



Islamabad POST

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Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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Somalia, Pakistan ties growing with each passing day

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Egypt enjoys good and brotherly ties with Pakistan

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Nishtar visits street hawkers in federal capital

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Briefs

Palestinian President sends prayers

DNA

RAMALLAH: President Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine sent his best wishes for a speedy recovery from Covid-19 to Imran Khan, the Prime Minister of Pakistan. In his message, President Mahmoud Abbas stated, "Our thoughts and prayers are with the PM and all those affected by coronavirus around the country". The Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas also wished prosperity and goodness to Pakistan and its brotherly people.

Putin extends greetings

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Russian President Vladimir Putin sent congratulatory messages to President Dr Arif Alvi and Prime Minister Imran Khan as the country would celebrate Pakistan Day on Tuesday. "Vladimir Putin, President of Russia, sent the congratulatory message on the occasion of a national holiday - the Pakistan Day to H.E. Dr. A. Alvi, President of Pakistan, and H.E. Mr. Imran Khan, Prime Minister of Pakistan," Russian Embassy in Pakistan said Monday on Twitter.

Bilawal takes a dig at Maryam

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari while denying the accusations of being selected clarified that he has no such blood in his veins, alleging that there is a political family from Lahore with such background. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari gave this statement while talking to media after meeting Ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Sirajul Haq in Lahore. He said the long march should not have been delayed adding that our party was well prepared for the long march and our rooms in Rawalpindi were also booked.

NCOC unfurls strict SOPs to curb virus surge

Decision about schools shall be taken in a meeting on March 24; Education Ministry wants schools to remain open: Shafqat

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: ISLAMABAD: In view of the surge in coronavirus cases in the country, the National Command and Operations Centre (NCOC) on Monday issued renewed standard operating procedures (SOPs) to contain the virus, adding that they would be implemented with immediate effect. Per the new guidelines, all businesses will only be allowed to operate five days a week, while all commercial activities will be closed by 8 pm. Under the chairmanship of the Federal Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives Asad Umar, the NCOC meeting was held on Monday and was attended by the chief secretaries of all provinces via video link. In cities with a coronavirus positivity ratio of less than 8%,

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Pak to get 60,000 doses of CanSino vaccine

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan will receive the fourth shipment of a Chinese COVID-19 vaccine this month. The sources said the shipment containing 60,000 doses of CanSino Biologics COVID-19 vaccine will arrive in Islamabad on March 26 while the fifth batch of the vaccine will reach the country on March 31. They said the government has asked China for shipment of one million doses. So far, Pakistan has received three shipments of Sinopharm vaccine as Beijing has donated 1.5 million doses to Islamabad.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi conferring the Award of Nishan-e-Imtiaz (Military) upon Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal, Zaheer Ahmad Babar, at a special investiture ceremony held, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. - DNA

Saudi Arabia announces steps to end Yemeni crisis

IP REPORT

Pak welcomes initiative

STAFF REPORT

RIYADH: The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia announced an initiative to end the Yemeni crisis and reach a comprehensive political resolution. The initiative comes in continuation of the Kingdom's concern for the security and stability of Yemen and the region, and its serious and practical steps to support peace in Yemen and put an end to the crisis. The initiative aims to end the human suffering of the brotherly Yemeni people, and affirms the Kingdom's support for efforts to reach a comprehensive political resolution between the

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has welcomed the peace initiative announced by Saudi Foreign Minister today, offering comprehensive roadmap including ceasefire for negotiated settlement of the Yemeni crisis. Pakistan considers this initiative a step in the right direction. We fully support Saudi efforts for peaceful settlement of the conflict in Yemen and stand in solidarity with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. We urge all parties to the conflict in Yemen to engage in a meaningful dialogue to end the hostilities in order to save thousands of innocent lives.

Yemeni parties in line with discussions in Biel, Geneva, Kuwait and Stockholm. The initiative includes the following proposals: A comprehensive ceasefire across the country under the supervision of the United Nations. Depositing taxes and custom revenues for ships carrying oil derivatives to the port of Hodeidah in the joint account of the Central Bank of Yemen in Hodeidah, in accordance

with the Stockholm Agreement on Hodeidah. The reopening of Sanaa International Airport to a number of direct regional and international destinations. The start of consultations between the Yemeni parties to reach a political resolution to the Yemeni crisis under the auspices of the United Nations based on the references of UN Security Council Resolution 2216. This initiative comes within the framework of the continuous support for the efforts of the United Nations Special Envoy to Yemen, Mr. Martin Griffiths, the US envoy to Yemen,

Continued on Page 06

Japanese envoy greets people on "Pakistan Day"

The Ambassador further said that Japan attaches great importance to its ties with Pakistan

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: On the auspicious occasion of Pakistan Day, MATSUDA Kuninori, the Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, has extended his warm congratulations and good wishes to the people and the Government of Pakistan, saying the meritorious sacrifices rendered by the resilient people of Pakistan over the decades towards achieving the goal of a peaceful and developed Pakistan are highly commendable. The Ambassador, in a felicitations message on the occasion, has said that

Australian HC extends greetings

ZUBAIR AHMED

ISLAMABAD: The Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan, Dr Geoffrey Shaw congratulated Pakistanis on Pakistan Day. In his Pakistan Day message, he said, "I congratulate the people and Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan as they celebrate the 81st anniversary of the passing of the

Continued on Page 06

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Opp strategies came to naught, says Shibli

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Information and Broadcasting Minister Senator Shibli Faraz said Monday that cabinet reshuffles were "common" and that the Opposition parties' recent anti-government strategies "came to naught". Addressing a press briefing here in the federal capital, the minister noted that the Opposition leaders' appearances at various courts



alongside their fans and supporters may encourage other inmates. "Even those sitting in jails

may be thinking that when they have to go to court, they should do so with their gang," he said. "The PTI government will not come under such pressure and no matter what they do, we will not be blackmailed. "We will never give them NRO; the PDM is over," he added, referring to the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM), the Opposition's anti-government campaign. "All the strategies of the Opposition came to naught".

Parade on March 25

ABID RAZA

RAWALPINDI: The Joint Services (JS) Pakistan Day Parade has been rescheduled on March 25, amid ongoing inclement weather and rains being forecast over the next two days. "The JS Pakistan Day Parade will now be held on March 25, as per programme and timings already specified," said an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) media release on Monday. It may be mentioned here that the ISPR had also released its public service message on creating awareness among the general public for participating in the JS parade with strict adherence to SOPs.

Saudi King, Crown Prince pray for PM Imran recovery



DNA

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz on Sunday wished Prime Minister Imran Khan a speedy recovery after the latter tested positive for the coronavirus. State-run Saudi Press Agency (SPA), reported that the two leaders sent cables to PM Imran about his health.

Continued on Page 06

President confers NI upon CAS

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi conferred Nishan-e-Imtiaz (Military) award upon Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal, Zaheer Ahmad Babar at a special investiture ceremony in Islamabad. He conferred the prestigious Nishan-e-Imtiaz (Military) on the Air Chief as a tribute to his professional services and achievements while serving the Pakistan Air Force. Born on 16 April, 1965 Air Marshal Zaheer Ahmad Babar Sidhu was commissioned in GD (P) Branch of Pakistan Air Force in April, 1986. He has commanded a Fighter Squadron, a Flying Wing, an Operational Air Base and Regional Air Command.

Somalia, Pakistan relations strengthened: Khadija Almakzoumi

She further said, in 1969, Pakistan and Somalia were among the founding members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Somalia's relations with Pakistan remained strong in the following years

EXCLUSIVE

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Somalia to Pakistan Khadija Mohamed Almakzoumi has said relations between the two countries are growing with each passing day. She said educational links between the two countries have been strengthened further. She expressed these views while giving an exclusive interview to Islamabad POST. Ambassador Khadija, who is in Pakistan for the last four years, has contributed significantly towards cementing bilateral relations. She also talked about the COVID situation in her country adding the situation had deteriorated in the past few months mainly because of influx of tourists. She said there was no COVID in Somalia in the beginning but suddenly cases have risen. She said her government was taking all possible steps to overcome the situation. To a question about

Pakistan's Look Africa policy the ambassador said, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Pakistan has done well by organizing a conference of the country's envoys in the African Continent with a view to deliberating on issues relating to enhanced cooperation with them. The move is timely in the sense

other countries of the world especially the United States and China are focusing more on Africa as its economies are considered as 'lions on the move'. African continent is a rising market of 1.26 billion people; it is rich in mineral resources and is an exporter of energy resources. Pakistan has

a lot of goodwill in the region as the country always championed the cause of the African countries at the UN and remained in the forefront of peacekeeping missions in Africa. In this backdrop, it is unfortunate that Pak-Africa trade is negligible and the country has diplomatic

presence in a few countries alone - thirteen missions to cover 54 countries (the rest are managed through concurrent accreditation). Apart from Africa being a huge potential market for Pakistani goods, the country's geo-strategic location and connectivity offers opportunity for African goods to reach Central Asia and South Asia. 'As Somali Ambassador to Pakistan, I consider my role is to facilitate the contacts between the players in the economic field, to get them to know each other better and also to interconnect in a better way'. She further said, in 1969, Pakistan and Somalia were among the founding members of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Somalia's relations with Pakistan remained strong in the following years and through the ensuing civil war period, when the Pakistani military contributed to a UN peacekeeping operation in southern Somalia. She stressed to further intensify trade and economic relations between the two countries adding she had already interacted with various chambers of commerce and industry in Pakistan with a view to exploring more and more avenues of cooperation.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Somalia Khadija Almakzoumi reading Daily Islamabad POST



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Somalia Khadija Almakzoumi presenting a souvenir to Editor Daily Islamabad POST Ansar Mahmood Bhatti

- Detailed interview shall be published in April issue of CENTRELINE magazine

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Briefs

Spring festival held to promote healthy environment

SHAHEEN HANIF

RAWALPINDI: A colorful spring festival titled 'Jashn e Baharaan' coupled with tree plantation was organized by a local martial arts and fitness club at Downtown Giga DHA-2 here Sunday evening with aim to create a recreational activity, promote tree plantation and importance of sustainable society.

The event was attended besides local residents, by more than 100 karatekas along with their families participated. As part of Clean and Green Pakistan initiative, children actively participated in tree plantation by planting more than 250 trees on the occasion. During his visit to the event, Managing Director of Al Ghurair GIGA Najeeb Ameen lauded the efforts of the organizers for engaging the Giga Downtown community in healthy activities.

Later in their separate addresses on the occasion, CdrAftab Iqbal, Ch. Abid-Tarar, Haider Awan, M. Ramzan and Maqsood-Chughtai highlighted the importance of Green Pakistan for healthy nation.

'Awareness for Youngsters' on saving water

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Water & power development authority (WAPDA) Lt Gen (R) Muzammil Hussain Monday stressed the public not to waste water and asked media for creating awareness about conservation of water among youngsters. Talking to local TV channel, on 'the world water day' Chairman said that a huge quantity of clean water is being wasted due to its irrational use, adding that there is a need to enhance awareness among people regarding water conservation.

He said, "We would have to sensitize public about conserving water by putting it to a judicious use to meet our needs". WAPDA Chairman also suggested launching an integrated awareness program at the national as well as regional level to apprise the masses of their due role for safety and protection of the water resources besides to discourage excessive use of water. He said it is a good news that in next few 8 to 9 years almost 90% of water storage would be filled increased in the country, adding, all available resources would be utilized to conserve water in the country. - APP

Bootlegger held with 103 bottles of liquor

IBRAR KHAN

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Margallah police has arrested a bootlegger and recovered 103 bottles of liquor and 128 tin of beer from his possession. According to police sources, on a tip off a team under the supervision of DSP Abidkram comprising SHO Margallah Abdul Ghafoor stopped a vehicle during snap checking on Sunday night.

They held the suspect and impounded the vehicle after confiscating liquor bottles and beer tin. Meanwhile, according to a news release, Shahzad Town police arrested three accused Mushthaq, Waseem and Shahbaz and recovered two pistols along with ammunitions and 105 gram heroin from their possession. Tarnol police arrested an accused Sadaqat and recovered one 30 bore pistol from him. Similarly, Shalimar police arrested an accused Usman and recovered one 30 bore pistol from him. Banigala police arrested two accused Khurram and Zafar Mehmood and recovered 300 gram hashish and one 30 bore pistol from him. Cases have been registered against the nabbed persons and further investigation is underway.



ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety, Dr. Sania Nishtar visits G-11 Markaz to Review Street Hawkers' economy first-hand. - DNA

Dr. Nishtar reviews street hawkers' economy first-hand

Syeda Shafaq Hashmi, Administrator Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad and Zia Bandy, Focal Person for Street Vendors' Initiative at the Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Division also accompanied Dr. Nishtar

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Social Protection and Poverty Alleviation, Dr. Sania Nishtar on Monday visited G-11 Markaz to review the street vendors' economy first-hand and realize the positive role and potential of street vendors in supporting poverty alleviation efforts. Ehsaas is striving to improve the operating environment for street vendors through multi-stakeholder engagement. In this regard, Ehsaas is collaborating with Islamabad Municipality, Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Pakistan Institute of

Development Economics (PIDE) to explore a sustainable and evidence-based solution to support street vendors. "Ehsaas is aware of the difficult working conditions for street vendors, but it is also the matter of fact that other citizens also have the right on the usage of public space", Dr. Sania Nishtar said while talking to street vendors during her visit to G-11 Markaz. Dr. Nishtar toured the whole Markaz, met different street vendors and listened to their plight. It included the 42-year Shaheen Akhtar, the only female street vendor in the market, who is selling home-cooked food. Street vendors informed Dr. Nishtar about various operational is-

suues being faced by them in the market. Syeda Shafaq Hashmi, Administrator Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad and Zia Bandy, Focal Person for Street Vendors' Initiative at the Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Division also accompanied Dr. Nishtar. At present, 85 street vendors are operating in the area, among which some have been vending for over 15-years, but none of them has any vending license. Lack of legal status makes vendors susceptible to frequent eviction campaigns and rent-seeking exploitation. Majority of the street vendors are less educated and low skilled migrants from other areas of the country, who have limited

capacity and resources for earning their livelihood. Public spaces in markets with sufficient footfall provides them room to make their living. A whole informal ecosystem existed in commercially viable public spaces for accommodating street vending. On per square feet basis, they are paying more monthlies to do their business than rent of the formal shop in the area. However, perpetual fear and uncertainty of tenure constraint restrict capacity of vendors to sustain more hygienic practices. Hygienic neglect and market demand is inducing more congestion and cleanliness issues in street vending. Street vendors asked the government to recognize

their positive role in generation of self-sustaining economic activities and poverty alleviation. Under Ehsaas, Vendors' Support Group has also been set up which is overseeing the development of number of interventions in streamlining vending in the city. Ms. Hashmi informed that municipality is pioneering efforts through the setting-up of dedicated Street Economy Unit to recognize and organize better governance and management of street vendors. Mr. Bandy shared details of an inclusive pilot project for street vendors planned in collaboration with different partners. PIDE has been providing the intellectual input and design of the pilot.

ICT admin to set up five 'Ramzan Sahulat Bazaars'

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration will be setting up five 'Sahulat Bazaars' in urban and rural areas to provide essential food items to general public on controlled rates during the holy month of Ramadan. The decision to this effect was taken during a meeting, chaired by ICT administration Director General Syeda Shafaq Hashmi, said a news release on Monday. The meeting, which was attended by the Additional Deputy Commissioner General, all the Assistant Commissioners (ACs), Deputy Director Food, representative of market committee and others, held on the direction of Chief Commissioner, ICT Amer Ali Ahmed. The 'Sahulat Bazaars' would be established in multiple areas including Rawat, Bharakahu, Tarnol, Tarlai and sector G-7 of Islamabad. On the occasion, Syeda Shafaq directed to all the ACs for ensuring strict implementation of the anti-coronavirus standard operating procedures (SOPs) at the facilities falling within their jurisdiction. The market committee administrator was asked to ensure constant food supply in all bazaars. It was also decided in the meeting that stalls of Utility Stores Corporation would also be set up in each bazaar. The Chair also directed to the secretaries of respective Union Councils and concerned staff of DMA to provide necessary support for the purpose. - DNA

Khushhali Microfinance Bank goes live on 1LINK 1TIP

RAJA PERVAIZ

ISLAMABAD: Khushhali Microfinance Bank has partnered up with 1LINK 1TIP (Cyber Threat Intelligence Platform) to implement a robust cyber security posture for the bank and further strengthen their payments ecosystem against ever increasing cyber threats. Given the industry-wide need to formulate a collaborative deterrence model that enhances the security posture via a trusted threat intelligence-sharing platform, KMBL has implemented 1TIP Base & DRP platform that will provide them with a holistic view of cyber threat landscape and



effectively combat threats that materialize. The signing ceremony was held at the KMBL Head Office in Islamabad and was attended by Mr. Ghalib Nishtar, President & CEO KMBL, Saleem Akhtar Bhatti, Group Head Finance & CFO, Ms. Amina Hassan, Group Head Operations KMBL and other department heads

of KMBL, along with Mr. NajeebAgrawalla, CEO 1LINK, Mr. Bashir Khan, COO 1LINK, and Mr. Mahir-Mohsin, CEO Trillium and Cydea Tech along with other senior officials of 1LINK. With this implementation, KMBL now has access to a full suite threat intelligence community sharing platform, threat advisory services from centralized

24/7 SOC covering regions across multiple time zones, data feeds/enrichment from multiple sources, sandbox environment for malware analysis and external brand monitoring. On the occasion, Mr. NajeebAgrawalla CEO, 1LINK commented, "1LINK is committed to improving the cyber security posture of the financial industry.

Rainfall threat to dengue spread

RAWALPINDI: The present spell of rains has increased the threat of dengue larvae, which needs to be tackled on urgent basis as Met office has forecast more rain in the next two days.

Chief Executive Officer District Health Authority Dr.FaizaKanwal while talking to APP said that prevailing weather was suitable for breeding of dengue larvae and asked the concerned to remove stagnant water in outdoor and household settings to stop mosquitoes from breeding after rain and submerged water.

She advised the residents to adopt precautionary measures and inform the department immediately if dengue larvae is found in their houses as the government alone cannot check the spread of dengue larvae.

The CEO informed that to check the occurrence of dengue larvae, surveillance is underway as present spell of rains has increased the threat of dengue larvae.

She urged the residents to keep their water tanks clean and not to leave any place wet with stagnant water as accumulation of water after rain was a major cause of mosquito-borne diseases including dengue fever. Dr.Faiza said dengue is under control in Rawalpindi and health department has adopted precautionary measures to cope with any situation. - APP

IGP urges to respond swiftly to complaints

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad, Qazijameel-ur-Rehman on Monday urged the police guides, deputed at police stations to respond the complainants swiftly. The visitors should be treated in respectful way with all possible guidance so the negative perception of police among public could be changed, he stressed.

He passed these directions during his visit at rural zone police stations including Khanna, Lohibhir and Sahala. SP rural zone and other police officers were also present on the occasion.

The IGP inspected record of first information report (FIR) registration, front desk and cleanliness and hygienic conditions at the stations.

He made an interaction with the visitors and inquired about their issues.

He directed the police station staff to expedite actions against anti-social elements and promote police-public coordination to control crime in the society.

'FIRs should be filed on time and no lethity would be tolerated in that regard, ' the IGP warned. Rehman further directed to improve cleanliness conditions at police stations to provide good atmosphere to the visitors as well as personnel.

Collaboration through science diplomacy urged

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: International webinar on 'Academic Collaboration, Science Diplomacy and OIC: Challenges and Opportunities' organized jointly by COMSTECH and Department of International Relations, Islamia University Bahawalpur on March 22, 2021.

The objective of the event was to bring stakeholders from academic management and diplomatic circles together to address bottlenecks and create opportunities for international academic collaboration through science diplomacy. COMSTECH set up Consortium of Excellence (CCoE) comprising of leading science, technology, and engineering academic and research institutions of Pakistan, under the "Science Diplomacy Initiative" of the Ministry of Foreign Af-

fairs (MoFA) last year. The Islamia University of Bahawalpur being the founding member of the CCoE, through its department of international relations offered to jointly organize this international webinar. In his message, the chief guest, Dr. Arshad Mahmood, Federal Secretary, MoST appreciated the establishment of COMSTECH Consortium of Excellence (CCoE) and the Islamia University Bahawalpur, being the leading higher education institution of Southern Punjab, the founding member of the CCoE. Dr. Arshad said that it is our collective responsibility to collaborate and join hands for addressing challenges effectively, particularly in the current COVID-19 situation. He said that academic institutions have a vital role to play in addressing various problems being faced by the Muslim Ummah.

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Women Day At Serena Hotel Celebrated
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Book from Landi Kotal to Wagah launched
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Australia gifts a Miyawaki forest to Pakistan
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LARGEST CIRCULATED DIPLOMATIC MAGAZINE

Briefs

NCOG unfurls strict SOPs to curb...

From Page 01

nonpharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) which are already in place will continue to be enforced based on risk assessment and disease prevalence. According to a notification issued in this regard, the following measures will be taken:

Implementation of broader lockdowns with stringent enforcement protocols based on risk assessment. No mobility will be allowed except for emergencies.

Closure of all type of indoor dining. However, outdoor dining will be permitted till 10:00pm. Takeaways will be allowed. Closure of all commercial activities (less essential services) by 8:00pm. Two safe days per week will be observed. Choice of days will be at the discretion of the federating units. Gatherings with an upper limit of 300 persons will be allowed with strict adherence to COVID-19 SOPs. However, all types of indoor gatherings involving cultural, musical/religious or miscellaneous events will be banned. Complete closure of cinemas and shrines will continue to be enforced. Complete ban on contact sports, festivals, cultural and other events. Outdoor wedding functions till 10:00pm with an upper limit of 300 guests will be allowed with strict adherence to COVID-19 SOPs (event duration two hours only).

Australian HC extends greetings

From Page 01

Pakistan Resolution – the proposal inked in Lahore in 1940, which envisioned and created Pakistan. Since its independence, Pakistan has made great strides in building its democracy and economic development and Australia has been a steadfast friend throughout. We will continue to stand with Pakistan as it strives to achieve its aspirations for economic security and long-term prosperity.

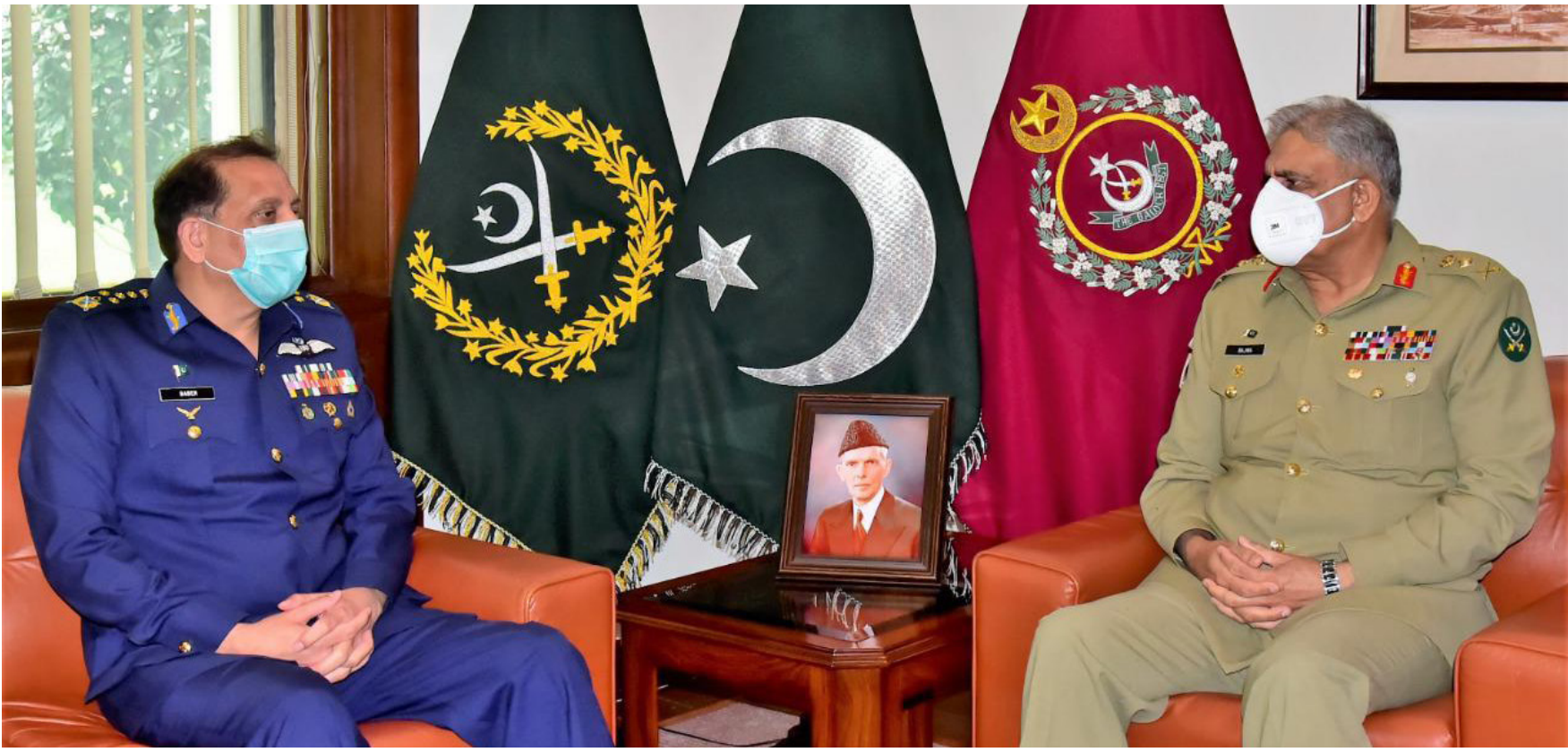
Our two nations have much in common. Our common love of cricket and Commonwealth ties continue to colour and underpin our warm and longstanding bilateral relations. I look forward to the continued strengthening of our two nations' cooperation on defence, trade, education and development – including our assistance to support Pakistan's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As friends we are there for each other in the tough times as well as the good. Globally, our work together in the United Nations, as well as regional and international institutions, supports our mutual interest in ensuring comprehensive peace and prosperity in our shared region.

On this day I also congratulate the Pakistani diaspora in Australia. I salute the contribution this vibrant community makes, in so many ways, to a strong, prosperous and inclusive multicultural Australia. On behalf of Australia, I wish our good friend Pakistan Yaum-e-Pakistan Mubarak!"

Japan envoy greets...

From Page 01

March 23rd is a landmark day in the history of Pakistan and holds a very significant importance for its people. "On this important occasion on behalf of the Government and the people of Japan, I would like to extend our heartfelt congratulations to the leadership and the people of Pakistan and offer our best wishes for their prosperity and well-being," said the Ambassador. The Ambassador further said that Japan attaches great importance to its ties with Pakistan and the relations between the two countries have witnessed steady progress in diverse fields over the decades and Japan remains committed to further strengthening cooperation with Pakistan in all areas of mutual interest. Ambassador MATSUDA, while reiterating his resolve to further deepen Japan-Pakistan bilateral relations said, "On the momentous occasion of Pakistan Day, let's renew our resolute commitment to stay together and work together towards our shared goal of a peaceful, stable and prosperous Pakistan."



RAWALPINDI: Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber calls on, Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa at GHQ. – DNA

Kabul eyes US troops until Taliban fully observes truce

"Responsible pullout has been our demand and that of all of our international allies," Dawa Khan Menapal, a spokesman for President Ashraf Ghani, told media on Monday

FOREIGN DESK

KABUL: Afghanistan's government on Monday demanded a complete withdrawal of US-led foreign troops from the country but only after the Taliban "cut ties with terrorists" and announced a ceasefire. "Responsible pullout has been our demand and that of all of our international allies," Dawa Khan Menapal, a spokesman for President Ashraf Ghani, told media on Monday. "It means that all the threats have finished, the Taliban has cut ties with all terrorists, the violence has been halted and a ceasefire has been announced. This is responsible withdrawal," he added. Menapal's remarks follow a surprise visit by US Defense Secretary

Lloyd Austin to Afghanistan on Sunday, in which the Pentagon chief met with Ghani and pushed for a "responsible end" to Washington's longest war in history. Austin said that the level of violence must decrease for "fruitful" diplomacy to succeed. Menapal agreed, adding that the world and Kabul "faced a joint threat" and needed "a joint assessment" because the Taliban – contrary to a controversial deal signed with Washington – "had not severed ties with terrorist groups, including Al Qaeda." "Our campaign is aimed at addressing this joint threat," he told media. The developments come ahead of a May 1 deadline for the complete pullout of US-led foreign troops from Afghanistan based on a controversial accord signed be-

tween former US President Donald Trump's administration and the Taliban more than a year ago. Zabihullah Mujahid, a spokesman for the Taliban, reiterated that Washington needed to honor the deadline. "They have signed an agreement with us, and the date there is clear," Mujahid told media by phone. "We are not giving people any further extension. This issue is finalized, and it is very crucial that it be implemented. If someone wants to deliberate on it, it will not be acceptable for us. Our expectation is that they pull out the troops from Afghanistan based on the deal and that this war comes to an end," he added. Since assuming office, US President Joe Biden has pledged to review the deal and hinted at retaining the troops beyond the

deadline so that Kabul and the Taliban could agree on the formation of an interim government before Washington ends its engagement in Afghanistan, which began with the Taliban's ouster in late 2001. Austin said Biden would decide on the date for the withdrawal of troops and that the aim of his trip to Afghanistan was to "listen and learn" for a review of the future of American forces. His visit came weeks after the leak of a letter from US Secretary of State Antony Blinken to Ghani, which included an urgent proposal to help restart discussions between the Afghan government and the Taliban, which began in Doha, Qatar, in September last year but failed to make any headway. Blinken's letter also pressed upon the urgency for a new government in Afghanistan to break a stale-

mate in the Doha talks, which have been riddled with disputes. The US secretary of state had been pushing for an UN-facilitated conference in Turkey next month, with international stakeholders, including proposals to arrange a discussion between the Taliban and Kabul to form a negotiated settlement and enforce a ceasefire. Blinken's letter was delivered by US Special Envoy for Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad, who shared the proposals with Ghani and other Afghan leaders, including the Taliban, and pressed upon the idea to form an interim government that would include the Taliban too. Ghani, who began his second term for another five years in March of 2020, has repeatedly said that he would transfer power only after elections were held.

Mauritania, Qatar re-establishes diplomatic ties

NOUAKCHOTT: Mauritania has re-established diplomatic relations with Qatar, according to its foreign ministry, almost four years after breaking them off in the midst of a Saudi-led freeze on ties with Doha. Nouakchott had followed Riyadh and its allies in cutting ties and transport links with Qatar in June 2017, imposing a land, sea and air blockade on the Gulf country. The quartet accused Doha of, among other things, supporting "terrorist" groups and being too close to Iran, allegations Qatar has consistently denied. However, in January, following a flurry of diplomatic activity by former United States President Donald Trump's administration, the boycott was lifted and Qatar was brought back into the regional fold. "After intensive contacts over the past week and with much appreciated support from the Sultanate of Oman, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania and Qatar decided to resume diplomatic ties," the ministry said in a statement released to the Mauritanian News Agency on Sunday. The announcement came after a meeting in Doha between the foreign minister and his Qatari counterpart, at which "the longstanding brotherly relations between the two countries" was discussed.

Overseas Pakistanis in Canada facing hardships

ATTOCK: Overseas Pakistanis residing in Calgary, Canada were facing severe hardships in obtaining various services from Consulate General of Pakistan in Vancouver and demanding setting up of a Council General Office in Calgary. While talking to newsmen, several Pakistanis said that thousands of Pakistanis living in Calgary and adjoining areas in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Yukon Territories were compelled to travel several hundred miles to Vancouver for getting various services specially to obtain machine readable passports (MRP) or to get other minor facilities like name changes etc. from Consulate General in Vancouver. One resident Syed Hasan Raza Naqvi, who was residing

in Calgary for almost 8 years also contacted Pakistan Canada Association President in Calgary and PCA president also confirmed that numerous efforts were made to bring the services to Calgary with official and they were all turned down by Govt of Pakistan. In addition Syed spoke with Consul General of Vancouver and he also acknowledge the hardships that overseas Pakistanis need to face for getting these services from surrounding areas and confirmed that multiple requests were submitted to Foreign Ministry and DG Immigration Passport. They said that even submitting complaints on PM Citizen Portal did not solve their problems which resulted bearing them financial as well as time losses. – APP

Trump lashes out at Biden's immigration policies

WASHINGTON: Former US President Donald Trump slammed incumbent Joe Biden's administration over its immigration policies amid the ongoing crisis on the southern border. "They had to do as we kept this smooth-running system on autopilot," Trump said Sunday in a statement. "Instead, in the span of a just few weeks, the Biden Administration has turned a national triumph into a national disaster." "They are in way over their heads and taking on water fast," he continued.

Calling Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas "pathetic," "clueless," and "self-satisfied," Trump claimed that he is "incapable of leading" the Department of Homeland Security. He added that Mayorkas' Sunday appearance, in which he rejected the "gag order" in the border, was a "national disgrace." The former president called for "an immediate congressional investigation" into the issue. Last week, several news outlets reported that Biden is allegedly restrict-

ing information Border Patrol agents can share with media. Citing officials who spoke anonymously, NBC said the new restrictions have been passed down verbally, not through an official memo, what the border patrol agents reportedly call an unofficial "gag order." "The only way to end the Biden Border Crisis is for them to admit their total failure and adopt the profoundly effective, proven Trump policies," Trump said, urging the new administration to complete his signature border wall. – DNA



ISLAMABAD: Afghan ambassador to Pakistan Najibullah Alikhil delivered a lecture on Afg-Pak relations: future prospects to former parliamentarians and generals, civil & military representatives, organized by the National Defense University of Islamabad. – DNA

N. Korea closes embassy in Malaysia as ties severed

Malaysia later expelled the North Korean ambassador from the country and effectively closed its own embassy in Pyongyang. Malaysia has not dispatched any diplomats to the North Korean capital since

FOREIGN DESK

KUALA LUMPUR: North Korea closed its embassy in Kuala Lumpur and its diplomats left Malaysia on Sunday after Pyongyang announced it was cutting diplomatic ties with the Southeast Asian country over the extradition of one of its citizens to the United States. The North Korean announcement on Friday over the extradition of Mun Chol Myong, who is wanted by U.S. authorities on money laundering charges, prompted the Malaysian government to give North Korean

Embassy staff and their dependents 48 hours to leave the country. The two countries had established diplomatic ties in 1973. Before leaving the embassy on the fringes of the city center, Charge d'Affaires Kim Yu Song read out a statement in which he slammed Malaysia for being "subservient" to the United States and laid all responsibility at Malaysia's feet. "Not content with the putting of our innocent citizen in the dock by blindly favoring the U.S., the principal enemy of our state, the Malaysian authority delivered our citizen to the U.S. in

the end, thus destroying the foundation of the bilateral relations based on the respect of sovereignty," Kim said. The Malaysian Foreign Ministry has said the North Korean man was only extradited after due legal process had been exhausted. In 2019, a Malaysian court ordered Mun to be extradited to the United States following his arrest earlier in the year. But he fought to remain in Malaysia, saying he had done nothing wrong. Earlier this month, he lost his final appeal to Malaysia's top court. Mun is accused of purchasing

luxury goods like liquor and cigarettes with illicit funds and having them shipped to Pyongyang via China. On Sunday, a group of about 30 North Korean diplomats and family members were driven to Kuala Lumpur International Airport in two buses. A diplomatic source said they were bound for Shanghai, China. Announcing that it had expelled all North Korean diplomats, the Malaysian Foreign Ministry said Sunday its action was in response to North Korea's "utterly irresponsible decision" to sever diplomatic ties. "The action by the Gov-

ernment of Malaysia has become a necessity in order to protect Malaysia's sovereignty and safeguard our national interest," it added. Ties between North Korea and Malaysia have deteriorated since the murder of Kim Jong Nam, the estranged half-brother of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, at the airport in February 2017. Malaysia later expelled the North Korean ambassador from the country and effectively closed its own embassy in Pyongyang. Malaysia has not dispatched any diplomats to the North Korean capital since.

Venezuela announces 'radical quarantine'

DNA

CARACAS: Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro has announced two weeks of what he referred to as "radical quarantine", leaving Holy Week celebrations suspended.

"I announce that Holy Week this year will be again in radical quarantine. So we are going to have fourteen days, two weeks of radical quarantine," he said on Sunday, referring to a period that will encompass the Christian holiday of Easter. About 88 percent of Venezuela's 28.5 million people are Christian, the vast majority of whom are Catholic.

Maduro had previously announced that the Holy Week would be flexible this year, but took the stricter approach as COVID cases in the country rise and amid threats from the variant of the virus detected in Brazil. Venezuela, which was already struggling with inadequate healthcare infrastructure as well as shortages of medicines and food before the pandemic, has reported a relatively light toll from the coronavirus, with 151,123 cases and 1,493 deaths confirmed to date. Maduro has long blamed the country's dire situation on US sanctions. Washington has maintained the sanctions do not affect the supply of medicines and food.

Saudi Arabia announces...

From Page 01

Mr. Timothy Lenderking, along with the positive role of the Sultanate of Oman, and the push to reach a political resolution to the crisis under the auspices of the United Nations. The Kingdom calls on the Yemeni government and the Houthis to accept the initiative, which gives the Houthis the opportunity to stop the bloodshed in Yemen, address the humanitarian and economic conditions that the brotherly Yemeni people are suffering from, and gives them the opportunity to become partners in achieving peace.

The initiative gives the Houthis an opportunity to uphold the interests of the brotherly Yemeni people first, and the Yemeni people's right to their sovereignty and the independence of their homeland over the Iranian regime's expansionary ambitions in Yemen and the region. The Kingdom calls on the Houthis to declare their acceptance of the initiative, which is to be implemented under the supervision and monitoring of the United Nations.

The Kingdom also affirms its full right to defend its land, citizens and residents from the systematic attacks carried out by the Iranian-backed Houthi militia against civilian areas and vital installations that not only target the Kingdom's national interests, but also target the core of the global economy and its supplies, as well as global energy security.

Saudi King, Crown Prince...

From Page 01

"The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud has sent a cable to Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan, after his infection with the novel coronavirus," reported the SPA. A similar cable was sent by Prince Mohammad bin Salman.

The SPA stated that the Saudi King and the crown prince wished PM Imran Khan "permanent health and wellness, and a speedy recovery".

PM Imran had tested positive for coronavirus on Saturday, following which he was quarantined at home. Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination Faisal Sultan announced the news on Twitter. Following the PM's test, First Lady Bushra Bibi also tested positive for COVID-19.

As per an update issued by Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Political Communication Dr Shahbaz Gill on Sunday, the couple was feeling "comfortable with mild symptoms".

Briefs

Massive fire breaks out at Rohingya camp

FOREIGN DESK

DHAKA: Hundreds of shanties were gutted after a massive fire broke out at Rohingya refugee camp in southern Bangladesh on Monday, according to eyewitnesses and authorities. "We have got the report of fire and we responded to the incident. We are trying to control the blaze," Mohammad Shamsud Douza, additional commissioner of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commission, told Anadolu Agency. Meanwhile, eyewitnesses at the camp in Cox's Bazar said the fire started at around 3.30 p.m. local time (1030GMT) and it is still burning. "More than 700 tents have been gutted while the fire has gone almost out of control," Mayyu Khan, Rohingya youth leader, told Anadolu Agency. Muhammad Ayyub, another Rohingya representative, told Anadolu Agency over phone that at least one woman, 19, and two children aged six and nine years old were reportedly killed and several others are still missing. The fire department has reportedly dispatched a team to the scene, he also said, while the fire brigade trucks are yet to arrive.

4 dead, 9 injured in Syria blast

WEB DESK

RAS AL-AYN: At least four civilians, including two children, were killed in an explosion in northern Syria, local medical sources said on Monday. An explosion hit the Ras al-Ayn district, near the Turkey-Syria border, injuring nine others, health officials said. The injured were taken to a hospital, while the blast caused serious material damage in a house hit by the explosion. The exact cause of the blast is not yet known. Security forces launched an investigation into the explosion. Ras al-Ayn was liberated from YPG/PKK terrorists on Oct. 12, 2019 as part of Turkey's Operation Peace Spring. It was launched to secure Turkey's borders by eliminating the terror group from northern Syria, east of the Euphrates River, aid in the safe return of Syrian refugees, and ensure Syria's territorial integrity. The terrorists, however, continue attacks in Ras al-Ayn, and the nearby city of Tal Abyad, despite their withdrawal from the border area following negotiations between the US and Turkey on Oct. 17, 2019. In its more than 30-year terror campaign against Turkey, the PKK - listed as a terrorist organization by Turkey, the US, and the EU - has been responsible for the deaths of nearly 40,000 people, including women, children, and infants. The YPG is PKK's Syrian offshoot.

Ethiopia keen to strengthen relations with Pakistan

DNA

ADDIS ABABA: Deputy Speaker of the House of Federation, Etsenget Mengistu, has conferred with Pakistani Ambassador to Ethiopia, Shozab Abbas. Etsenget briefed the ambassador about the current situation in Ethiopia besides exchanging views on the bilateral relations between the two countries, which was established more than 60 years ago. She said Ethiopia is keen to strengthen its socio-economic, political business, investment and tourism ties with Pakistan, according to the House of Federation. Ambassador Abbas commended the ongoing reforms in Ethiopia and reiterated his country's interest to scale up political, economic and people-to-people ties with Ethiopia.

Pak, China and Afghanistan exhibition for youth kicks off

Award ceremony of China, Pakistan and Afghanistan art exhibition for young people was held at China Soong Ching Ling Youth Science & culture exchange center

DNA

BEIJING: "Pakistan and China's friendship was built on mutual trust, respect and support and over the past 70 years, the friendship between the two sides was tested and deepened. Such an iron brotherhood is like an asset, which we hoped can be passed to the younger generation," said Ahmed Farooq, Deputy Chief of Mission at Embassy of Pakistan on the opening and award ceremony of China, Pakistan and Afghanistan art exhibition for young people. According to Gwadar Pro, sponsored by China Soong Ching Ling Foundation, the opening and award ceremony of China, Pakistan and Afghanistan art exhibition for young people was held at China Soong Ching Ling Youth Science & culture exchange center. Hang Yuanxiang, Executive vice chairman of China Soong Ching Ling Foundation, Chen Feng, counselor of Department of Asian Affairs from Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ahmed Farooq, Amb. Javid Ahmed Qaem, Ambassador of Afghanistan to China along with students from Pakistan International School and representatives of



award-winning students in Beijing, attended the ceremony. Echoing the Belt and Road Initiative, the event is aimed at promoting international friendship and mutual learning among the youngsters of China, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. "I loved drawings which are among the most naturalistic, and I was deeply impressed by how the Pakistani and Afghan con-

testants are able to exquisitely capture the beauty of their motherland. Through their paintings, I sensed their love for nature and peace, which resonate with traditional Chinese culture. I wish that I could visit Pakistan and Afghanistan someday." Chinese contestant Ma Xuange told Gwadar Pro. "My paintings were inspired by football, since I love the

sport so much." 14-year-old Chinese contestant Lu Zening told Gwadar Pro with a grain. His painting adopted Chinese traditional painting methods, depicted a scene of children from Pakistan and China playing football together. "I am in the same league with a group of Pakistani students in an online game, that's how the concept of 'Iron brotherhood'

gets real for me. My Pakistani buddies were all excited to learn that I come from China and we have made a deal of playing football together in real life in the near future." Lu said. 11-year-old Pakistani contestant Mustafa Afridi printed the smiling faces of children in the 3 countries in their traditional clothes, with 3 flags of the countries connected

like the ancient silk road. He wishes that friendship between the 3 countries could flourish and prosper. Ahmed Farooq told Gwadar Pro that the three countries have a long history of culture and economic exchanges, and share a bright future. The three sides should strengthen exchanges and cooperation to jointly promote development and regional peace.

New Chinese SUV to be introduced in Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Sazgar Engineering Works Limited (SEWL) is set to introduce a new Chinese SUV brand to Pakistan named HAVAL, Gwadar Pro reported on Monday. SEWL is already in partnership with the Chinese company BAIC. SEWL will now partner with the Great Wall Motors (GWM) of China, which owns an SUV brand called HAVAL, said a news release. HAVAL is famous for its professional SUVs and crossovers. According to reports by Pakwheels.com, the brand currently exports its SUVs to more than 60 countries in the world and more than 5 million people in the world own HAVAL SUVs. SEWL is initially planning to launch the latest generation of two HAVAL SUVs, namely HAVAL H6 and HAVAL Jolion, in the Pakistani market. Sazgar is known for its 3-wheelers in Pakistan. However, the company has been granted a greenfield status under the Auto Development Policy (ADP 2016-21), prompting it to partner with several car manufacturers. HAVAL H6, being one of the highest selling SUVs in the world, features a 2.0-liter Turbo All-Wheel Drive (AWD) with a 7-speed dual-clutch transmission (DCT).

Philippine troops rescue 4 Indonesians from militants

FOREIGN DESK

JAKARTA: The Philippine military has rescued four Indonesian nationals including a 15-year-old boy, who were abducted by Abu Sayyaf militant group in the country's south, according to official statements. In a statement on late Sunday, the Indonesian Foreign Ministry said the Philippine military rescued three hostages on Thursday and the boy, Khairuldin, on Sunday. Abu Sayyaf militant group leader Majan Sahidjuan, also known as Apo Mike, and two others were also killed in Tawi-Tawi province,

the Philippines' southernmost province. The ministry said Khairuldin was examined by the armies of both countries at the Indonesian border crossing station near Bongao city. The statement said all four rescued people are in good health. The four hostages were among five Indonesians kidnapped by Abu Sayyaf group on Jan. 17 last year off the coast of Tambisan in Malaysia. One of them died while trying to escape. Lt. Gen. Corleto Vinluan, commander of the Philippines Western Mindanao Command, in a statement said that a boat belonging

to Abu Sayyaf capsized after being hit by a big wave and it gave security forces the opportunity to rescue three of the four hostages on Thursday. "We are pleased to inform everyone that Mohd Khairuldin, a 15-year-old Indonesian National, was rescued in Kalupug Island, Languyan, Tawi-Tawi at 6:30 [2230GMT Saturday] in the morning today, Sunday," Vinluan said. Apo Mike succumbed to his injuries after a clash with marine troops on Saturday evening, he added. Vinluan said Sahidjuan was the mastermind behind several kidnappings by Abu Sayyaf group, which is

based in the Sulu province and has also been involved in bomb attacks and piracy for decades. "We are happy that all the hostages are safe now and we are also able to neutralize the notorious Apo Mike and two of his comrades," he added. The Foreign Ministry said it will coordinate with the Philippine government for their repatriation process. "Furthermore, the hostages who had been rescued earlier will be taken to Zamboanga before being flown to Manila," it added. The ministry also expressed gratitude to the Philippine government and military for their cooperation.



ISLAMABAD: Col. Murat icli, Head of Department of Culture and Art of the Ministry of National Defence of Turkey and Col. Aydin Erdem, Head of Mehteran Unit (Military Band) visited Turkish embassy Islamabad. Military unit of the Ministry of National Defence of Turkey will attend the 23 March Pakistan Day ceremonies which will be held on 25th March. - DNA

Domestic mobile payment users increased

DNA

BEIJING: Affected by the epidemic, the number of domestic mobile payment users in Pakistan has increased rapidly, says a report published by Gwadar Pro. Quoting Wang Yu, Senior Director of Risk Control Department of a Chinese financial services giant UnionPay, the report stated that it is not taking place at a large scale, but Pakistan has a huge population of youth who can learn this system very fast and use it very well. Digital finance not only changes the means of payment, but also subverts the lifestyle of the whole society.

"On the online side, mobile payment is frequently used for credit card repayment, online shopping, virtual goods, takeaway and other related scenarios. Offline, it's mainly used by small and micro businesses. People over 50 use mobile payments offline, mainly in vegetable markets, supermarkets and brick-and-mortar retail stores," said Wang. As early as 2018, China's Ant Financial Services Group entered the Pakistani digital finance field through TMB. As its parent company Alibaba is headquartered in Zhejiang, this province has become one of the centers of cross-border e-commerce with the help of powerful digital finance.

EU imposes China sanctions over HR abuses

FOREIGN DESK

BRUSSELS: EU foreign ministers meeting in Brussels have approved sanctions over abuses in China, Myanmar and Russia, as the bloc expands measures targeting global rights breaches. The highly symbolic move on Monday is the first time Brussels has hit Beijing over human rights abuses since it imposed an arms embargo in 1989 after Tiananmen Square. The 27 nations imposed sanctions on four Chinese officials accused of responsibility for abuses against Uyghur Muslims in a raft of measures targeting alleged human rights offenders around the world, despite warnings that Beijing could retaliate. The sanctions involve a freeze on their assets in the EU and a ban on them traveling in the bloc. European citizens and companies are not permitted to provide them with financial assistance. China's foreign ministry has warned that Beijing will "react

China hits back at EU with sanctions

FOREIGN DESK

BEIJING: China on Monday blacklisted 10 EU individuals and four entities in response to Brussels' sanctions against Chinese officials over alleged human rights abuses in the Xinjiang region. The Chinese foreign ministry said members of the European Parliament Reinhard Butikofer, Michael Gahler, Raphael Glucksmann, Ilhan Kyuchuk and Miriam Lexmann were among those who "severely harm China's sovereignty and interests and maliciously spread lies and disinformation." The EU had earlier accused Chinese officials of mass detentions of Muslim Uyghurs and human rights abuses in Xinjiang and imposed its first sanctions against Beijing since an arms embargo in 1989 following the Tiananmen Square crackdown.

with a firm hand" against any punishment over its actions in the western Xinjiang region. The measures are part of a package of human rights sanctions targeting a dozen people that also includes individuals in Russia, North Korea, Eritrea, South Sudan and Libya, diplomats said. "This is a very important step

which shows how committed we are," Slovak Foreign Minister Ivan Korcok said. The mechanism - designed to make it easier for the bloc to target rights abusers - was launched this month with sanctions on four Russian officials over the jailing of Kremlin critic Alexey Navalny. Diplomats said the fresh sanc-

tions on Russia will target individuals behind abuses in the country's Chechnya region, which is ruled with an iron-fist by Kremlin loyalist Ramzan Kadyrov. The bloc placed Myanmar junta chief Min Aung Hlaing on an assets freeze and visa ban blacklist over the military coup last

month and crackdown on demonstrators, the bloc's official journal said. "Commander-in-Chief Min Aung Hlaing has been directly involved in and responsible for decision making concerning state functions and is therefore responsible for undermining democracy and the rule of law in Myanmar," the listing said. The EU also slapped asset freezes and visa bans on 11 officials of Myanmar's junta. "What we see there in terms of excesses of violence is absolutely unacceptable," German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said. "That is why we will not be able to avoid imposing sanctions." Myanmar has been in turmoil since the military ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi on February 1, triggering a mass uprising that security forces have sought to crush with a campaign of violence and fear. Diplomats have said businesses tied to the military will likely be placed under sanctions in the coming weeks.

Saudi satellite 'Shaheen Sat' launches

FOREIGN DESK

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's locally made satellites "Shaheen Sat" was launched on Monday along with several others from 18 different countries aboard the Russian Soyuz rocket. Shaheen Sat - one of the two satellites designed and made in Saudi Arabia - will be used for photography and maritime tracking purposes. Among the 38 foreign satellites in total, the Soyuz rocket is carrying Dubai's environment nanosatellite the "Challenge One", the first satellite fully-made in Tunisia. The Challenge One - originally scheduled to launch on the Tunisia's Independence Day on March 20 - will focus on the "Internet of Things" and is a precursor to a constellation of 30 other satellites. The rocket, which included satellites of Germany, South Korea, Japan, Canada, Italy and Brazil, lifted off from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan at 6:07 a.m. GMT. The initial launch was originally scheduled for Saturday but was later postponed to Monday after a surge in voltage was detected.

Over 3 mln Saudis receive vaccine

FOREIGN DESK

RIYADH: More than 3 million people are vaccinated against the coronavirus in Saudi Arabia, making up about 70 percent of citizens and residents who registered to receive the dose, the Ministry of Health announced on Sunday. Over 500 inoculation centers are open around the Kingdom, including in pharmacies, to make sure that everyone has access to them, according to the ministry. No serious side effects of the vaccines have been recorded in the country, health ministry spokesman Mohammed al-Abd al-Ali said, denying claims that a man had died after experiencing complications caused by a dose. Vaccinated people have only reported expected minor side effects, such as a fever, headache, or nausea, he added. When asked about whether the vaccine could affect women who want to conceive, al-Abd al-Ali said that there are no indications that the dose has any effect on plans to get pregnant. Nursing mothers are also eligible to receive the vaccine, he said, adding that research is ongoing to determine whether the vaccine is safe for pregnant women and young children. There are no links between blood clots and any of the approved vaccines in Saudi Arabia, the spokesman also said. Several European countries temporarily halted the use of the AstraZeneca vaccine after reports linking it to blood clots in several people who received it. The World Health Organization's vaccine safety panel said on Friday that available data from AstraZeneca's COVID-19 shot do not point to any overall increase in blood clots, but it would continue to monitor for any adverse effects.

Taiwan loses 2 fighter jets in collision

WEB DESK

TAIPEI: A Taiwanese air force pilot has been killed and another is missing after their fighter jets disappeared in a suspected midair collision off the island's southern coast, officials said. The crash on Monday was the third such incident in the past half-year, at a time when the island's armed forces are having to intercept Chinese aircraft on an almost daily basis. The two F-5E jets disappeared from radar at about 3pm (07:00 GMT) some 2.6km (1.6 miles) off the coast of rural southern Pingtung County, the National Rescue Command Centre said. It added that the fighters, each with one pilot on board, crashed into the sea off the island's southeastern coast after they apparently collided in midair during a training mission. One of the pilots was found unconscious in the sea but could not be resuscitated and was pronounced dead at the hospital.

