Palestinians say the deal amounts to "treason" and have called on Arab and Muslim countries to oppose it.

Afghan govt release 80 Taliban prisoners

DNA

KABUL: The Afghan government on Thursday released 80 out of 400 remaining Taliban prisoners whose release was approved by last week in Loya Jirga, the National Security Council said on Friday. The consultative Loya Jirga, the grand assembly of Afghan elders, last week approved the release of the 400 Taliban prisoners, a step that was seen as a key push for the start of the intra-Afghan negotiations. The prisoners were released from Pule-Charkhi prison in Kabul, according to the National Security Council. According to government data, out of the 400 prisoners in question, 156 of them have been sentenced to death, 105 of them are accused of murder, 34 of them are accused of kidnapping that led to murder, 51 of them are accused of drug smuggling, 44 of them are on the blacklist of the Afghan government and its allies, 6 of them are accused of assorted other crimes, 4 are accused of unspecified crimes.

Pakistan not independent economically, says Shehbaz

DNA

LAHORE: Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Shehbaz Sharif has said that Pakistan is not independent economically. The PML-N leader addressed a ceremony in connection with Pakistan's Independence Day which is being celebrated on Friday (today) and said the nations with weak economies are not independent. Pakistan's biggest success was becoming an atomic power but the country is scrounging today despite that, he said while adding that this practice should be stopped. Today, no one can dare to look towards Pakistan with evil eye because of the nuclear power, he said. "Salaries were not increased this year due to the pressure by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Inflation has soared owing to coronavirus and load-shedding — which had been ended completely in 2018 — has started again due to the incompetent government."



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Bewell Hospital Syed Tariq, Ambassador of Morocco Mohamed Karmoune, Ambassador of Palestine Ahmed Rabei, Ambassador of Yemen Mohammed Mohatar Alashabi along with others cutting the cake during Jashn-e-Azadi celebrations. — DNA

Pak-Sino Universities to establish research center on hybrid rice

ISLAMABAD: Wuhan University-University of the Punjab Joint Research Center for Honglian Hybrid Rice is going to be established this year. This was reported by Gwadar Pro on Friday quoting the official website of China Association for Science and Technology. This move will boost the development of high-yield hybrid rice in Pakistan, a major rice exporter in the world, to improve domestic food safety as well as supplement rice export. Honglian hybrid rice is one of the three major types of cytoplasmic male sterility (CMS) of rice (*Oryza sativa* L.) that has been commercially used in hybrid rice seed production.

In China, it is a well-known hybrid rice type developed for over 40 years by Zhu Yingguo, the late member of the Chinese Academy of Engineering and expert in plant genetics and breeding. By 2020, the global acreage of Honglian hybrid rice has surpassed about 26.67 million hectares. The production of Honglian hybrid rice in Pakistan can reach around 7,500 kg per hectare, nearly three times as much as that of many other rice varieties, according to Zhu Renshan, professor-level senior engineer of Wuhan University who is now in charge of the international cooperation on this type of rice. "A lot of hybrid rice varieties' high-yield performance is only confined to a specific area. In contrast, Honglian hybrid rice can create bumper harvest not only in China but also in many other countries like Pakistan," Zhu Renshan said. Honglian hybrid rice adapts well to Pakistan's climate. Even under extreme high temperature or changeable weather, the seed setting rate is still stable, much higher than that of other hybrid rice varieties. Moreover, Honglian rice seed production costs less.



Therefore, farmers can get higher income at the same investment. It's also worth mentioning that Honglian hybrid rice is eco-friendly because of the higher nitrogen use efficiency characteristic, exhibiting vigor and good yield even in barren soil. In this way fertilization can be decreased. In 2019, the exchange visits between the two nations' agricultural experts on Honglian hybrid rice had been done. Having seen Honglian hybrid rice does so well in the six experimental plots in Pakistan, the two countries' professionals are confident in its future performance when sowed at a large scale. Next, besides lifting local cultivation, the research center is planning a series of technical cooperation and scientific research. Seed production technologies will be gradually transferred to Pakistan. Furthermore, they will also provide technical support on pest control. Though COVID-19 pandemic is still persists, Pak-Sino cooperation related to Honglian hybrid rice keeps progressing. The two countries' experts are communicating online and have held a video meeting of technical guidance. Earlier this year, the research team of Wuhan University delivered seeds from China to Pakistan via international logistics, and the rice will be harvested in October.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Cultural Forum, Zafar Bakhtawari standing in the honor of National Anthem during cake cutting ceremony on the eve of Independence Day at D Watson Blue Area. — DNA

Waziristan fast becoming tourism hotspot

ISLAMABAD: Waziristan is fast becoming a tourism hotspot, as it provides some fascinating places to visit, says a report published by Gwadar Pro on Friday. Tribal youth from South and North Waziristan are extensively utilising social media platforms to promote the stunning beauty of the erstwhile lawless districts bordering Afghanistan ever since Pakistan Army wiped out militants here. The report says, this is a success story, as thousands of people have started travelling to Waziristan, including families, from the country's settled areas, said Zahid Wazir, an analyst from North Waziristan, who has vast exposure to matters related to the tribal region. Zahid Wazir said that Waziristan had the potential to divert tourism spotlight from Swat, Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan, at least for the people of Sindh province and South Punjab, not to mention foreign tourists at this point of time. He said that the CPEC Western route will also connect these areas with the rest of the country, which will further boost tourism in Waziristan. Wazir said that many factors contributed to this unexpected but pleasant development, including better roads network, which made the areas easily accessible. However, the biggest contributor is the change of mindset and social acceptability for people of non-tribal areas among the tribesmen as they went through untold hardships in camps in settled areas after they were displaced due to military operations in the past, he said. — DNA

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Pak a paradise for tourists: Usman

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Youth Affairs Muhammad Usman Dar on Friday said the country was not less than a paradise for tourists due to its stunning beauty. "I have travelled across the world but nothing can match the mesmerizing sceneries of Pakistan," Dar, who was on a one-day visit to Malam Jabba, said in a news release issued here. The government was actively pursuing its tourism promotion policy, he added. According to the SAPM's office, Usman Dar had celebrated the Independent Day in unique style as he planned to visit the beautiful valleys of Pakistan. He rode on the longest zip line of the country, set up at the Malam Jabba tourist attraction, with a Pakistani flag in his hand. He chanted "Pakistan Zindabad" (Long live Pakistan) slogans while zip-lining. — APP

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Top leaders wish nation on Independence Day

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The nation is celebrating the 74th Independence Day with much fanfare. With celebrations being held across the country to mark this day, top political leaders in their messages have sent out wishes to the nation on the occasion and paid rich tributes to the founder of the nation. Former president Asif Ali Zardari in his message on the 74th Independence Day

of Pakistan paid rich tribute to the founder of the nation Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and said that Quaid assured the rights of the minorities by establishing a separate state for the Muslims of the subcontinent. He said Quaid-e-Azam had clarified that he is laying the foundation of a democratic state. "Today, we need to follow the spirit of the philosophy of our leader," he said, stressing the need for accepting the supremacy of the Parliament.

Auckland: lockdown extended for 12 days

DNA

ACKLAND: New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern has announced a 12-day extension of the country's Covid-19 restrictions, after a cluster of cases grew to 29. There are four "alert levels" in New Zealand, and Auckland has been on Level 3 since Wednesday. The rest of the country is on Level 2, and Ms Ardern said both would be extended. New Zealand has had success containing coronavirus, and went 102 days without a community transmission. The origin of the cluster in Auckland - New Zealand's largest city with a population of 1.5 million - is still being investigated. The PM said the decision to extend the restrictions was "in keeping with our cautious approach and New Zealand's philosophy of going hard and going early". She said that, in 12 days' time, she thought "the cluster will be identified, will be isolated, and we can move to Level 2 in Auckland with confidence". All 29 cases "remain linked to one cluster centred in Auckland", Ms Ardern said, adding that 38 people are in government quarantine.

PML-Q for 'cautious' diplomacy with Saudi Arabia

DNA

LAHORE: PML-Q leaders Chaudhry Shujaat Husain and Pervaiz Elahi have said the Foreign Office should have exercised maximum care with regard to Pak-Saudi relations. "Saudi Arabia is not only our brotherly country, but also the centre of our religious beliefs. Saudi Arabia has always supported Pakistan in every difficult time," they said in a joint statement here on Thursday. The opposition had also criticised Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi's remarks about the Saudi Arabia-led Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), calling these "highly unfortunate and irresponsible". The PML-Q leaders questioned the FO's diplomacy for ignoring the nature of the country's relations with Saudi Arabia. "What was the need for giving such a statement after which explanations have to be given," Chaudhry Shujaat said and added if one pointed out the mistakes for correction, this was taken as the government's opposition, and this was not the right attitude. He said that millions of Pakistanis were earning their livelihoods in Saudi Arabia. "Every patriot will foil any attempt to spoil Pak-Saudi relations. Nobody has the right to harm [Pakistan's] relations with brotherly Islamic countries," he said.

COVID-19 recovers reach 265,300: NCO

ISLAMABAD: The number of recovered COVID-19 patients in the country has reached 265,215 from out of a total of 287,300 cases of reported till date. According to latest statistics released here by National Command and Operation Centre (NCO) on Friday, the total active COVID-19 cases in the country were 15,932 till date. Some 626 people have been tested positive of COVID-19 while 14 patients have been died due to the pandemic in the last 24 hours. From out of total COVID patients some 2,167 persons have been contracted the disease in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), 12,062 in Blochistan, 2,426 in Gilgit-Baltistan, 15,342 in Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT), 35,021 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 94,993 in Punjab and 125,289 people were infected in Sindh. While 6,153 patients have so far died of the virus in the country including 2,307 patients died in Sindh, 2,180 in Punjab, 1,236 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 173 in ICT, 138 in Balochistan, 59 in Gilgit-Baltistan and 60 patients died in AJK after contracting COVID-19.

Pakistan's Independence Day celebrated in Paris

DNA

PARIS: Pakistan's flag was hoisted at a ceremony held at the Pakistan Embassy here this morning to celebrate the country's 74th Independence Day. Members of the Pakistani community and Officers and staff of the Embassy were present on the occasion. Messages of President and Prime Minister of Pakistan were read out to the audience, while Charge d'Affaires a.i.

Mr. Muhammad Amjad Aziz Qazi addressed the gathering. Expressing his views Mr. Qazi noted the importance of freedom and joy felt by Pakistanis inside and outside the country on this day. He compared the situation in Pakistan with that of India in light of recent actions by India to marginalize its minorities. He also highlighted the sufferings of the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJK) saying that Indian government's illegal



act of changing the status of IIOJK and military siege imposed on the territory is in violation of international law and UN Security Council resolutions that grant the right of self determination to Kashmiris. He also appreciated the role played by Pakistani and Kashmiri communities in raising the Kashmir issue in France. While lauding the efforts of members of the Pakistani community in France during Covid-19 lockdown by providing relief to the needy, he mentioned that Foreign Minister of Pakistan had also acknowledged the community's efforts yesterday

and honored two members of the community and an organization by including them in FM Honours List 2020. Mr. Qazi also availed of the opportunity to urge the community to use the recently issued Political Map of Pakistan in their events, wherever required. In the end he advised the members of the community to strictly observe precautionary measures in their everyday life as Covid-19 cases are increasing again in France.

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