



Islamabad POST

Saturday, March 13, 2021

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Price Rs. 20

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Briefs

'Education vital for development'

DNA

SOHAWA: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Friday, terming education vital for national development, said that preparing knowledgeable and talented youngsters with moral strength was the need of the hour. Addressing a ceremony at Al Qadir University, he emphasised an education system that acted as a means of self-development and a source of bringing positive change in the society. Two years ago, the prime minister had laid the foundation-stone of the university with the objective of making the institution a cradle of science and spirituality.

CJP unhurt in road accident

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan Gulzar Ahmed is unhurt after his convoy met with an accident near Rashakai, the Supreme Court's spokesperson confirmed on Friday. The spokesperson said that one of the cars in CJP Gulzar's convoy had an accident as he was travelling to Kohat to attend the funeral of Justice Yahya Afridi's father. The spokesperson said the accident took place near Rashakai town in Mardan. "Chief Justice Gulzar Ahmed and his car are safe," said the spokesperson. It was reported on Thursday that Supreme Court's Justice Yahya Afridi's father Omar Khan Afridi had passed away.

Third virus wave has begun: Asad

ISLAMABAD: Chief of the National Command and Operations Centre Asad Umar has issued a grim warning: the third coronavirus wave has begun in Pakistan. Speaking to a private channel, the planning minister said: "Yes, absolutely. There is no doubt that the third wave has begun. Basically, the phenomena driving it is the spread of the UK strain." Umar said that the districts where there was higher positivity ratio had a high number of Pakistanis living in the UK. "We had genome sequencing done from NIH (National Institute of Health) and [...] the dominant strain is the UK strain," said the minister.

PDM decides to challenge results in court

SANJRANI IN, GILLANI OUT

Jamaat-e-Islami Senator stays away from the process; PDM loses despite having majority in the Upper House; PPP accuses the Presiding officer of being partial; Mirza Afridi bags highest 54 votes and become Dy Chairman

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: As many as 98 senators on Friday actively participated in the process to elect their new Chairman and Deputy Chairman for a term of three years, giving the both slots to the PTI-backed candidates Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani and Mirza Muhammad Afridi respectively. The PDM has decided to take the matter to the court because it thinks the Presiding officer wrongly rejected seven votes. After a nerve-wrecking contest for the seat of Chairman, the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) candidate

Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani secured 48 votes and defeated Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM)'s joint candidate Yusuf Raza Gilani, who secured 42 votes. In the House of 100 seats, as many as total 98 votes were polled in the election of Senate Chairman as Senator Mushtaq Ahmed of Jamaat-e-Islami abstained from the voting process, while the notification of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's (PML-N) Ishaq Dar was suspended by the Election Commission of Pakistan due to his continued absence and stay abroad. Eight votes were rejected on technical ground. For the election of Deputy Chairman, as many as 54



GOVT: Sadiq Sanjrani 48



PDM: Yousaf Raza Gillani 42

senators voted in the favour of Mirza Muhammad Afridi, while 44 votes went to the PDM candidate Abdul Ghafoor Haideri. Earlier in the day, as many as 48 newly-elected sena-

tors took oath of allegiance to Pakistan in the Upper House of the Parliament for a term of six years. Senate Secretary Mohammad Qasim Samad Khan welcomed all existing and

newly-elected members and handed over the chair to Senator Sayed Muzfar Hussain Shah, who had been nominated as Presiding Officer for special sitting of the House by President Dr Arif Alvi. Presiding Officer Sayed Muzfar Hussain Shah administered the oath to the newly-elected members, who reached the country's top constitutional forum for national service after getting votes from members of the national and provincial assemblies. PPP's Qasim Gillani, the son of Yousaf Raza Gillani, announced that the Opposition parties will approach the election tribunal and challenge the rejection of votes.

Kunwar Dilshad, the former secretary of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), said that a decision related to the matter will be taken by the Supreme Court of Pakistan. Speaking to media after the Senate chairman's election, Opposition leaders, including PPP's Raja Pervaiz Ashraf and PML-N's Ahsan Iqbal, said that the rejection of votes cast for Yousaf Raza Gillani was "deliberate," adding that Gillani, as the representative of the PDM, has won the Senate chairman election. "The way the government has stolen the election is an insult to the Parliament," said Ashraf.

PDM to challenge Sanjrani win

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has refused to acknowledge the defeat of its candidate Yousaf Raza Gillani in the election of Chairman Senate and announced to challenge his loss in the Election Tribunal. As soon as the presiding officer announced the re-election of Sadiq Sanjrani as Chairman of the Senate, senators on the opposition benches caused uproar against the decision. PPP leader Farooq H. Naik said that we cannot accept this decision under any circumstances as the ballot paper did not instruct or indicate where the voter should affix the seal. He refused to accept the seven votes rejected during the election of Chairman of the senate, saying that putting the stamp over the candidate's name does not invalidate the vote. Meanwhile, Qasim Gilani, son of Yousaf Raza Gillani, while refusing to acknowledge the victory of Sadiq Sanjrani, said that PPP plans to soon approach the election tribunal against this decision. On the other hand, the PML-N has also refused to acknowledge the defeat of the joint PDM candidate. A statement issued by PML-N leader Ahsan Iqbal said that Yousaf Raza Gillani won with 49 votes and the government's candidate Sadiq Sanjrani lost with 48 votes. However, seven votes of Yousaf Raza Gillani were rejected to forcibly declare Sanjrani as the victor.

PDM has defeated the govt, says Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari

"We hope that justice will be served and the high court will rule in our favour,"

NAZIR SIYAL

ISLAMABAD: PPP Chairperson Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari said Friday the Senate chairman election 2021 "has been stolen right in front of the eyes of the people". Bilawal claimed that the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) - the Opposition parties' anti-government coalition - "has defeated the [PTI] government in the National Assembly and the Senate". "Their bias and their biased, illegal decision is



right in front of you. Seven votes for the chairman of the Senate of Pakistan were cast in favour of Yousaf Raza Gillani. "Those votes were cast properly, legally, constitutionally, but seven senators of the Senate of Pakistan were purposefully disenfranchised and Gillani sahib, despite winning, has still not sat on

that seat in the Senate. "A vote is 'cast' when the intention of the voter becomes clear. Seven votes were invalidly rejected [but] if these seven votes are added, then Yousaf Raza Gillani has won. Yousaf Raza Gillani has become the chairman of the Senate. "Those seven votes were in line with whichever Supreme Court precedents you wish to bring up or the stance or position of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), they were legal votes."

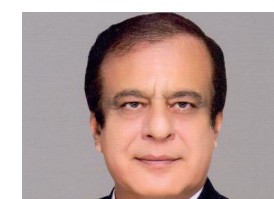
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'Opposition's 'heinous conspiracy' exposed'

- says the opposition itself committed the wrong act and started hue and cry

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Senator Shibli Faraz on Friday said the opposition parties' 'heinous conspiracy' and malicious attempt to breach secrecy of the ballot, during the election of Senate Chairman and Deputy Chairman, had been exposed after the hidden camera installed by them around the polling booth was unearthed. Talking to media persons here at the Parliament House, he said the opposition parties had somehow managed to install camera on top of the polling booth, which was timely identified and pointed out to the Presiding Officer before oath-taking of the newly elected members.



He said the opposition itself committed the wrong act and started hue and cry, after getting exposed, and blamed the government. "Opposition started the drama as they were the master of doing such acts, so they reached the site and gave impression of wrongdoing on the part of the government. We will thoroughly investigate it and expose the culprits," he said. Shibli Faraz said the opposition parties' corrupt practices could be gauged from the fact they managed to win the Senate

seat of Yousaf Raza Gillani despite having minority in the National Assembly. He said Gillani was the person who opted to get disqualified as the Prime Minister just to protect the corruption of his leader Asif Ali Zardari. The minister was of the view that such elements should have no place in the Parliament who always kept their personal interests supreme, setting aside national interests. While contrary to it, he said, PM Imran Khan always safeguarded the public interest. He said the PM wanted to bring transparency in the election process and accordingly the government introduced amendments in the Parliament in the relevant acts and approached the apex court for open ballot, but the opposition parties opposed it.

Cameras allegedly installed in polling booths

ISLAMABAD: PML-N Senator Dr Musadik Malik and PPP Senator Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar claimed Friday that cameras have been installed in polling booths set up for the election of the Senate chairman and deputy chairman. The senators had shared apparent evidence on Twitter hours before the Senate was set to elect its new chairman and deputy chairman. "What a freaking joke. The senate polling booth has secret /hidden cameras installed," tweeted Dr Musadik Malik along with the pictures of cameras. The PML-N senator also claimed that there was a "hidden device" in the polling booth. The PPP senator claimed that he and the PML-N senator had found "spy cameras right over the polling booth". The two leaders, after posting the pictures on Twitter, also held a press conference outside Parliament House once the Senate session started. Dr Malik said that both PML-N and PPP had directed them to check the polling booth before the election of the Senate chairman. - APP

NAB begins action against HEC chairman Dr Tariq Banuri



DNA

ISLAMABAD: The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has begun an action against the Higher Education Commission (HEC) Chairman Dr Tariq Banuri over accusations of misuse of power and corruption.

Continued on Page 06

Australian envoy calls on COAS

RAWALPINDI: Geoffrey Shaw, Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan called on General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) at GHQ. According to an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) statement, matters of mutual interest, overall regional situation including Afghan Peace Process and bilateral cooperation in various fields were discussed during the meeting. Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Bajwa said that Pakistan values its strong diplomatic, economic and defence relations with Australia.

Continued on Page 06



RAWALPINDI: Geoffrey Shaw, Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan called on General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) at GHQ. - DNA

Sadiq Sanjrani sails smoothly, courtesy PDM

Miracles once again ruled supreme in the Chairman Senate elections on March 12, 2021 where govt-backed candidate and sitting Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani managed to regain the title despite the fact that they did not have the majority in the Upper House. The govt and its allies possessed 47 seats while the PDM tally was counted at 51 in the House of 98. Ishaq Dar of PML N is out of the country and Jamaat-e-Islami senator chose to stay away from the process. Sanjrani got 48 votes, one extra vote and PDM candidate Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani got 42. Seven votes were rejected while one candidate polled his or her vote for both the candidates simultaneously thus that vote was also rejected. For the post of Deputy Chairman Senate Mirza Afridi got 54 votes while Ghafoor Haideri of PDM got 44 out of the total 98 votes cast. Afridi who be-

longs to FATA, miraculously got seven extra votes. The seven rejected votes issue became serious when the PPP leaders questioned the Presiding officer's ruling who had outright rejected the votes. Farooq Naik had a valid point that it was not written anywhere in instructions that if a Senator affixed a stamp on the name of the candidate instead of the box in front of the name, the vote shall be rejected. Legal experts too share Naik's opinion and think it does not matter when a stamp is affixed on the name of in the box in front of the name. This matter therefore for sure will go to the Supreme Court. But all said and done, the fact of the matter is that Sadiq Sanjrani has won and regained the Senate chairman slot. The question that is still unanswered is that the Senators put stamp on wrong place deliberately or by mistake? In both cases one thing is certain that the govt

camp remained steadfast and loyal but in PDM ranks some fatal fissures were observed. Even before the Chairman election it was quite evident that Sadiq Sanjrani shall succeed and Yousaf Raza

number three in the top hierarchy after the President and the Prime Minister. When the President is out of the country or unable to perform functions as President then the Chairman Senate

becomes the acting President. And by virtue of that the supreme commander of the armed forces of Pakistan as well. A convicted person sitting at the highest office thus did not make any sense, from the point of view of powers that be. Secondly the govern-

ment ministers had made it clear well before the election that they will adopt each and every method to get their candidate elected as the chairman. And they did it. March 12 will go down in the political and parliamentary history of Pakistan as a doomed day. Another day that has not earned any repute for the politicians for whatever happened in the Senate these Senators and politicians are responsible for that no matter whoever coerced them to do so or they did it on their own. The entire drill has badly shaken the political process. If things have come to such a pass, the political parties are to blame for this. They are not ready to see one another's faces. For personal gains, they would go to any extent. Thus, they provide the spoilers with ample opportunities of exploiting their differences. The govt and its supporters wanted to get a clear majority in the Senate in order to have smooth



Ansar Mahmood Bhatti

Gillani despite a clear majority shall not be able to make it. The reasons are quite obvious. Yousaf Raza Gillani was convicted by the Supreme Court of Pakistan and thus removed from the post of Prime Minister of Pakistan. The Chairman Senate post ranks

legislation however the results show govt has not been able to achieve that goal despite that fact that PTI has emerged as the largest party in the Senate with 26 seats. The anti-govt parties would continue to maintain a majority in the Senate. So basically it will be a hotchpotch situation in the Upper House, which means no serious legislation shall take place. PTI's predicament is unique. Despite having a greater number of Senators, neither the Chairman Senate nor the Deputy belongs to PTI. This is yet another interesting and intriguing aspect of our politics. But that is how politics works here. The Senate results ostensibly may instill a new vigor into the PDM movement against the sitting government. Nevertheless, it is now not clear whether this movement would actually pose any threat to the ruling clique because winds are still blowing in favour of PTI and its allies.

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Briefs

AJK President pay tributes to Inqalabi

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Leaders across the entire political and social spectrum, including AJK President Sardar Masood Khan at a condolence reference termed former legislator and PPP leader, late Muhammad Matloob Inqalabi as a widely recognized and gifted leader of his time.

The reference was jointly organized by former Federal Minister, Sardar Mohammad Yousuf Khan and Hafiz Sajjad Qamar to pay homage to the late Matloob Inqalabi for his political and social services.

Former Chairman National Disaster Management Authority Lt Gen (ret) Mohammad Afzal, former Chief Justice Azad Kashmir Chaudhry Mohammad Ibrahim Zia, state minister Chaudhry Mohammad Shehzad, Muslim Conference leader Saghir Chughtai, former Member of National Assembly Zamurad Khan, PTI leader Eng Iftikhar Chaudhry, APHC leader Ghulam Mohammad Safi, Major (ret) Hafeez Chaudhry, Maulana Mehmood Tabassum, Qari Ali Akbar Naemi, Sahibzada Zulfikar Ali and other speakers also addressed the reference.

Court extends remand of Khawaja Asif

DNA

LAHORE: An accountability court in Lahore has extended the judicial remand of Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) lawmaker Khawaja Asif in assets beyond income case.

Judge Jawadul Hassan conducted the hearing of assets beyond income case against PML-N central leader Khawaja Asif today. The lawmaker did not appear in the hearing.

During the hearing, the jail officials presented the medical report of the accused lawmaker which stated that Asif was admitted to Jinnah Hospital for hernia operation. The judge remarked that platelets of the patient dropped within a minute here.

He said that each accused would give an excuse for not appearing in the courtroom. Khawaja Asif's counsel told the court that his client will be discharged from the hospital after undergoing operation within 10-15 days.

The court asked the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) prosecutor whether the judicial remand could be extended in the absence of the accused. The prosecutor said that it could be extended in an untoward situation.

38,000 trees to be planted in Pishin'

DNA

QUETTA: Special Assistant to Prime Minister for Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam in a meeting with Governor Balochistan Amanullah Khan Yasinzai at Governor House. APP photo by Mohsin Naseer

QUETTA, Mar 12 (APP): Special Assistant to Prime Minister (SAPM) on Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam Friday said that planting trees was our national duty and people must take full part in Tree Plantation Campaign for the welfare of our future generations.

He expressed these views while addressing at a ceremony of 10 billion Tree Tsunami Project (10 BTTP) project organized under contribution of Development Foundation at Band Khushdil Khan in Pishin area of Balochistan. Provincial Secretary, Siddique, Mandukhel, Development Foundation, President Allah Dad Loni, Chief Executive Amjad Rashid, Chief Conservator Forest Balochistan Abdul Jabbar, PPP's Tahir Malik, 10BTTP's project Director Ali Imran, Deputy Commissioner Pishin, Qaim Lashari and other officials were present on the occasion. Addressing the ceremony, SAPM said federal government was taking measures to protect the forests under contribution of provincial regime.



LAHORE: Chinese ambassador to Pakistan, Nong Rong along with deputy chief executive officer and technical staff of Orange line metro train, posing for a group photo. – DNA

Chinese envoy visits Orange Line Metro Train project

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Chinese ambassador to Pakistan, H.E. Nong Rong, visited the Orange Line Metro Train depot at Dera Gujran in Lahore on Friday, March 12, 2021. This was the first official visit of H.E. Nong Rong to the very first operational CPEC project in Pakistan. Top management

officials from Norinco International welcomed the Chinese ambassador and escorted him to various departments of the project, where he also spoke with a Pakistani metro train driver to inquire about his ongoing experience. H.E. expressed his satisfaction at the overall running of the project and congratulated the entire team for managing their professional

duties with utmost dedication and commitment. H.E. Nong Rong was pleased with the growing percentage of Pakistani workforce engaged with the project and the technical skills and training being imparted to them for their professional growth. While speaking at the occasion, Li-Chen, Deputy Chief Executive Officer at Norinco International said, "We

are humbled and pleased to welcome H.E. Nong Rong to the very first CPEC project in Pakistan that became operational on October 26, 2020. The Orange Line Metro Train project is a symbol of the long-standing Pakistan-China friendship that is committed to embracing a successful future through mutual support and collaboration. At Norinco Inter-

national, we are determined to play a pivotal role in deepening these good relations between China and Pakistan and efficiently introducing the latest engineering marvels in Pakistan that can help modernize its socio-economic landscape." The Orange Line Metro Train is the very first CPEC project to be operational for public use. So far, 10 million passengers have

travelled on the Orange Line Metro Train project since its inauguration on October 26, 2020. This shows how local residents have embraced this project with utmost excitement and have made it a part of their daily lives. Thousands of commuters are benefiting from this safe, fast and economical mode of transportation which is also benefiting the environment.



FAISALABAD: Ameer Jamaat e Islami Siraj ul Haq addressing to public gathering at Dhoobi Ghat Ground. – DNA

NSER survey formally opens in Alipur tahsil

MUZAFFARGARH: National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER) survey under Ehsaas programme of the PTI government was formally opened at a ceremony in Ali Pur tahsil of district Muzaffargarh on Friday to expand the scope of the flagship social safety initiative by bringing more deserving families in the fold. The ceremony was presided over by district head NSER Operations Sardar Khalil Ahmad Khan Sehar while assistant commissioner Mubeen Ahsan and PTI district president Malik Amir Arain were the special guests.

AC Mubeen Ahsan said that the surveyors were collecting statistics relating to every family to add more deserving families to enable them get assistance under Ehsaas programme.

He appealed the people to give correct information to the survey teams adding that a number of underserving people had already been excluded from the list as per government's vision to make the financial assistance accessible only to poor deserving families.

Amir Arain said that Prime Minister Imran Khan has allocated huge funds worth billions under Ehsaas programme and appealed the people particularly women to get themselves registered.

He said, Pakistan was taking strides in every field and would soon emerge as a self sufficient country with a strong economy.

A large number of people including PTI local leaders, workers, civil society representatives attended the ceremony. – APP

Alvi opens Clean and Green Pakistan Scouts Camporee

DNA

KARACHI: President Arif Alvi on Friday inaugurated Pakistan Boys Scouts Association's Clean and Green Camporee by planting a sapling at the scout training center in city's Scout Colony.

President Alvi also visited stalls set up by scouts engaged in various innovative schemes including villages representing different parts of the country.

Addressing the youth and children attending the event, he said Clean and Green campaign was extremely relevant to the country exposed to pollution and massive tree cutting was consequently leading to steady decline in the forest cover of the country coupled with environmental degradation.

"The 10 billion tree campaign is critically relevant and each of us ought to participate with due care and should heed equal attention towards fruit trees too," he said adding that safe disposals of garbage also required urgent attention at community level.

Appreciating PBSA for taking upon itself the task of grooming youth and children, he said Robert Baden Powell's motives must be truly materialized and the spirit of volunteerism must be inculcated besides introducing them to concepts relevant to the present day needs. "Scouting teaches how to live to-

gether bringing all sections and segments of the society closer," said President Alvi reminiscing his days as a boy scout. He urged the young boy and girl scouts to understand importance of principles promoted by Quaid e Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah mentioning that Unity was key to achieve goals that are beneficial for the nation.

The President said Discipline and Faith were equally important to put country on the path of progress and development. "Discipline helps nations go strong and successful," he said reiterating that youth along with people of the country

in general must join hands to combat corruption.

"I have absolute confidence in Pakistanis," he said appreciating the physically challenged scouts present on the occasion. "Training is needed and skills have to be imparted for self reliance," said President Alvi.

The Camporee, a week long event organized by PBSA is being attended by some 2500 boy scouts from across the country along with around 250 girl scouts assigned with the task to get themselves involved in tree plantation in the metropolis as well as in their respective areas of residence.

Begum Samina Alvi, MNA Saifur Rehman, Chief Secretary and Sindh Scout Commissioner, Mumtaz Ali Shah, Akhter Habib were also present on the occasion.

– DNA

Pak, Turkey call for further strengthening ties

The two sides stressed the need for further strengthening the existing long-cherished brotherly relations between Pakistan and Turkey, a news release said. The minister said the bilateral co-op in all technical aspects of the aviation sector was being further increased

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: Turkish ambassador to Pakistan Ihsan Mustafa Yurdakul Friday called on Minister for Aviation Ghulam Sarwar Khan and discussed the matters relating to promoting bilateral ties in diverse fields including Aviation.

During the meeting, the two sides stressed the need for further strengthening the existing long-cherished brotherly relations between Pakistan and Turkey, a news

release said. The minister said the bilateral cooperation in all technical aspects of the aviation sector was being further increased.

He said a more proactive and collaborative strategy was needed to cope with the confronted challenges in the given scenario of global coronavirus pandemic. Ghulam Sarwar said two countries enjoyed good cultural and tourism relations, which would prove beneficial in promotion of aviation sector. The minister appreciated



Turkey for supporting Pakistan's stance on the issues confronted by Ummah and the international community including the Kashmir issue. He said Pakistan and Turkey



were playing an important role in peace, stability and economic development in the region. Following the establishment of Pakistan, both countries

extended each other their support during the most difficult times, such as in reacting natural disasters and they cemented their friendly relations with frequent high-level visits. The High Level Cooperation Council which was established in 2009 and upgraded to High Level Strategic Cooperation Council has been a clear demonstration both countries' will to further bilateral relations in every field.

Sixth meeting of the High Level Strategic Cooperation Council was held in Islamabad on 13-14 February 2020 under the chairmanship of H.E. Recep Tayyip Erdogan and H.E. Imran Khan. Within this mechanism, 73 agreements and documents have been signed, so far. The positive reflection of the excellent bilateral relations can also be seen in the international fora. Turkey and Pakistan are supporting each other in all international platforms. Pakistan also adopts a highly supportive approach on international matters, which are of special interest for Turkey.

Vaccination successfully continues in Punjab

LAHORE: The coronavirus vaccination drive for senior citizens (60-year and above) is successfully in progress on the third day across the province.

According to the Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department on Friday, so far 207,464 citizens of age 60 and above got themselves registered for the vaccination.

The Health department set up 80 vaccination counters on the third day at Expo Centre where vaccination centre has been established.

The vaccination process remains continuous from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. without break. In the first two days, 7582 senior citizens received first of two doses of the vaccine.

As many as 88,974 frontline health care workers got first dose of vaccine while 15,177 workers received the 2nd dose so far.

The vaccination is being administered without any VIP culture and purely on merit and transparency basis.

The senior citizens can register their names by sending CNIC number to 1166 through sms. – APP

CDNS receives Rs 33 billion savings

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Central Directorate of National Savings (CDNS) has received Rs 33 billion through the new launches schemes investments by March 10, from registered Premium Prize Bonds of Rs 40,000 and Rs 25,000 introduced by the institution.

The CDNS has introduced the new registered Premium Prize Bonds after the termination of both major Prize bonds of Rs 40,000 and Rs 25,000. This initiative documentation of the country's economy, senior official of CDNS told here on Friday.

New registered Premium Prize Bonds of Rs 40,000 and Rs 25,000 were registered by State Bank of Pakistan and en-cashed only by the registered financial institution under the SBP, he said. Replying to the question, he said CDNS has opened new avenues for public and private investment to document the country's economy and ensure transparency in the financial system. While replying to another question, he informed, "We paid the encashment of Rs 118 billion by March 10 to the investors against the suspension of prize bonds of Rs 25,000."

He said the federal government recently suspended the prize bonds of Rs 25,000 and had given a six-month deadline to investors to en-cash their total savings of Rs 160 billion.

NA-249 by-election on April 29

NAZIR SIYAL

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has fixed April 29 as the polling date for by-election on constituency NA-249 Karachi West-II. The commission has called upon the electors of the said constituency to elect a member to fill the vacant seat, which has become vacant due to the resignation of Muhammad Faisal Vawda.

As per schedule, the public notice will be issued by the Returning Officer on March 12 while the dates for filing of nomination papers with the Returning Officer by the candidates will be March 13 to March 17.

The date of publication of names of the nominated candidates will be March 18 while the last scrutiny of nomination papers by the Returning Officer will be March 25.

Similarly, the last date for filing of appeals against decisions of the Returning Officer for rejecting or accepting the nomination papers will be March 29 while the last date for deciding of appeals by the Appellate Tribunal April 5.

The publication of a revised list of candidates will be on April 6. The last date for withdrawal of candidature and publication of the revised list of candidates will be April 7 while the allotment of election symbol to contesting candidates will be April 8.

Briefs

SHO murder case suspect killed

DNA

RAWALPINDI: A suspect in SHO Imran Abbas murder case was killed in an encounter by Rawalpindi police.

The culprit, identified as Shahid, started firing at a check post in the Civil Lines police station with his partners.

He was killed in the shoot-out with police. His accomplices managed to escape. Police has confirmed that Shahid was among the five shooters involved in SHO's killing on Sunday.

Racecourse SHO Imran Abbas was killed after unidentified men opened fire at this vehicle on Jhelum Road.

Around 6 mil illicit cigarettes confiscated

ISLAMABAD: The Directorate of Intelligence and Investigation-Inland Revenue, Islamabad Friday seized 600 packrites (6,000,000 sticks) of local brands of illegal cigarettes, valuing more than Rs40 million, after intercepting two vehicles at Burhan Interchange of Motorway.

According to statement issued by the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), on inquiry it was also found that FED amounting to Rs.9.9 million and Sales Tax amounting to Rs. 2.756 million was not deposited in government exchequer against supplies of aforesaid cigarettes.

The statement added that mandatory legal proceedings were underway for recovery of due taxes.

It said that in pursuit to the vision of Prime Minister to curb the menace of trade of counterfeit and illicit tobacco trade, which is not only hazardous to the health of general public but also causing huge loss to the government exchequer, the Chairman FBR had urged Directorate General of Intelligence and Investigation-Inland Revenue to speed up the enforcement measures to combat the trade of counterfeit and non-duty paid cigarettes. - APP

Govt retrieved 144439 acres land

DNA

ATTOCK: The Punjab Minister for Revenue Col (retd) Malik Anwar said that during province wide crackdown against land grabbing mafia, the government has retrieved state owned land worth of Rs 425 billion comprising 144,439 acres.

He expressed these views after inauguration of Dhoke Fateh Khan to Dhoke Jutt link road at Pindi Gheb.

The road project was completed with an allocation of Rs 21.60 million.

The minister said that the total value of retrieved state land is more than 425 billion. He claimed that the government is following a policy of zero-tolerance against land grabbing. He said that institutional reforms have also been introduced so that the people may not face any difficulty in their revenue matters.

To a question, Anwar said 115 arazi record centers, satellite arazi record center and 20 mobile arazi centers have helped the people in their revenue matters.

"Now, the hapless persons are saved from the hassle of moving from pillar to post for the solution of petty problems as facilities are provided under one roof," he added.

He claimed that this initiative would also help in overcoming the culture of corruption and gratification.

The minister said that due to COVID-19 pandemic, the economic situation of the government has become thin that is why the development plans drafted by the government for the uplift and betterment of masses have affected.

He also said Punjab will witness a new journey of development in the next few months and the performance of present government would speak by itself.

MCI assures to address key issues of business community

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: Shafaq Hashmi, Administrator, Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad assured that she would work with concerned market associations and industry representatives to address the MCI related key issues of the business community so that they could be facilitated in promoting trade and industrial activities. She said this during an interaction with the business community at Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI). Mian Tariq Latif, Director Revenue MCI also accompanied her at the occasion. Shafaq Hashmi said that many issues highlighted by the business community were related to the CDA, however, she is ready to sit with CDA's top brass to resolve problems of traders and industrialists for their ease of doing business. She listened to the various issues of trade and industry including exorbitant hike in property tax, raise in trade license fee and board tax and assured that she would look into these issues to



find out their optimum solutions. She said that she would take F-10 Markaz as a pilot project for removal of encroachments and added that things would be taken forward to find solutions with joint efforts. Speaking at the occasion, Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry said that most of the traders and industrialists of Islamabad were facing common issues and close cooperation of MCI

was needed to address them. He said that parking was a serious issue in markets and parking plots should be auctioned to the private sector for construction of parking plazas or build them on BOT basis. It will also generate sufficient revenue for the civic bodies, he added. He urged that property tax should be reduced to make it affordable while trade license fee and board tax should also be rationalized to save traders from unnecessary

problems. He said that more parks should be made for citizens and a town hall should be constructed in Islamabad for holding meetings and functions. He said that MCI should take measures to generate yearly economic activity including carnivals, food parks, various sporting events.dna He said that no one was taking the ownership of Islamabad Citizens Club and emphasized that this club should be made oper-

ational in cooperation with stakeholders so that the citizens could take benefit from it. Mian Akram Farid, Chairman, Founder Group apprised the Administrator MCI of the major issues of industrial areas and stressed that the civic body should take steps to address the highlighted issues. He said that the business community was making significant contributions towards various development works for the

beautification of the city and it needed close cooperation of MCI and CDA to resolve issues and develop Islamabad on modern lines. Abdul Rehman Khan Vice President ICCI, Zafar Bakhtawari, Ahmed Khan President Traders Association F-10 Markaz, Yousaf Rajput President Traders Association Blue Area, Raja Zulsham from Melody Food Park, Baser Daud, Tahir Abbasi, Nasir Chaudhry, Abbas Hashmi, Khalid Chaudhry and others also highlighted various issues. They said that parking was a burning issue in markets that should be addressed on top priority basis. They said that repair of footpaths, carpeting of roads, restoration of streetlights, improvement in sewerage and sanitation was needed and urged that steps should be taken by MCI and CDA to address these issues. They further said that businesses in Melody Food Park should be restored, a cricket ground should be provided for special persons and a graveyard should be provided to the residents of all sectors in Islamabad.

Opposition leveling false allegations

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Chief Minister Punjab on Information Dr. Firdous Ashiq Awan on Friday said that opposition parties are leveling false allegations to escape from the Senate Chairman and Deputy Chairman Elections. Talking to journalists at Media Center Parliament House, she said that it was a democratic process and winning or losing is part of it. She said that opposition has already lost their trust in the masses and now they were making hue and cry to play victim, adding that they should take care of the sanctity of the Senate. She said that PTI nominated Deputy Chairman from the merged area of Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) to end the sense of deprivation of areas people. Dr. Firdous Ashiq Awan said that Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) knows that PTI government is committed to contest them at each front. - APP

AIOU uploads merit lists for BS, MSc programmes

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has uploaded merit lists on the university website (www.aiou.edu.pk) for the programmes offered in spring 2021 semester.

According to the university details, the programmes include BS in Biology, Botany, Chemistry, Environmental Sciences, Mathematics, Microbiology, Physics and Statistics whereas MSc programmes include Botany, Chemistry, Environmental Sciences, Mathematics, Microbiology, Physics and Statistics. Selected candidates have been informed through short messaging services as well as intimation letters have been dispatched through registered postal services.

Deadline for fee submission is March 15, 2021. The candidates may deposit admission fee by printing challan form available online on the university website.

Ongoing rain spells benefitting crops

ISLAMABAD: The ongoing rain spells would be beneficial for crops as well as it will reduce pollen count in the capital, said spokesman of Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) Dr. Khalid Malik on Friday. Talking to APP, he said there was a direct relationship between climate and agriculture sector however when rainfall patterns change, it effects directly the cropping patterns. He said as a result of depletion of the ozone layer, there will be more heat trapping gases in the atmosphere, which, according to climate models, will shift rainfall and precipitation patterns in two major ways. - APP

ATC to indict accused in Osama murder case on March 26

DNA

ISLAMABAD: An anti-terrorism court (ATC) hearing Osama Satti murder case on Friday decided to indict the five accused policemen in the case on March 26.

Osama Satti was killed by Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) personnel after they claimed that the boy refused to stop his vehicle at a check-point following a robbery report on the wireless in Islamabad. The post mortem report later found that the boy was shot multiple times from the front.

The hearing was presided over by the ATC Judge Raja Jawad, in which the accused policemen were presented, while the police failed to present the challan of the case.

The Investigation Officer (IO) sought more time from the ATC for filing the challan of the case, which was granted by the court.

Earlier, Prime Minister Imran Khan met with Nadeem Younis Satti, the father of Osama Satti who was shot dead by policemen in the federal capital.

Capital records highest surge of covid cases in over 3 months

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Continuing with the alarming rise, the federal capital has reported 384 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours, which is the highest single-day spike in almost the last 94 days, National Command and Operation Center (NCOC) said on Friday.

According to an official of NCOC, as many as 350 cases were reported on Thursday which was also the highest figure during the last two months while 253 cases were reported on

Wednesday. He said so far 46,963 cases were reported from the federal capital while 520 deaths were reported from Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT). He said 43,658 patients had been recovered completely. Meanwhile, on the direction of the Ministry of National Health Services, the district administration of Islamabad had continued surveillance of different streets of the capital to reduce transmission of the infection in the selected streets and other sectors.

They also started taking action on a violation of

standard operating procedures (SOPs) related to the coronavirus while visiting marriage halls, markets, and petrol pumps by its inspection teams. The administration has been asked to seal schools, shops, workshops, and restaurants on violation of SOPs.

The inspection teams have been directed to issue notices to marriage halls besides imposing fines on owners of different shops in case of violation of SOPs. Commenting on the situation, an official of the Ministry of National Health Services said that several

local-level administrative decisions were made to control the disease. He advised the citizens to continue following the social distancing, use of mask and other precautionary measures to stop increasing local transmission of COVID-19 in the city. He said the government had adopted an effective strategy to combat COVID-19 that resulted in a reduction in corona cases in the country. He said a strategy was made to control corona keeping in view the global information, focusing on data with integration of local data in a scientific way.



ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Bakhtawari, Chaudhry Nadim-ud-din and Waqar Bakhtawari are cutting Women's Day cake with the participants at the event organized by Pakistan Cultural Forum. -DNA

PNCA to organize 'Bethak with legend on Puppetry Arts Farooq Qaiser'

RAJA PERVAIZ

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) would organize "Bethak with legend on Puppetry Arts Syed Farooq Qaiser" on March 17.

Students of various schools and arts lovers would attend the formal discussion on Puppetry as a medium of communication.

Farooq Qaiser is well known for his fictional puppet Uncle Sargam introduced in 1976 in children's television show Kaliyan.

He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Fine Arts from the National College of Arts (NCA). Later, he received a master's degree in Graphic Arts from Bucharest, Romania in 1976 and also trained for puppetry there. He also received his master's degree in Mass

Communication in 1999 from the University of Southern California, School for Communication and Journalism, United States.

Farooq Qaiser started his career in the early 1970s before graduating from the NCA, Lahore, with a short documentary in the English language. In 1971, his teacher Salima Hashmi got him involved in her children's television puppet show Akkar Bakkar. In 1976, Qaiser directed and wrote his own puppet show Kaliyan which became very popular in Pakistan at that time. He created his own fictional puppet characters for that show including Uncle Sargam, Haiga and Maasi Museebte.

He also was the voice of Uncle Sargam in that show. He created the character 'Uncle Sargam' in resemblance to his teacher Mohan Lal from Romania.

Ignite, PITC collaborate for engineering innovation

Pakistan Innovation and Testing Center (PITC) and Ignite joining hands for innovation under their respective organizations

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Ignite entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Pakistan Innovation and Testing Centre (PITC), a department of Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) for partnership and collaboration for the growth of entrepreneurs, researchers, industrialists, and academia in engineering innovation in Pakistan. The event was attended by Federal Secretary of IT & Telecom Shoaib Ahmad Siddiqui, CEO Ignite Asim Shahryar Husain, Registrar/Secretary Engr. Dr. Nasir Mehmood Khan, Advisor on Innovation Brig. Tariq Javed (R) and senior officials of the IT Ministry and Ignite, said a news release. Speaking on the occasion, Shoaib Ahmad Siddiqui expressed his pleasure to see Pakistan Innovation

and Testing Center (PITC) and Ignite joining hands for innovation under their respective organizations i.e. PEC and Ministry of IT & Telecom. "There is no denying the fact that we urgently need to jump start the economy and improve the business investment environment for our tech entrepreneurs" he added. He said that this collaboration will be in the best interest of our innovators, researchers, industrial and academicians who would be benefited by the massive opportunities emerging due to various initiatives of Ignite and PITC.

NIC startups will now get access to these engineering labs for development and testing of engineering products. Ministry of IT has always supported its departments to reach out to relevant organizations who can add value to our innovation and startup ecosystem.



Advisor on Innovation Brig. Tariq Javed (R), said that Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) has been assigned the lead role for promoting innovative engineering products and local manufacturing of engineering goods, products and services.

PEC has established PITC and is facilitating innovators, researchers and product designers to locally develop and manufacture engineering goods/products. PEC has coined a new term i.e. Researchers and Product Develop-

ment (R&PD) instead of R&D only. The focus is on collaboration manufacturing and product design/development which had an important aspect of integration between software and hardware. The Ignite and PITC

collaboration is the first step which would result in an avalanche of further initiatives. Earlier in his welcome address CEO Ignite Asim Shahryar Husain, said that Ignite will facilitate engineering students of PEC

accredited institutions and recommended by PITC to apply to our network of 5 incubators through their innovative ideas and products. He said, "We have been missing engineering-related equipment and facilities at our National Incubation Centers. So this partnership with PITC will help us in bridging this gap. This collaboration will enable our startups to carryout test and trials of their end products, have regulatory approval related help for their engineering goods, products and services including Agri-products, robotics, virtual reality, etc. Ignite will also provide web-based training and opportunities to engineering students, and professionals through its DigiSkills training platform to develop their skillset to grab new freelancing opportunities to enhance Pakistan's freelancing exports."

Briefs

NAB begins action against HEC chairman

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has begun an action against the Higher Education Commission (HEC) Chairman Dr. Tariq Banuri over accusations of misuse of power and corruption. The anti-corruption watchdog accused HEC Chairman Dr. Tariq Banuri of misusing power, illegal appointments and corruption. Dr. Tariq Banuri has been asked to provide details of expenditures of the university at the PM House, as well as particulars of the National Academy of Higher Education.

The NAB sought Dr. Banuri's reply regarding the illegal appointments of consultants on the basis of favoritism. Moreover, the bureau also sought a response from the HEC chairman regarding the appointments of Legal Officer Advocate Tariq Mansoor, Nadia Tahir, Azhar Lateef and Noor Anna Malik. The HEC officials had received the notice issued by NAB last week.

IESCO issues power suspension schedule

ISLAMABAD: According to Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO)'s spokesman, System Maintenance is in process. Therefore power supply of below mentioned feeders/areas will be temporary suspended as per given schedule: On Dated March 13 th From 05:00 AM to 03:00 PM, Dina 1, Capt. Nisar Shaheed, Rohtas, Dina 4, Madukalas, Col. Muhammad Akram, Mangla Cantt, M. Riaz Shaheed, Mumtaz Shaheed, Reliance Weaving Mills, Jarar Camp, Industrial, Ammar, Lab 1.2, Bhal, Islamabad Feed Mill, Jhatta Hathiail, Feeders From 09:00 AM to 04:00 PM, 132KV Grid station PAC Kamra On Dated 14th March From 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM Zaraj, Dhok Awan, Eid Gah, Raja Sultan, Bagh Sardarain, Abu Bakar, Bani, Gulshanabad, Service Road East, Park View, Pindiboard, Jail Park 1, Car Chowk, Mehboob Shaheed, Fuji Foundation, Morgah, Burhan, Islampura, Sarai Kharboza, Pind Parian, Sangjani, Shahullah Ditta, Taxila, Nawazish Shaheed, Bohi Ghar, State Bank, Humayun Road, Jail Park, Mecca Chowk, Rehmatabad 1 & 2, 502 Workshop, Bostan Road, Chaklala, Scheme 3, National Park, MSF, Murree Brewery, Gulistan Colony, Topi Pumping, Chaklala Garrison, JSHQ Feeders, From 08:00 AM To 12:00 Noon, Taxila, Sher Shah Suri, Haro, Boi Ghar, BOC, HMC 3, R/ Poline, Salar Gah, SSD Wah Feeders From 10:00 AM to 01:00 AM, Lalazar, POF, Khanabad, AWC Housing, Pathar Ghar, HECO, Khanpur, Shahia, Col. Sher Khan, KSB, Islampura. - DNA

COVID-19 patients in Attock surge

DNA

ATTOCK: The Attock district on Friday witnessed another spike of novel coronavirus (Covid-19) as 8 more patients detected across the district during last 24 hours raising the tally to 1340. It is third highest spike of Covid-19 patients in the district during this month.

Chief executive District health authority, Dr. Jawad Ellahi said that among newly positive patients four belongs to Hazro, two each belongs to Attock city and Hassanabad. He informed that the number of active patients in the district is 50 and in which 48 are home isolated while two others are hospitalized.

He informed that one suspected patient is also admitted in the hospital. He informed that number of suspected patients in the district raised to 26,545 while screening of as many as 29,797 persons is carried out across the district in which 25,157 were tested negative. Responding a question, he said that result of as many as 48 suspected patients are awaited.



ISLAMABAD: PRCS Chairman, Abrar ul Haq and TRC President, Dr. Kerem Kink signed the MoU at a ceremony at National HQs. - DNA

PRCS, TRC sign MoU to boost humanitarian cooperation

Abrar ul Haq says TRC has always supported PRCS as a reliable partner in case of any disaster or emergency in Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) and Turkish Red Crescent have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to strengthen cooperation in the areas of humanitarian and relief operations, information and experience sharing and capacity building. PRCS Chairman Abrar ul Haq and Turkish Red Crescent President Dr. Kerem Kink signed the MoU at a ceremony here at the National Headquarters. After signing the MoU, both dignitaries also exchanged mementos. Under the agreement, the two organizations will

collaborate on matters related to humanitarian activities and exchange of knowledge and experiences, besides jointly implementing relief operations in the two countries. Addressing on the occasion, Chairman Abrar ul Haq said the PRCS is serving the suffering humanity to the best of its capability and without any discrimination. He said Turkey has always stood side by side with people of Pakistan through thick and thin. He also paid rich tributes to the TRC for their magnanimous support and long-term partnership with the PRCS in humanitarian interventions in the last decades. "The TRC has always col-



laborate on matters related to humanitarian activities and exchange of knowledge and experiences, besides jointly implementing relief operations in the two countries. Addressing on the occasion, Chairman Abrar ul Haq said the PRCS is serving the suffering humanity to the best of its capability and without any discrimination. He said Turkey has always stood side by side with people of Pakistan through thick and thin. He also paid rich tributes to the TRC for their magnanimous support and long-term partnership with the PRCS in humanitarian interventions in the last decades. "The TRC has always col-

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Speaking on the occasion, Turkish Red Crescent President Dr. Kerem KINK said relations between Pakistan and Turkey are time-tested. He said PRCS-TRC relationship has a history spanning over decades. "With each passing day, the cooperation is getting stronger. With signing of this MoU, the bilateral collaboration will get a fresh boost," he added. Later, the Turkish delegation visited Islamabad Post-Graduate Model College of Commerce H-8/4, Islamabad, where a blood donation camp had been organized by the PRCS. TRC President Dr. Kerem KINK appreciated the college students who voluntarily donated blood at the camp.

Govt to establish alpinism institute

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan Affairs Ali Amin Khan Gandapur Friday said federal government was considering the establishment of a mountaineering institute to encourage the people associated with this sector. Deliberations were underway to set-up a state of the art institute, where qualified teachers would impart professional training to the students in mountaineering, tracking as well as in skiing to improve their

skills, he said in a meeting with Pakistani mountaineer Samina Baig here. Pakistan is a home to a lot of talent in winter sports, he said and underlined the need to strengthen the professionalism to raise it globally. Both the dignitaries discussed various ways to bring innovation in the sector and expressed their commitment to work together in the future. Gandapur also sought suggestions from the climber so the progress on the project should be accelerated.

Govt to invest more to achieve UHC targets

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to Prime Minister on National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination Dr. Faisal Sultan on Friday said that effective measures are being adopted to ensure achieving targets of universal health coverage (UHC). "The government is working for expansion of universal health coverage (UHC) by investing in health systems, especially in Primary Health Care (PHC) and is

committed to implement its agenda to achieve the target of UHC," Dr. Faisal said while chairing a meeting on Health Sahulat Program. He reiterated the strengthening of Primary Health Care in the country and taking innovative steps to improve the health status of the population. He assured expansion in coverage of the Sehat Sahulat Program, which will be instrumental in decreasing the financial burden on the poor and marginalized population and endorsement of

the Universal Health Coverage Benefit Package. He said that the government is working on developing strategies and plans for strengthening the PHC services and implementation of UHC plan. In the wake of a sudden increase in the number of infections in the country during these days, Dr. Faisal urged the public to strictly adhere to COVID-19 Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to effectively counter the disease. He said, "The government is seeking public full coop-

eration in adhering to the SOPs. We can save precious lives including those of our near and dear ones by taking preventive measures." He urged citizens to wear mask, maintain social distance, wash hands with soap frequently and avoid crowded places. He asked the provincial and district governments to enforce necessary preventing measures at public places and encouraging people to protect themselves and others from the virus by adhering to the SOPs.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador Denmark Lis Rosenholm meeting with South Korean ambassador Suh Sangpyo in Islamabad. They discussed the strong collaboration between South Korea on green transition and climate change. - DNA

CDA counters an effort to occupy govt land

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The administration of Capital Development Authority (CDA) successfully countered an effort to occupy the government's land at Dhoke Chaudhri, Malpur here on Friday. Land Mafia tried to occupy very important land of CDA, but the timely action of the administration of CDA successfully stopped the land mafia from occupying the land. CDA demolished newly constructed home, boundary walls, rooms, and other constructions and retrieved the government's land. On the other hand CDA's campaign against encroachments and illegal constructions is also underway. In an operation against illegal construction the adminis-

tration of CDA demolished an illegal building at sector I-12. Whereas 150 road side setups, 10 huts, 7 markets of construction material, and other illegal constructions were demolished during the operation at Mandi Mor and IJP road. Recovered goods have been captured. Prior to this, the Enforcement department of CDA conducted an operation against encroachment at Faizabad. During the operation 30 stalls of fruit and vegetables were demolished. 02 trucks of goods were recovered and captured from the spot. Environment staff handed over a person to police who was involved in using the green belt for cattle. The department has asked concerned people time and again not to use green belt for cattle before taking action.

Govt resolving public issues at doorsteps

FAISAL MUNIR

ATTOCK: Rawalpindi Commissioner Muhammad Mahmood said the present government was resolving public issues at their doorsteps and using all available resources in that regard. He expressed these views while presiding over a meeting in Deputy Commissioner Office Attock. Deputy Commissioner Attock Ali Annan Qamar, additional deputy commissioners, assistant commissioners and heads of all government departments were also present in the meeting. Coronavirus, dengue, price control, development programme, polio campaign, tree planting campaign, revenue generation, anti-adulteration campaign, action

erating procedures. At the same time, strict legal action was being taken against the violators so that effective measures could be taken to eradicate the coronavirus in the district. Briefing about the development programmes, it was informed that he was working on 71 schemes at a cost of Rs6, 839.851 million. Those included road maintenance, upgrades in the education and health sectors, development work of the local government, sports and other departments which were in process. On the occasion, the commissioner said the development work should be completed on time and no compromise should be made on the quality of work. Regarding dengue, he was informed that steps were being taken to combat dengue along with

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IPDS signs MoU with Pakistan Research Center

RAWALPINDI: Institute of Peace and Diplomatic Studies (IPDS) Friday signed Memorandum of Understanding MoU with Pakistan Research Center, Inner Mongolia Honder College of Arts and Sciences, under the Ministry of National Education, the People's Republic of China.

The MoU was signed by IPDC Founder President Ms. Farhat Asif and Pro. Tang Jun (Richer TJ), Director of Pakistan Research Center Inner Mongolia Honder College of Arts and Sciences, China. IPDS Director Asif Noor was also present on the occasion.

The MoU is aimed at the promotion of research, academic exchange in order to improve and promote collaboration between the academic social sciences faculties between Pakistan and China.

It would also help to strengthen the "Friends of Belt and Road Initiative Forum" across Asia, Europe, and Africa through education and research exchange. - APP

Medical labs offer discount to Islamabad Police

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad police on Friday signed an agreement with two laboratories for the provision of medical facilities to personnel at discounted rates.

According to a police spokesman, the families of martyred policemen would get 80 per cent discount while serving officers could receive 50% discount on test fees. Similarly, 25 concession was given for Covid-19 test, 7.5 per cent for medicines while 15 per cent was specified for purchasing surgical equipments.

SSP headquarters Naveed Atif made agreements with GSR Lab and Bio-Diagnostic Centre, following IGP Islamabad Qazi-Jameelur Rehman directions to boost the morale of the force.

Policemen were required to prove their identities before receiving discounts at any lab to avoid fraud, the spokesman added. - APP

COVID-19 vaccination drive underway

SHAHEEN HANIF

RAWALPINDI: The COVID-19 immunization drive for frontline healthcare workers (HW) and senior citizens is underway at 23 centers of the district. District Health Officer Dr. Jawad Khalid while sharing data of the persons who received C jab since the drive launched told media that as many as 6,744 people including 2309 HW and 317 senior citizens have got themselves vaccinated against the lethal COVID-19 on March 12.

He informed as many as 283 people had been inoculated the vaccine at Tehsil Headquarters Hospital (THQ) Taxila, 193 at THQ Murree, 293 at THQ Kahuta, 247 at THQ Gujjar Khan, 174 at THQ Kotli Sattian, 315 THQ, Kallar Sayda, 1073 Rawalpindi Institute of Cardiology, 1360 Holy Family Hospital, 698 DHQ Hospital, 1483 Benazir Bhutto Hospital, 123 Govt T.B Sanatorium Samli and 348 at Shahbaz Sharif Complex while 148 senior citizens received the jab at Red Crescent center.

Dr. Jawad told that the vaccine was also being administered at newly established centers at Tehsil office (TO) Taxila, TO Kalar Syeda, TO Gujjar Khan, TO Kotli Sattian, TO Murree, TO Potohar town, TO Kahuta, and Red Crescent center in Rawalpindi to cover the maximum number of the people having symptoms of the COVID-19.

Meanwhile, after the addition of 93 positive cases during the last 24 hours, the number of confirmed cases has reached 13638 in the district, he said.

Facial recognition

With Covid-19, businesses in developed countries have moved towards incorporating greater technological systems to make payments and in other important activities. 'Contactless' has been a buzzword associated with financial systems for the past half decade. But the pandemic's restrictions have forced many institutions across the world to step up in their efforts to bring new innovative efforts to induce consumers to spend without having to risk being exposed to the infection. Russia has gone a step further however, with the introduction of facial recognition software as a means to make payments at a local supermarket. While undoubtedly ingenious, the neutrality of technological advancement entails that it could open up potential misuse. One obvious threat is that of online threats and potential vulnerabilities in the system to hackers. Sensitive data is already online through various banks, payment vendors and third-party applications. Has this new system been vetted by authorities to ensure that no backdoors are easily accessible? Can customers conduct their business safely and without disruptions? These are questions that the company behind this endeavour must answer.

But more importantly, there are some asks from the government as well. Russia's use of facial recognition to monitor the public for potential lockdown violations might be effective, but it is also deeply invasive. Citizens have an intrinsic right to privacy. Like all other freedoms, there is a grey area where the government can encroach upon these rights, but only with good reason.

The future of facial recognition has often been associated with Jeremy Bentham's panopticon; with this high-level of scrutiny the concept can be extended to governance in modern times as well. An all-seeing government where the law will not be broken simply because the state is constantly vigilant is a dangerous proposition. However, it is important to remember that security concerns can only take rights to the backseat in extreme situations. In everyday life, members of society cannot be treated as potential criminals that must be watched at all times, but innocent citizens that deserve their freedoms.

Pakistan would do well to start debating such issues now. Our previous experiences with security might imply an interest in such methods to monitor the population, but we must not give in to this seemingly easy fix for security. In reality, such decisions have long term effects on the state of security and the definition of crime in general.

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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ABC CERTIFIED

Vol: 01 Issue: 299

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Alleviating hunger

The "Koi Bhooka Na Soye" programme is a direct subsidy project planned by the government in which lower-income and labour families will receive free meal boxes twice a day through mobile trucks at various points in Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

The project was launched by Prime Minister Imran Khan on Wednesday who has said that the revolutionary programme was estimated to provide direct subsidy to 30 million families. Food trucks will go to areas frequented by the poor and labourers, and subsidy amounts would be directly credited to the accounts of poor people enabling them to buy basic food items like wheat flour, sugar, ghee and pulses.

It would not be hyperbole to call this initiative "revolutionary", if it is successful. If the government's promise of 30 million families is fulfilled, that makes about half of the country's population. What the government is trying to do in terms of a holistic approach to help those below the poverty line is commendable. The state reaching out to assist people to access basic food items was a necessity considering its economic policies, coupled with the pandemic and its lockdowns, had led to those staple food items becoming more difficult to afford for all citizens.

However, the government must also be careful. This project is launched under the umbrella of Ehsaas, and to make the programme financially stable, the Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Division has constituted a "Donor Coordination Group" that would serve as an Ehsaas channel to engage with the private sector for donations.

Considering this entails a partnership with the private sector, the government needs to be even more careful in carrying out this programme effectively. Mishandling the funds allocated for this project can damage the credibility of other philanthropic endeavours which depend on the private sector as well. While this is a well-intentioned project, the government must be realistic in its goals and map out a strict transparency and performance policy at the outset.

Can America's word be trusted?

Sajjad Ashraf

Kabul dithered on the first condition, taking more than three months for the release of Taliban prisoners – something that should have taken 10 days under the agreement for the start of the intra-Afghan dialogue. Germinating mistrust at the outset several more deadlines have been missed – not one from the Taliban side

The stalled intra-Afghan talks resumed in Doha last week following a flurry of activity when US Central Command head General Kenneth McKenzie and Russian President Vladimir Putin's Special Representative on Afghanistan Zamir Kabulov followed by Qatar's Special Envoy Dr. Mutlaq Bin Majed Al Qahtani all visited Pakistan during the latter half of February. Every one hopes that Pakistan will be able to nudge the Taliban into making critical compromises that may lead to the end of America's "never ending war." Pakistan

does not have sufficient influence on the Taliban forcing them to sign a deal that is sustainable. The onus for success of the process rests more on the ability of the Afghan stakeholders to resolve their disagreements than on Pakistan.

The US had under the February 2020 Accords agreed to removing all its troops including defence contractors from Afghanistan by May 1, 2021. Currently, this number is down to 2,500, supplemented by a nearly 7,500 Nato force.

A year on since the US-Taliban Accords were signed, violence has increased and the intra-Afghan dialogue has made only a little progress.

Trump administration apparently hoped that intra-Afghan dialogue would yield results by the time all foreign forces withdraw by May 1. This has not happened.

Kabul dithered on the first condition, taking more than three months for the release of Taliban prisoners – something that should have taken 10 days under the agreement for the start of the intra-Afghan dialogue. Germinating mistrust at the outset several more deadlines have been missed – not one from the Taliban side.

Responding to Biden administration's calls for an extension in the deadline for pullout in order to allow more time for the intra-Afghan talks, lead Taliban negotiator Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar reiterated that "implementation of the Doha agreement is the most effective way of ending" the war in Afghanistan. This leaves the other stakeholders wondering if America's word can be trusted.

While adhering to their verbal commitment of letting American troops depart in peace, the Taliban have pushed their battlefield advantage and have increased attacks on the symbols of the regime. Afghanistan has never had this level of violence since the beginning of American intervention in 2001.

As expected, in an ostensibly calibrated move Nato (read the US) in a defence ministers meeting – the first for the Biden team – taking a cue from the American stance, deferred its decision on whether to withdraw troops by the agreed date of May 1, 2021 under the US-Taliban agreement.

While the US media and now the Biden administration continue to accuse Taliban of the acceleration in violence there is not a word in the February 29 Accords where the Taliban have committed to reduction of violence.

The ceasefire according to the Accords was to be "an item on the agenda of the intra-Afghan dialogue" and was meant to be announced "along with the completion and agreement over the future political road map of Afghanistan."

In fact, the US-Taliban talks extended for several months on this American demand, which the Taliban refused to concede like of any other fundamental issue.

Therefore, Nato's current stance on deferring the decision on troops withdrawal is clearly meant to shore up the tottering Kabul regime. The Taliban, on the contrary claim that it is the US that has not lived up to its commitments given to the Taliban on lifting of the American as well as the UN sanctions against Taliban by August 27

2020. In Doha, both sides are tight-lipped over how the talks are progressing. From the wish lists either side presented, Kabul wants ceasefire first, and the Taliban want to start with setting up an interim administration immediately in which they will have a significant presence.

Signalling a vague support for possible shift in withdrawal date, Pakistan desires orderly and responsible withdrawal of the US and other international forces, "so that mistakes of the past are not repeated".

Pakistan, the country most affected by the developments in Afghanistan, bore the brunt of previous US disengagement from Afghanistan triggering a civil war that ended when Taliban took control of Kabul in September 1996.

It is not unusual for the warring parties to continue secure advantage on the battlefield while negotiations for peace continue. There was no ceasefire in Vietnam while the negotiations for peace continued for over 4 years. Similarly, fighters continued to battle the Soviet forces while Geneva talks were in session.

All status quo powers seek ceasefire first so as to maintain their ground advantage. Ceasing fire before any political settlement can be a recipe for stalemate like in case of Jammu and Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan that has prolonged for over 70 years, with no resolution in sight.

Biden administration's rethink on the issue poses a fundamental question – who will trust the American government when they do not honour sovereign agreements?

Courtesy: Gulf News

Vaccine diplomacy likely to prolong suffering

Chris Doyle



The Israeli case is highly illustrative of this short-termist approach. Tel Aviv has refused to vaccinate occupied Palestinians under its control, even though it is required to do so by international law. While about half of the 9 million Israelis can celebrate having their first jab, Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank have no idea if and when they too will get protected

Vaccines are arguably the most sought-after currency in the world right now. Huge stockpiles provide those governments that control them the supposed reassurance of being able to vaccinate and placate their weary and frustrated populations. But many have also

seen additional side benefits, including deploying doses for soft power purposes. They can also be used for political gain, to achieve goals that perhaps normal diplomacy cannot.

Many richer states have accumulated huge coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccine supplies, more than enough for their own populations, creating an enormous surplus. At the same time, poorer countries await even their first meager supplies. Of the hoarding states, some might credit their leaderships with far-sightedness, saying that they invested in the vaccine supply chain while others were hesitant. The UK, Israel and the US lead this vanguard, whereas the EU was arguably ponderous and more labored in developing its vaccine strategy.

The greatest flaw in this approach is that defeating the virus requires it to be defeated everywhere. An entire population can be vaccinated, but is it then truly safe? The virus will spread and, more importantly, mutate in unvaccinated populations elsewhere, risking undermining the effectiveness of the groundbreaking vaccines.

The Israeli case is highly illustrative of this short-termist approach. Tel Aviv has refused to vaccinate occupied Palestinians under its control, even though it is required to do so by international law. While about half of the 9 million Israelis can celebrate having their first jab, Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank have no idea if and when they too will get protected. The virus will continue to infect these areas and new variants will find plenty of hosts.

But what makes this approach so short-sighted is that Palestinians and Israelis share the same geography, even if most Israelis do not see Palestinians any more, as they are shut away behind a protective shell of walls and checkpoints. Palestinians work inside Israel, either legally crossing the Green Line every day if they have a permit, in illegal Israeli settlements, or illegally slipping through the many gaps in Israel's wall. The Israeli construction sector is hugely dependent on Palestinian labor, which is almost certainly why the authorities turn a blind eye

even during a pandemic.

So what did Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu choose to do with Israel's excess vaccines? A sound approach would have been to make the grand neighborly gesture of vaccinating the Palestinians and hoovering up all the positive public relations for doing so, while at the same time acting in the best interests of his countrymen, who still see huge numbers of COVID-19 cases every day. Let us be clear, sending a measly 2,000 doses to the Palestinians does not count.

No, Netanyahu immediately dropped any pretense of treating the pandemic as a common threat to humanity and instead offered to provide certain carefully-chosen states with Israel's excess vaccines. Which states? They included the Czech Republic, Guatemala, Honduras and Hungary, all of which Netanyahu wanted to reward for their pro-Israel stances, not least over Jerusalem. It was not done on the basis of humanitarian need or the immediate interests of his people.

There is also the story of how Israel reportedly paid Russia \$1.2 million for Sputnik V vaccines for the Syrian regime as part of a prisoner exchange deal. If true, these vaccines will almost certainly not be shared equitably among Syrians, or even given to front-line medical staff, but will instead be used to reward loyalist cronies. Once again, the basis of need was not a priority.

Israel is not alone on this front. China, Russia and India all stand accused of cherry-picking the countries they support with vaccines. Some 50 countries, plus the African Union, which represents 55 nations, have made or been offered vaccine deals with India, China and Russia. China and India are competing for influence in their shared neighborhood, dishing out spare vaccines to selected neighbors. New Delhi is able to use its status as the world's largest vaccine producer in this regard.

Chinese and Russian vaccines are also being offered across South America, as they try to gain influence in America's backyard. Chains of influence are established. Russia and China have,

for example, both provided Serbia with their own vaccines. Serbia, having acquired a surplus and overseen the fastest rate of vaccination on mainland Europe, is now giving some to North Macedonia and possibly to Montenegro and Republika Srpska (part of Bosnia and Herzegovina) too. And President Vladimir Putin wasted little time in trying to lure Hungary even closer to Russia's orbit by offering vaccines to Budapest to make up for the lamentably slow rollout in the EU. That the likes of Russia and China can do this is, in no small part, due to the vaccine hoarding of Western states. As they hoard, other powers are filling in the gaps and increasing their influence. The Covax mechanism is admirable as far as it goes. It aims to supply vaccines to 3 percent of the most vulnerable people in 145 lower to middle-income countries. But, as the World Health Organization has warned, the vaccine hoarding by rich countries means Covax has the funds but no vaccine doses to buy. The Biden administration has now committed \$4 billion to Covax and the UK £548 million (\$764 million), but others must contribute. The mechanism will have to guard against abuses and ensure it is the front-line workers and the most vulnerable that get the jabs.

The lack of a sound global strategy to handle the pandemic has been evident from the outset. Countries have typically acted on their own, failed to collaborate effectively, and now are cloaking themselves in the dangerous garb of vaccine nationalism. Could there not have been an agreement on prioritizing certain key categories, such as front-line health workers, to prevent healthcare systems collapsing?

Those that hoard and those that abuse the vaccine for their own political ends are guilty of violating the core humanitarian principle of helping those most in need regardless of politics and nationality. It jeopardizes our chances of defeating the virus and prolongs the pandemic. Maybe it is too late to sort this out for this pandemic, but for future occasions a more robust and fairer system would be more effective.

Courtesy: Arab News

Briefs

Hasan Ali
clears
COVID-19 test

SPORTS DESK

KARACHI: Islamabad United's Hasan Ali has cleared his COVID-19 test and allowed to travel back home. Taking to Twitter, Hasan informed his fans that he has returned negative in his COVID-19 testing. "First time in life, I'm happy to be negative on anything. Alhamdulillah! Big shoutout to all PCB team members who supported me and all the players during these tough days love you guys," he wrote. It must be noted here that Hasan was among those six cricketers who were tested COVID-19 positive and put into quarantine in Karachi. He had to test COVID-19 negative twice to travel back to his home. Meanwhile, Hasan has been named in all three formats for Pakistan's tour to South Africa and Zimbabwe.

NAB begins
action
against HEC

From Page 01

regarding the appointments of Legal Officer Advocate Tariq Mansoor, Nadia Tahir, Azhar Lateef and Noor Amna Malik.

The HEC officials had received the notice issued by NAB last week.

PDM has
defeated the
govt, says
Bilawal

From Page 01

The National Assembly and the Senate were also "with the PDM and not with [Prime Minister] Imran Khan", the PPP boss said, lamenting that there were four hidden cameras installed in the upper House of the Parliament.

Noting that the PDM "exposed the system and defeated" the PTI, Bilawal announced that the anti-government alliance had decided to go to the court after consultations with PML-N Vice President Maryam Nawaz and other Opposition leaders.

"We hope that justice will be served and the high court will rule in our favour," he added, noting that there was "evidence of the Senate secretary telling our people that the stamp mark can be inside the box".

"I also stamped on my name in the general election. This is an open case, we hope we get justice from the courts," Bilawal said.

Germany
faces wait
for J&J jabs
amid export
squabbles

BERLIN: Health Minister Jens Spahn said Friday that Germany would have to wait until "mid-to-late April" for the newly approved Johnson & Johnson coronavirus vaccine, adding that the EU is querying the company over the delays. Johnson & Johnson's single-dose Covid vaccine on Thursday became the fourth job to be authorised for use in the European Union. Yet Spahn warned that Germany would have to wait at least another month to receive the first doses from the US firm, as Berlin cited production issues and what amounted to an effective US ban on exports of domestically produced vaccines.

"It's a pain with Johnson & Johnson. We have a European authorisation, but the deliveries will only be there from mid-to-late April at the earliest," said the minister at a weekly press conference in Berlin. He added that the European Commission was in talks with the company over the problem.

"We made an advance payment of 300 million euros for production and signed a contract in October, so we of course have to ask what has happened," he said. He said that Germany and the EU were now working on "short-term solutions" to the problem such as setting up production facilities in Germany. Speaking about the issue later Friday, Angela Merkel's spokesman Steffen Seibert raised US reluctance to export doses as another problem for Europe's supply. — APP



ABU DHABI: Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi exchanging views with Commander UAE Naval Forces Rear Admiral (Pilot) Saeed Bin Hamdan Al Nahyan during his official visit to United Arab Emirates. — DNA

Naval chief meets military leadership of UAE

The Naval Chief underscored Pakistan Navy's initiative for ensuring maritime security in the region through Regional Maritime Security Patrols (RMSP) and participation in Combined Maritime Force

DNA

ABU DHABI: Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi during an official visit to United Arab Emirates (UAE) called on Chief of Staff UAE Armed Forces Lt General Hamad Mohamed Thani Al Rumaiti and Commander UAE Naval Forces Rear Admiral (Pilot) Saeed Bin Hamdan Al Nahyan separately. Upon arrival at Naval Headquarters, the Admiral was received by Commander UAE Naval Forces and presented ceremonial Guard of Honour. The Naval Chief was given comprehensive briefing on UAE Navy. The Admiral also

visited Shipbuilding Facility, Naval Forces Institute and Ghantout Naval Base at Abu Dhabi.

During call on with Commander UAE Naval Forces, matters of bilateral naval collaboration and regional maritime security were discussed. The Naval Chief underscored Pakistan Navy's initiative for ensuring maritime security in the region through Regional Maritime Security Patrols (RMSP) and participation in Combined Maritime Force. The Naval Chief also thanked Commander UAE Naval Forces for participation in Multinational Maritime Exercise AMAN-21. Commander UAE Naval Forces



acknowledged Pakistan Navy's efforts and commitment in support of collaborative maritime security and appreciated successful conduct of Exercise AMAN-21.

21. Later, during call on with Chief of Staff UAE Armed Forces, professional matters of mutual interest including bilateral defence collaboration were discussed. The Naval Chief highlighted importance of enhancing cooperation between the armed forces of both the countries through bilateral exercises and training programs. The dignitaries acknowledged the importance of strong military cooperation among the two countries. It is expected that visit of the Naval Chief will further augment and expand defence ties between the two countries in general and Armed Forces in particular.

India sees worst
single-day rise in
COVID cases

FOREIGN DESK

NEW DELHI: India has registered its worst single-day increase in coronavirus cases since late December as the western state of Maharashtra battles a resurgence. India's health ministry on Friday reported 23,285 new cases of COVID-19 in the past 24 hours. It is the highest daily rise since December 24, according to government data. India has so far reported more than 11.3 million cases of coronavirus infection, the world's second-highest total after the United States, and 158,000 deaths. The cases had been falling steadily since a peak in late September, but experts say increased public gatherings and laxity toward public health guidance is leading to the latest surge. The increase in new cases is being reported in six states, including Maharashtra, where authorities have announced a lockdown in densely populated Nagpur city. A weeklong complete lockdown will be implemented next week, officials said. The vaccine drive will, however, continue in the city. In Thane district, adjacent

to Mumbai, a lockdown has been declared at 16 hotspots until March 31 with only essential services to remain open.

Restrictions on opening of markets, movement and closure of schools and colleges and night curfews have been announced in five other districts of Maharashtra. Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray's party has warned that unless people kept to the rules, more restrictions such as a state-wide lockdown would be inevitable.

Government health official Vinod Kumar Paul in a news conference on Thursday said the latest surge, particularly in Maharashtra, was worrying. He advised people not to lower their guard as "the pandemic is not yet over". India began its vaccination drive in January and has advanced to the second phase, giving shots to healthcare workers, people older than 60 and people over 45 with significant health risks. But the programme aiming to vaccinate 300 million people by August is running well below capacity. More than 26 million people have received a shot, though only 4.72 million are fully vaccinated with both doses.

'No reason to stop using AstraZeneca jab'

FOREIGN DESK

NEW YORK: Countries should not stop using AstraZeneca's Covid-19 vaccine over fears it causes blood clots as there is no indication this is true, the World Health Organization says. Bulgaria is the latest country to suspend use of the vaccine. But a WHO spokeswoman told a briefing on Friday there was no link between the jab and developing a clot. Margaret Harris said it was an "ex-

cellent vaccine" and should continue to be used. Around 5 million Europeans have already received the AstraZeneca jab. There have been about 30 cases in Europe of "thromboembolic events" - or developing blood clots - after the vaccine was administered. There were also reports that a 50-year-old man had died in Italy after developing deep vein thrombosis (DVT). The WHO is investigating the reports, as it does any safety questions, Ms Harris said.

But no causal relationship had been established between the shot and the health problems reported, she said. Bulgaria's decision to pause its rollout follows similar steps by Denmark, Iceland and Norway as well as Thailand. Italy and Austria have stopped using certain batches of the drug as a precautionary measure. "I order a halt in vaccinations with the AstraZeneca vaccine until the European Medicines Agency dismisses all doubts about its safety," Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borisov said.



AHMEDABAD: English players celebrating after taking wicket in 1st T-20 match against India. — DNA

Pak squads for SA, Zimbabwe announced

SPORTS DESK

LAHORE: Pakistan cricket selectors have continued to reward domestic performers and show faith in emerging cricketers as they named formidable sides for the upcoming challenges in South Africa and Zimbabwe where the national men's side will play seven T20s, three ODIs and two Tests. The seven T20s and two Tests will count towards the ICC T20I and Test Team Rankings, while the three ODIs against South Africa will be part of the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup Super League - a 13-team competition from which the top seven sides will qualify automatically for the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023. The 35-member Pakistan squad

will depart for Johannesburg on 26 March for the three ODIs and four T20s against South Africa. They will then fly to Bulawayo on 17 April for three T20Is and two Tests against Zimbabwe. The side is scheduled to return on 12 May.

Prior to their departure for Johannesburg, a training camp for the white-ball players will be held at the Gaddafi Stadium from 19 March. The players will arrive in Lahore on 18 March following 16 March PCR tests in their respective cities and will undergo further PCR tests on 18, 21 and 24 March. During the Lahore camp, the players will remain in a bio-secure environment. The T20I and ODI sides include 18 players each with 14 players featuring in both the formats, while the Test

squad comprises 20 players with eight players figuring across all three formats. These eight players are Babar Azam (captain), Faheem Ashraf, Haris Rauf, Hasan Ali, Mohammad Nawaz, Mohammad Rizwan, Sarfaraz Ahmed and Shaheen Shah Afridi.

Squads: T20I: Babar Azam (captain) (Central Punjab), Shadab Khan (vice-captain) (Northern), Arshad Iqbal (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), Asif Ali (Northern), Danish Aziz (Sindh), Faheem Ashraf (Central Punjab), Haider Ali (Northern), Haris Rauf (Northern), Hasan Ali (Central Punjab), Mohammad Hafeez (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), Mohammad Hasnain (Sindh), Mohammad Nawaz (Northern), Mohammad Rizwan (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), Mo-

hammad Wasim Jnr (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), Sarfaraz Ahmed (Sindh), Shaheen Shah Afridi (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), Sharjeel Khan (Sindh) and Usman Qadir (Central Punjab) ODI: Babar Azam (captain) (Central Punjab), Shadab Khan (vice-captain) (Northern), Abdullah Shafique (Central Punjab), Danish Aziz (Sindh), Faheem Ashraf (Central Punjab), Fakhar Zaman (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), Haider Ali (Northern), Haris Rauf (Northern), Hasan Ali (Central Punjab), Imamu-Haq (Balochistan), Mohammad Hasnain (Sindh), Mohammad Nawaz (Northern), Mohammad Rizwan (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), Mohammad Wasim Jnr (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), Sarfaraz Ahmed (Sindh), Saud Shakeel (Sindh), Shaheen

Shah Afridi (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) and Usman Qadir (Central Punjab) Test: Babar Azam (captain) (Central Punjab), Mohammad Rizwan (vice-captain) (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), Abdullah Shafique (Central Punjab), Abid Ali (Central Punjab), Azhar Ali (Central Punjab), Faheem Ashraf (Central Punjab), Fawad Alam (Sindh), Haris Rauf (Northern), Hasan Ali (Central Punjab), Imran Butt (Balochistan), Mohammad Nawaz (Northern), Nauman Ali (Northern), Sajid Khan (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), Salman Ali Agha (Southern Punjab), Sarfaraz Ahmed (Sindh), Saud Shakeel (Sindh), Shaheen Shah Afridi (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), Shah Nawaz Dhanani (Sindh), Tabish Khan (Sindh) and Zahid Mahmood.

Punjab govt
suspends
sports
activities

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: The Punjab Government has suspended all sports activities across the province due to the rise in COVID-19 cases. According to the Sports Minister of Punjab - Rai Taimoor Bhatti, they have immediately suspended all sports activities due to a rise in COVID-19 cases across the province. "Public health and safety are very important for us that's why we decided to call off all sports activities across the province. I request everyone to follow COVID-19 SoPs to avoid the spread of this virus," he said. In connection to this decision, the National Hockey team's skills camp was called off and players were allowed to go back to their homes.

Australian
envoy calls
on COAS

From Page 01

Both reiterated the desire to further enhance bilateral cooperation including efforts for peace and security in the region.

Australian High Commissioner appreciated Pakistan's positive role for regional peace & stability, the statement added.

England
trounce India
by 8 wickets

AHMEDABAD: Jason Roy and Jofra Archer played the lead roles as England thrashed India by eight wickets in the opening Twenty20 international on Friday. Chasing a modest 125, Roy hit a confident 49 as England romped home in 15.3 overs to take a 1-0 lead in the five-match series at the world's biggest cricket stadium in Ahmedabad. Roy and Jos Buttler put on 72 in a blazing opening stand. Buttler fell lbw to leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal for 28 and Roy, who hit four fours and three sixes, fell one short of a half century when Washington Sundar trapped him lbw.

"I'll take 49 and a comfortable victory for the team any day," said Roy, who did not take part in the Test series in which England were hammered 3-1. David Malan finished on 24, including the six that won the game, and Jonny Bairstow, scored 26 off 17 balls. The pair put on an unbroken stand of 41 to steer England to victory after Archer took 3-23 in a fiery opening attack on the Indian batters. Captain Eoin Morgan won the toss, fielded first and India slipped to 48-4 with skipper Virat Kohli out for nought off leg-spinner Adil Rashid. Kohli blamed a "below par batting performance" by his side.

"There was a lack of execution of some of the shots. We have to come back with much more intent and clarity of plan. The wicket did not allow you to play the kind of shots you wanted to," he added. Archer claimed KL Rahul who hit an inside edge on to the stumps. Fellow quick Mark Wood rattled Shikhar Dhawan's stumps. — APP

Some EU
states have
'secret' vaccine
contracts

VIENNA: Austria's Chancellor Sebastian Kurz on Friday suggested that some European countries may have signed "secret contracts" with vaccine companies to receive more vaccines than they were entitled to based on EU rules. EU members have agreed that vaccines should be distributed among countries based on population size, but Kurz said that after comparing the total procurement figures of member states, it became clear that "deliveries do not follow the per capita quota system". "There are clues that point to so-called bazaars where additional agreements between member states and pharmaceutical companies were made," Kurz said. "Malta will receive three times as many doses per capita as Bulgaria until the end of July," he said. "The Netherlands would not only receive more doses of vaccine per capita until the end of June than Germany, but almost twice as many as Croatia," Kurz said. — APP

Briefs

UK asks citizens to leave military-ruled Myanmar

FOREIGN DESK

LONDON: The UK advised its citizens to flee Myanmar, as a United Nations representative warned the junta appears to be committing "crimes against humanity" in its attempt to stay in power.

Britain, the country's former colonial ruler, urged its citizens to get out if they can, warning that, "political tension and unrest are widespread since the military takeover and levels of violence are rising".

It called on "British nationals to leave the country by commercial means, unless there is an urgent need to stay". The move comes after Thomas Andrews, the UN special rapporteur on human rights in Myanmar, gave a stark assessment of the crisis.

Myanmar is "controlled by a murderous, illegal regime" that is probably committing "crimes against humanity", Andrews told the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

These crimes probably include "acts of murder, enforced disappearance, persecution, torture" carried out with "the knowledge of senior leadership", including junta leader Min Aung Hlaing, Andrews said.

Azerbaijan, Poland eye Karabakh peace deal

DNA

BAKU: Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov and his Polish counterpart Zbigniew Rau have discussed the fulfilment of the Karabakh peace deal, Armenia's refusal to provide maps of land mines and the regional situation, the Foreign Ministry reported on its website on March 11.

In a telephone conversation that took place on March 11, Bayramov briefed Rau about the work done by the Azerbaijani government to ensure the implementation of the November 2020 Karabakh peace deal and the January 2021 agreement on unblocking all transport and communication lines in the region. The Azerbaijani minister drew the Polish counterpart's attention to mine blast casualties on territories liberated from Armenia's occupation.

Bayramov added that the mines planted by Armenia pose a direct threat to people's lives on a daily basis and reiterated that Armenia still refuses to provide mine maps to Azerbaijan. Polish Minister Zbigniew Rau stressed the importance of the implementation of the November and January trilateral statements signed by the Azerbaijani, Russian and Armenian leaders, the normalization of Azerbaijani-Armenian relations and the role of international organizations in this process.

ADB to halt funding for Myanmar govt projects

FOREIGN DESK

YANGON: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has announced that it will put on hold funding for Myanmar government development projects following the military regime's Feb. 1 coup. ADB is one of Myanmar's biggest development partners. Its decision to halt funding comes as at least 70 civilians have been killed by the security forces, as the junta continues its ongoing crackdown against peaceful protests calling for the reinstatement of the civilian government.

In a statement the ADB said that it remains "deeply concerned about recent developments in Myanmar, especially the loss of life during civil protests." The bank stated that the change in the country's circumstances will have a serious impact on Myanmar's economic and social development. The bank has put "a temporary hold on sovereign project disbursements and new contracts in Myanmar", while the international community assesses the evolving situation.



KABUL: Dr. Abdullah Abdullah meeting with Ambassador Stefano Pontecorvo. They discussed issues related to Afghan peace etc. – DNA

CCTSS Pak-China literary corridor to bring the two peoples closer

DNA

BEIJING: Chinese Culture Translation & Studies Support (CCTSS) has paved the way for Pakistan-China literary Corridor to bring the two peoples closer by launching "Sino-Pakistan Translation Workshop". As per China Economic Net (CEN) on Friday, CCTV launched year-long activities to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between all-weather allies. Xu Baofeng, Executive Vice President of Belt and Road Academy of Beijing Language and Culture University said that on the occasion

of the 70th anniversary of establishing formal diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of China and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, CCTSS Sino-Pakistani Translation Workshop aims to further enhance the cultural exchange between two countries. This will also help to promote mutual translation and publishing of cultural works and deepen the understanding of our two peoples. "We are making efforts to make it easier for foreign readers to appreciate classic works from a different culture and have a better understanding of the essence of two civilizations", Xu mentioned.

He further said that Chinese are always proud to say that China and Pakistan are iron brothers. Usually, the relations are described as higher than mountains, deeper than oceans, sweeter than honey, and stronger than steel. However, our understanding about each other is far from enough. "We seldom know that the Ancient Silk route was passing through parts of Pakistan, and Chinese traders travelled to Europe through Pakistan. Around two thousand years ago, famous Chinese Monk Xuan Zang, made several trips to areas, which are part of Pakistan now", he

told China Economic Net. He further said that Cultural works translation and publishing would be an efficient way for us to know better about each other and deepen our understanding to bring our relations to new heights, adding literature and history will be our first consideration. Meanwhile, we are planning to train young translators by writing textbooks and creating language training lessons targeting foreign learners. "Human history is recorded through literature, whether it be an oral tradition or the legends written down. If the world needs one method to unite together, literature is

the tie to connect the world. It's time to further strengthen the understanding of our two peoples. In addition to the classic works to help people know more about each other's culture and history, we want to stress modern literature, the one mirroring the reality of people's lives," he said. Talking to the audience Prof. Engr. Zamir Ahmed Awan, Sinologist (ex-Diplomat), said Pakistani students in China should be equipped with in-depth China-knowledge and professional education; they can play a significant role after returning to Pakistan strengthen the existing cordial relations between the

two nations. On this occasion, speakers told that the workshop organiser, Chinese Culture Translation & Studies Support (CCTSS), is a sinologist and translator's talent bank. The platform has already gathered several talents of different languages, including Urdu. They further said that the want to discover and invite more of them to work together for mutual translation and appreciation. A signing ceremony was also held to translate and publish Urdu versions of books such as "China's Rise in the Asia Market Construction" and "Spring and Autumn on the Sea".

Fairy tales and postage stamps of SCO member states are published

DNA

BEIJING: As part of the activities to mark the 20th anniversary of the Shanghai Organization, The SCO Center for Public Diplomacy in Tashkent, published the collections "Eighty-Eight Tales of the Eight Nations" and "Countless Proverbs of the Eight Nations". These include the most ancient sayings and wisdoms of the legends of Indian, Kazakh, Chinese, Kyrgyz, Pakistani, Russian, Tajik, and Uzbek. The collections were prepared under the guidance of Zuhridin

Isomutdinov, Candidate of Philological Sciences. A souvenir album "Postage Stamps of SCO Countries" showing national symbols, historical and cultural heritage of the SCO Member States was also published. The Director of the SCO Center for Public Diplomacy in Tashkent, Mr. Kabuljon Sobirov emphasized that the publications are designed to familiarize the citizens of Uzbekistan and foreign countries about the spiritual heritage of great thinkers and outstanding personalities of SCO nations as well as to disseminate

knowledge about their historical role and invaluable contribution to the development of world civilization and history of human development. Isomidiyov Z. notes that the collection of "Eighty-Eight Tales of the Eight Nations" contains 11 tales of the peoples of each Member State. Tales of the peoples of the SCO Member States, like all the peoples of the world, are based on the ideas of the inevitability of victory of good over evil and the triumph of nobility over baseness and praise the ideals of honest and faith-

ful people who, despite all difficulties and hardships, achieved their noble goals. The book states that the fairy tale is the oldest form of human thought and the largest folklore genre. At the same time, every nation has dozens of other genres of valuable verbal art. In this regard, publishers, through the artistic translation of the finest literary works, which is a kind of "golden bridge" to bring peoples and cultures together with the intention to continue their work in this direction in the name of strengthening the "Shanghai spirit."

Italy plans to impose national COVID lockdown

WEB DESK

ROME: Italy will be placed under a nationwide lockdown for the Easter weekend, a draft law decree seen by Reuters said on Friday, as the government battles to stem a fresh surge in coronavirus cases and hospitalisations. Non-essential shops will be shuttered nationwide from April 3 to April 5.

On those days, Italians will only be allowed to leave their homes for work, health or emergency reasons. The draft decree also said that as of Monday, curbs will be tightened in the country's low-risk "yellow" regions, where movement between towns will be severely limited and restaurants and bars will be closed. Along with nationwide measures, Italy calibrates restrictions in its 20 regions according to a four-tier colour-coded system (white, yellow, orange and red) based on infection levels and revised every week.

In red zones, restaurants, bars and non-essential shops are closed. By comparison, in white areas, restaurants can open in the evening.

The decree is expected to be approved later on Friday. Italy was the first Western country to enforce a national lockdown last year, as the virus took hold and the nation became an epicentre of the pandemic.

Include Taliban in interim Afghan government: Russia

FOREIGN DESK

MOSCOW: Russia said on Friday that the Taliban should be included in any Afghan interim administration, before a conference in Moscow aimed at supporting peace talks between the group and Afghanistan's government. Moscow is set to host a conference on Afghanistan on March 18 and has invited several regional players, including Taliban representatives. The meeting is seen as the Kremlin's latest effort to cement its role as a broker in the conflict, decades after the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan ended.

It comes at a crucial time for the peace process before a May 1 deadline for foreign troops to withdraw from Afghanistan. The United States has drafted a peace plan calling for the current Afghan government to be replaced with an interim administration until a new constitution is agreed and elections held, but Afghan President Ashraf Ghani has refused to step aside for a transitional government. "The formation of an interim coalition government should be decided by the Afghans themselves during national reconciliation negotiations," Russian MoFA spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told.



BUCHAREST: Pakistan embassy's delegation led by deputy head of mission Mubashir Khan visits Romanian Chamber of Commerce & Industry. Discussed further actions to enhance linkages between Pakistani and Romanian business communities. – DNA

SCO secretariat celebrates Women's Day

DNA

BEIJING: As part of the activities coinciding with the 20th anniversary of the SCO, the SCO Secretariat hosted a reception to mark International Women's Day (March 8) on March 5. The head of SCO diplomatic missions, Special Representative of the PRC Government for Eurasia, Mr. Li Hui, Deputy Chairman and Secretary of the Secretariat of the All-China Women's Federation, Ms Xia Ze, and other distinguished guests from members of the SCO Women's Club and the Chinese side attended the celebrations. Congratulating women on the International Women's Day, the SCO Secretary General, Mr. Vladimir Norov noted that women

of the SCO family, with their high spiritual and intellectual potential, selfless care, and generosity, has made an invaluable contribution in maintaining peace in the states. "Women have tremendous merits in preserving the rich national and cultural values of our peoples formed over the centuries, and transmitting the highest universal qualities such as tolerance, humanity and humanism from generation to generation," said Norov. In his words, the beautiful half of men with their diligence, skills, and responsibility regardless of their field of activity or profession, has made a huge, incomparable contribution to the prosperity and well-being of countries and peoples, and are the driving force of social progress in the SCO region. The Secretary General also high-

lighted the sacrifice, courage and heroism exhibited by the women during the pandemic. He identified equality and full participation of women in political and socio-economic tasks as a prerequisite for the sustainable development of SCO countries. Today, the SCO Member States pay special attention to issues of gender equality and womenempowerment, he stated. In the Moscow Declaration of the SCO Summit the Member States stressed that they consider it important to hold regular forums, congresses, and meetings of women within the SCO frameworks. Integration of gender equality issues into the SCO agenda may serve as an effective platform for consolidation of women's potential in the member states to achieve sustainable development

goals, promote regional cooperation and strengthen the "Shanghai spirit". Norov thanking all women for their understanding and generosity, wisdom and resourcefulness, patience, and kindness, expressed his sincere admiration and pride in their talents and successes, inimitable femininity and genuine charm, energy, and hard work. Mr. Li Hui, Special Representative of the Government of the People's Republic of China for Eurasia Affairs, also delivered a congratulatory speech at the event. He said the Chinese government has always attached great importance to the protection of women's rights and interests, integrating China's course of development and progress with the course of promoting equal development of men and women, en-

couraging, and supporting women in the historic process of realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. The SCO continues to grow and develop, and cooperation in various fields is gradually taking a deep and practical path, which is inseparable from the strong support of women of SCO countries and the solid development of cooperation among women in the SCO, he pointed out. The evening continued with a cultural program followed by a fashion show of the world-famous Chinese designer Lan Yu's own collections "LAN YU" were presented. Masters of opera art, headed by one of the best three tenors of the world, Mrs. Chang Sysy, also made a performance before the participants of the festival.

Turkey plans to host Afghan peace talks

FOREIGN DESK

ANKARA: Turkey plans to host Afghanistan peace talks in Istanbul in April, Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said, and Ankara will appoint an Afghanistan special envoy.

Cavusoglu's comments on Friday come after the United States shared a draft peace plan calling for replacing Afghanistan's government with a power-sharing interim administration pending elections under a new constitution.

The US proposal is intended to jump-start stalled talks in Doha between the Taliban and a team including Afghan officials on a political settlement to end decades of conflict.

In a letter leaked to Afghan media, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken encouraged Afghan leaders to consider a "new, inclusive government" and proposed that talks take place within weeks in Turkey to seal a peace deal with the Taliban. Cavusoglu said Turkey had previously been asked by Afghan officials, the Taliban and the negotiation team to host talks, and this week's decision came after a US proposal for Turkey to host a meeting.

"This is not a meeting that is an alternative to the Qatar process, it is a complement to that," state-owned Anadolu news agency quoted Cavusoglu as saying. "We will carry this out in coordination with brotherly Qatar, but it will be in Turkey."

UK economy slumps 2.9% in January

LONDON: Britain's economy shrank by 2.9 percent in January after much of the country re-entered coronavirus lockdown, official data showed Friday.

Gross domestic product hit reverse after 1.2-percent growth in December, the Office for National Statistics said in a statement.

"Government restrictions reduced economic activity," the ONS said.

"Restrictions were in place to varying degree across all four nations of the UK during January." The economy was also 9.0 percent smaller than its pre-pandemic level in February 2020.

The ONS said reduced activity in education and consumer-facing industries such as hospitality drove a 3.5-percent contraction in the services sector. Much of the UK re-entered lockdown in early January to curb a variant Covid-19 strain that was deemed more transmissible. Restrictions were similar to initial curbs imposed in the second quarter of 2020 that sparked a recession.

However, this month, the government eased Covid-19 restriction measures as some 23 million people in Britain have received at least a first vaccination. That brings down case numbers and eases pressure on hospitals. – APP

Myanmar's movement hires int'l lawyers

WEB DESK

YANGON: In the latest attempt to bring down Myanmar's coup leaders, the committee representing elected members of the Union Parliament for the National League for Democracy (NLD) has hired a London-based legal firm.

The Committee Representing the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH), formed by the lawmakers who could not take their seats in the Union Parliament because of the Feb. 1 coup, announced that it has engaged international law firm Volterra Fietta.

The CRPH said the firm would also advise on international legal proceedings against those responsible for violently cracking down on pro-democracy protesters and armed aggression against democratic representatives. Myanmar's legal team is due to be led by Robert Volterra and Alvaro Nistal, who have advised numerous states and victims of human rights violations. The firm's website says it specializes in international law with experience at the International Court of Justice, the International Criminal Court and other global courts.

Briefs

6 colliers killed due to explosion

DNA

QUETTA: An explosion in a coal mine in Balochistan claimed the lives of six miners, officials with the provincial Directorate of Mines told Reuters Friday.

They were among eight miners trapped about 1,000 feet underground when accumulating methane gas exploded at the coalfield in Marwar in the province of Balochistan, the officials said. "Six bodies have been retrieved by the rescue team from the affected mine this morning," a senior official of the Directorate of Mines said.

"(The) mine has been closed and an inquiry has been ordered by the Chief Inspector of Mines into the incident." In the past year, 102 coal miners have been killed in Balochistan in 72 different incidents, Sultan Muhammad Lala, president of the Balochistan Coal Mines Workers Federation, told Reuters. Lala said the government and mine owners were not ensuring safe working conditions at the sites. An explosion caused by methane gas at another coal mine in Marwar killed 20 workers in May 2018. In August that year, another methane-fueled explosion in the city of Quetta killed seven. In 2011, 45 coal miners were killed by a methane gas explosion, also in Balochistan. Sparsely populated and impoverished Balochistan is home to large deposits of coal, natural gas, copper and gold, many of which are being extracted by Chinese-backed operations. Separatist militants often target workers and security forces.

Cold, dry weather likely in most parts

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) Friday forecast dry weather in most parts of the country during day time for next 24 hours. However rain wind-thunderstorm (with snowfall over high mountains) is expected in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Northwestern Balochistan, Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan during evening/night. MET office reported. A westerly wave is affecting upper parts of the country and will intensify Saturday evening/night. Rain-thunderstorm occurred in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Kashmir, Punjab, northwest Balochistan and Gilgit-Baltistan. Snowfall was also recorded in Kalam during this period. Rainfall (mm) recorded in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Kakul 50, Kalam 31, Pattan 25, Malam Jabba 21, Balakot 20, Dir (Upper 13, Lower 08), DI Khan 08, Cherat 06, Saidu Sharif, Bannu, Parachinar 05, Chitral 04, Mirkhani 02, Peshawar (City, Airport), Drosh, Takht Bai 01, Kashmir: Muzaffarabad (Airport 47, City 36), Rawalakot, Garhi Dupatta 39, Kotli 30, Punjab: Murree 27, Bhakkar 22, Rawalpindi (Chaklala 16, Shamsabad 10), Islamabad (Airport 14, Saidpur 13, Bokra 11, Golra 10, Zero Point 09), Gujarat 13, Mandi Bahauddin 11, Jhelum, Mangla 09, Chakwal, Attock, Faisalabad 06, Sialkot (Airport 06, City 02), Sargodha 05, Gujranwala, Hafizabad 04, Narowal 03, Lahore City, Joharabad, Layyah, Noorpur Thal 02, Kasur, Khanewal 01, Balochistan: Quetta 01, Gilgit-Baltistan: Astore 16, Skardu 05 and Gupis 04. - APP

Indonesian envoy for enhancing agri relations

He was talking to deans and directors meeting of the University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF) and addressing a seminar in connection with Women Day at the UAF that was presided over by Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Asif Tanveer

STAFF REPORT

FAISALABAD: Indonesian Ambassador to Pakistan Adam Mulwarman Tugio on Friday said the bilateral relations in the field of agriculture, academia, and industry would be further strengthened to get benefit from each other experiences and fight the common challenges. He was talking to deans and directors meeting of the University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF) and addressing a seminar in connection with Women Day at the UAF that was presided over by Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Asif Tanveer. The ambassador was of the view

that Indonesia was exporting palm oil to Pakistan. He said palm oil production was important to economy of Indonesia as the country was one of the biggest producers of palm oil. Talking about academia ties, he said that they would open up new avenue of the academia exchange, including bilateral seminar, conferences among the UAF and his country's educational institutes particular in agriculture, livestock and animal sciences. Besides, he also urged students and faculty to apply for KNS fully funded scholarship 2021 to study in Indonesia. He said there were many similarities in the culture of the



both countries. Talking about the UAF, he said the UAF was listed among the top ranked universities across the globe in the agricultural sector and making marvelous contributions in academia and research. Talking about

women contributions, he said that in Pakistan and Indonesia, around 30 per cent of parliamentarians were women. He said it was essential of the women active contributions in socio economic development of the country. On this occasion, UAF Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Asif Tanveer said that Indonesia and Pakistan strengthened relations would help address the common challenges and to get benefit from each other experiences. He said the academia-industry strengthened ties would help raise income of people, and way of living and to meet challenges of the modern era.

Rashid terms Sanjrani's victory PM's success

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Sheikh Rashid Ahmed on Friday termed the Sadiq Sanjrani's victory a success of Prime Minister Imran Khan. Talking to a private news channel, he said Prime Minister Imran Khan wanted to hold Senate elections by show of hands but the opposition did not support him in that regard. He said the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) was going to be divided in days to come ahead, adding most of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz parliamentarians were not in favour to support Pakistan Peoples Party candidate Yousaf Raza Gilani for top slot of the upper house of parliament. Replying to a question, he hinted that the PDM might go for the long march in end of the current month but neither the government was sacred of it, nor create any hurdle in its way. - APP

WHO insists AstraZeneca vaccine safe

GENEVA: The World Health Organization said Friday there was no reason to stop using AstraZeneca's Covid-19 vaccine after several countries suspended the rollout over blood clot fears and as the EU added severe allergies to the list of possible side effects. The WHO, which said its vaccines advisory committee was examining the safety data coming in, stressed that no causal link had been established between the AstraZeneca vaccine and clotting. "AstraZeneca is an excellent vaccine, as are the other vaccines that are being used," WHO spokeswoman Margaret Harris told reporters in Geneva. "Yes, we should continue using the AstraZeneca vaccine," she added, stressing that any concerns over safety must be investigated. UK-based AstraZeneca insisted its job was safe, adding there is "no evidence" of higher blood clot risks from it. The UN health agency in Geneva also said that after the injection of millions of coronavirus doses from all vaccines around the world, no deaths had yet been attributed to a Covid-19 jab. Denmark, Norway and Iceland paused the use of the AstraZeneca jab as a precaution after isolated reports of recipients developing blood clots. Italy and Austria have banned the use of shots from separate batches of AstraZeneca, and Thailand and Bulgaria said this week they would delay the rollout of the shot. - APP

Pakistan to pay 'huge' price for TikTok ban: Fawad

DNA

ISLAMABAD, MAR 12 (DNA) - Federal Minister for Science and Technology Fawad Chaudhry took to Twitter on Friday to weigh in on the Peshawar High Court's (PHC) decision to ban the short video sharing entertainment app TikTok. "Court Decision to ban TikTok is yet another Court Decision for which people of Pak will pay a huge price," the minister wrote on his official Twitter handle.

"I understand most of the judges are unaware of the tech working models," he said, requesting Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP)

Gulzar Ahmed to intervene in the matter. Fawad Chaudhry said that his ministry will work with the judiciary for "tech modules for Judges."

On Thursday, the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) directed internet service providers to immediately block access to TikTok in compliance with the PHC order. The PTA said in a statement: "In respectful compliance to the orders of the Peshawar High Court, PTA has issued directions to the service providers to immediately block access to the TikTok App. During the hearing of a case today, the PHC has ordered for the blocking of App."

Hafeez Shaikh for enhancing trade relations with Iran

ZUBAIR AHMED

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Minister of Economic and Finance Affairs and the Managing Director, Foreign Investment Company of Iran Hassan Abghari called on the Minister for Finance and Revenue, Dr Abdul Hafeez Shaikh in Islamabad Friday. Minister for Finance and Revenue, Dr. Abdul Hafeez Shaikh extended a warm welcome to the Deputy Minister of Economic and Finance Affairs who was accompanied by the

Deputy Head of Mission Muhammad Surkhabi, Embassy of Iran.

According to a press statement here, they exchanged views on matters of common interests and reiterated resolve to promote economic and trade linkages between the two countries by building upon historical ties, geographical proximity, cultural affinities and economic commonalities.

The Finance Minister emphasized to find ways for furthering trade relations. The Pakistan Iran Investment Company can play a pivotal role in strengthening

trade and investment between the two countries, he added.

The Finance Minister briefed His Excellency Deputy Minister that Government of Pakistan is pursuing a broad-based economic reform agenda to achieve export led growth and sustainable economic development. He apprised about the economic challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and outlined socio-economic measures taken by the Government of Pakistan to lessen the adverse impact of the pandemic on marginalized sections of the society.



ISLAMABAD: Hassan Abghari, Deputy Minister of Economic and Finance Affairs and the Managing Director, Iran Foreign Investment Company (IFIC) of the Islamic Republic of Iran called on the Minister for Finance and Revenue, Dr. Abdul Hafeez Shaikh. - APP

Punjab markets to close at 6pm

LAHORE: Amid rising coronavirus cases, the Punjab government has decided that markets in seven districts of the province with the highest ratio of cases will close at 6pm. The decision was made by Chief Minister (CM) Punjab Usman Buzdar in light of the number of cases being reported in Lahore, Rawalpindi, Multan, Faisalabad, Gujranwala, Sargodha. "Educational institutions, parks, indoor ceremonies, Mazars will remain close for 15 days," Buzdar tweeted. The decisions were taken during a meeting of the cabinet committee on combating coronavirus threat convened by Usman Buzdar to review the pandemic situation in the wake of the National Command and Operation Centre's (NCOC) decision to re-impose restrictions due to a surge in infections. Usman Buzdar said that these steps are being taken to prevent the dangerous spread of the virus and to save the precious lives of citizens. - DNA

Turkey, Egypt hold first diplomatic contacts since 2013

He told Turkish state media on Friday that the two countries have now made "contacts both at the level of intelligence and foreign ministries with Egypt"

ANKARA: Turkey on Friday said it had established its first diplomatic contacts with Egypt since 2013 and was ready to improve relations with other rivals as it seeks to break its isolation. Ankara and Cairo had a dramatic falling out when Egyptian President Fatah al-Sisi ousted the Turkish-backed Islamist leader Mohamed Morsi. The two regional powers have since sparred over a range of issues and found themselves on opposite sides of the war in Libya. But Turkish Pres-

ident Recep Tayyip Erdogan has been extending olive branches to his rivals in the face of potential sanctions from the European Union and a tough new diplomatic line from US President Joe Biden. Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu first signalled earlier this month that Ankara was prepared to negotiate a new maritime agreement for the eastern Mediterranean with Cairo. He told Turkish state media on Friday that the two countries have now made "contacts both at the

level of intelligence and foreign ministries with Egypt". Erdogan later told reporters that he wanted these initial discussion to lay the groundwork for possible talks with Sisi. "Our desire would be to extend this process and strengthen it much more," Erdogan said after attending Friday prayers in Istanbul. "Therefore, after these intelligence, diplomatic and political contacts yield result, we will take this to much higher levels." - APP

CPEC is important programme: China

"China and Pakistan welcome any initiative that supports the BRI and CPEC," he said in his regular briefing in response a question about recent meeting in which Pakistan urged ASEAN members' countries to promote CPEC

NEWS DESK

BEIJING: China and Pakistan welcome any initiative that supports the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) launched by President Xi Jinping and its flagship projects - the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson, Zhao Lijian said on Friday. "China and Pakistan welcome any initiative that supports the BRI and CPEC," he said in his regular briefing in response a question about recent meeting in which Pakistan urged ASEAN members' countries to promote CPEC.



He said the CPEC is an important pilot programme under the BRI and added, "It is an open initiative, based on the principles of joint consultation, shared contribution and shared benefits." "We hope relevant countries and international organisations can

take part in the building of CPEC and sharing the benefits of BRI," he added. A senior official in a recently held a roundtable discussion with the resident ASEAN Heads of Missions urged them to promote the CPEC. The meeting agreed to optimally utilize the bilateral and ASEAN-wide institutional mechanisms and to explore the possibilities presented by far-reaching initiatives like Regional Economic Comprehensive Partnership and CPEC. The Heads of Missions of Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam attended the discussion.

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POLO MATCH 2021

Prestigious 117th M.P. Bhandara Memorial Murree Brewery Polo Cup Final 2021 being played at Rawalpindi Polo Ground, Peshawar Road Rawalpindi on 14th March 2021 at 16:00 hrs. All Polo enthusiasts, Diplomats & friends of Murree Brewery Company are requested to please honour the occasion with their presence.

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