



# Islamabad POST

Wednesday, April 21, 2021

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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**UAE extends the \$2 billion loan repayment deadline for Pakistan**

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Sehr & Iftar Timings

CITY	SEHR	IFTAR
ISLAMABAD	03:59 am	06:44 pm
FAISALABAD	04:05 am	06:41 pm
LAHORE	03:59 am	06:36 pm
KARACHI	04:43 am	06:58 pm
SARGODHA	04:05 am	06:44 pm

FIQA JAFARIA

CITY	SEHR	IFTAR
ISLAMABAD	03:49 am	06:55 pm
FAISALABAD	03:55 am	06:51 pm
LAHORE	03:49 am	06:46 pm
KARACHI	04:33 am	06:48 pm
SARGODHA	03:55 am	06:55 pm

## UAE extends loan repayment deadline for Pak

The UAE had, earlier, determined April 19 as the deadline for the loan repayment

NEWS DESK

ABU DHABI: The United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Tuesday granted Islamabad an extension on the due date of the payment of a \$2 billion loan given to Pakistan in 2020. The development came during a meeting between Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi and his UAE counterpart Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan in Abu Dhabi. Sheikh Abdullah informed him about the decision of the UAE government regarding the loan repayment. The UAE had, earlier, determined April 19 as the deadline for the loan repayment. They reviewed the entire gamut of bilateral relations, discussing ways to enhance cooperation in diverse areas including trade, investment, infrastructure, energy, technology, tourism and manpower. Foreign Minister Qureshi thanked the UAE for its continued support and cooperation bilaterally, as well as at the international fora. He lauded the UAE's progress and development over the last five decades, attributing this achievement to the sagacious and visionary leadership of the nation. He also outlined his plans for showcasing the history as well as the future potential of Pakistan-UAE cooperation at EXPO 2020 Dubai in October 2021. Qureshi emphasized the need for nurturing and strengthening people-to-people linkages, as well as removing impediments that hamper travel between the two countries. The foreign ministers also discussed ways to provide fresh impetus to existing Pakistan-UAE ties. In this regard, they agreed to facilitate Ministerial level visits from both sides. Foreign Minister Abdullah acknowledged the valuable role played by Pakistani diaspora in the UAE's growth and prosperity.

## Pakistan appreciates UAE's support: FO

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office spokesperson Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri has said Pakistan greatly appreciates the UAE's continued support and cooperation, especially its decision to roll-over the two billion dollars deposit by the Abu Dhabi Fund. In response to some media queries, he said UAE's decision was conveyed during Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi's just concluded visit to the UAE, which is yet another manifestation of the close cooperative relations between the two countries.

The foreign ministers also exchanged views on regional and global issues of mutual interest. Foreign Minister Qureshi briefed his counterpart on the grave human rights situation in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir and Pakistan's consistent efforts to support the ongoing peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan. Expressing sincere appreciation for UAE's warm hospitality, Foreign Minister Qureshi reiterated his invitation to Foreign Minister Abdullah to visit Pakistan at the earliest opportunity. Foreign Minister Abdullah graciously accepted the invitation.

## Briefs

### FM Qureshi arrives in Tehran

DNA

TEHRAN: Foreign Minister Mehmood Qureshi arrived in Iran on 20-22 April, 2021 at the invitation of Foreign Minister Dr. Javad Zarif. In a video message before departure, Shah Mehmood Qureshi said that the visit will provide him an opportunity to discuss the regional situation with the Iranian leadership. The Foreign Minister thanked the Iranian leadership's categorical stance on Kashmir dispute. The Foreign Minister said both Pakistan and Iran have supported each other in difficult times and it will be our endeavor to further strengthen the relationship. During the visit, the Foreign Minister will hold delegation-level talks with Foreign Minister Zarif on the entire spectrum of bilateral relations with focus on further deepening cooperation in diverse fields.

### Ties with Arab countries improving

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's relations with Arab Islamic countries have improved to a larger extent during last six months and cooperation in all areas have also been increased and reinforced, Special Representative to Prime Minister on Religious Harmony and Middle East Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi said Tuesday. Talking to media persons, he said Pakistan's relations with brotherly UAE (United Arab Emirates) were improving significantly. The UAE has demonstrated its love for the people of Pakistan by extending the time period to pay debt for Pakistan, which hinted at strengthening relations between the two countries.

## Pak to receive 2mn COVID vaccine doses from China

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan will receive two million doses of COVID vaccine from China by April 24, sources in the ministry of national health said on Tuesday. According to sources, the vaccine would start arriving in the country from April 21, and out of two million doses, 1.5 million would be purchased from China while 500,000 would be provided as a gift from the neighbouring friendly country. "The vaccine will arrive in four phases from April 21 to 24," they said adding that three special planes and a PIA flight would be used to bring the COVID doses from China. The doses included 1.5 million vaccines of Sinopharm and 500,000 jabs of Sinovac. It is pertinent to mention here that Pakistan has already begun vaccinating elderly

Continued on Page 06

## COVID-19 claims 137 more lives

ISLAMABAD: The national tally of total active COVID-19 cases recorded 83,298 with 5445 more people tested positive for the deadly virus while 137 more people died from the disease during the last 24 hours. Out of total 137 corona patients died during past 24 hours, of whom 122 were under treatment in hospital and 15 out of the hospital in their respective quarantines or homes, according to the latest update issued by the NCOC. During the last 24 hours most of the deaths had occurred in Punjab followed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Out of the total 137 deaths occurred during last 24 hours, 53 of the deceased had died on ventilators during their treatment. The maximum ventilators were occupied in four major areas including Multan 85 percent, Mardan 95 percent, Gujranwala 88 percent and Lahore 82 percent. The maximum Oxygen beds (alternate oxygen providing facility other than ventilator administered as per medical requirement of COVID patient) were also occupied in four major areas including Gujranwala 85 percent, Peshawar 72 percent, Nowshera 68 percent and Swat 65 percent. Around 549 ventilators were occupied elsewhere in the country while no COVID affected person was on ventilator in, Gilgit Baltistan (GB) and Balochistan. Some 68,002 tests were conducted across the country on Monday, including 14,109 in Sindh, 41,074 in Punjab, 7,027 in KP, 4,233 in ICT, 710 in Balochistan, 247 in GB, and 602 in AJK. - DNA



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Azerbaijan Ali Alizade called on Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi at the Naval Headquarters. - DNA

## Azerbaijan envoy meets Naval Chief

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Azerbaijan Ali Alizade called on Chief of Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi at the Naval Headquarters, Islamabad. The ambassador remained with the Naval Chief for quite some time and discussed matters of mutual interest. Pakistan and Azerbaijan enjoy excellent relations. Pakistan is keen to take part in the rebuilding and rehabilitation process initiated in the recently liberated areas. Both countries support each other on regional as well as global forums. Pakistan wholeheartedly supported Azerbaijan in its war against aggressor Armenia. Likewise Azerbaijan supports Pakistani stand on the issue of Kashmir.

## KSRelief providing medical assistance

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre (KSRelief) has provided humanitarian and development aid to more than 59 countries over four continents. With international, regional and local partners in place in recipient countries to implement our programs and initiatives, we have delivered assistance to millions of beneficiaries worldwide. On the directive of the Custodian of Two Holy Mosques to provide aid to combat the Corona virus to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, KSA is donating several medical items and equipment worth US\$ 1.5 Million. The 3rd wave of corona virus is badly affecting the people of Pakistan. This medical aid will help National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) of Pakistan to combat against this pandemic. The Ambassador of the Custodian of the

## Shehryar Afridi calls on Saudi envoy

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Kashmir Committee Shehryar Khan Afridi called on the Ambassador of Saudi Arabia, Mr Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki, here on Tuesday and exchanged views on matters of mutual interest. Chairman Kashmir Committee Shehryar Khan Afridi also extended congratulations to the Royal family of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on the birth of the son of Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman. Shehryar Khan Afridi lauded the role played by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in taking care of the Pakistanis living in Saudi Arabia in this age of pandemic. Ambassador Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki expressed gratitude to the Chairman Kashmir Committee and said that Pakistan and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia would take their bilateral relations to new highs.

Continued on Page 06

## 'It's your mess' Bilawal tells PM

NAZIR SIYAL



KARACHI: Chairman of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Tuesday said that government did not take parliament into con-

ference over agreement with recently proscribed Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP). PPP Chairman in a tweet said that government took action on streets against the party and then banned it, killed people and over 500 policemen sustained injuries. Bilawal further said that government closed inter-

net and PM Imran Khan didn't make any statement in the National Assembly nor it was taken into confidence at any stage and now Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) wants to hide behind NA. PPP Chairman said this mess has been created by the government and asked PM Imran Khan to solve the issue or resign from the post.

## Ban on TLP to stay

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: The government has decided that the proscribed Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) will remain banned and the murder cases against its workers will not be withdrawn. This was revealed in a parliamentary party briefing by Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid and the Minister of Religious Affairs Noor-ul-Haq Qadri on negotiations with the TLP. The parliamentary party meeting was chaired by Prime Minister Imran Khan. It was briefed that no decision has been taken to lift the ban against Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) and it will remain in force. The meeting was told that the proscribed party's leader Saad Rizvi has been released under Maintenance of Public Order (MPO) Ordinance. However, the murder cases against TLP workers are not being withdrawn.

## TLP protest ends as National Assembly takes up resolution

The resolution moved by Amjid Ali Khan of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf condemned the publication of blasphemous caricatures by the French magazine Charlie Hebdo in September last year

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: A resolution was tabled in the National Assembly on Tuesday demanding a debate on the issue of expulsion of French ambassador from Pakistan. The banned TLP then announced to end its Lahore protest saying its demand had been met. Interior Minister Shaikh Rashid Ahmed will hold an important press conference today to further share details of the so called agreement with the banned outfit. The resolution moved by Amjid Ali Khan of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf condemned the publication of blasphemous caricatures by the French magazine Charlie Hebdo in September last

## NA to resume debate on Friday

ZUBAIR AHMED

ISLAMABAD: A session of the National Assembly to debate on a resolution calling for the protection of the sanctity of the Prophethood of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was held in Islamabad on Tuesday and attended by all major political parties except for the PPP which boycotted it. The session was adjourned by Speaker Asad Qaiser without any major inroads made and will resume on Friday, April 23, at 11am. He called upon the government and the Opposition to sit down together in the meanwhile and formulate a unanimous resolution.

encouraging the elements

hurting the sentiments of hundreds of millions of Muslims in the name of freedom of expression. The resolution also called for apprising the European countries, especially France, of the gravity of this matter. It sought detailed discussions with all the Muslim countries to take up issue jointly on international forums. The resolution further stated, "This House also demands that the state should decide matters of international relations and no person, group or party can exert unnecessary illegal pressure in this regard."

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## Briefs

LHC adjourns  
Kh Asif's bail  
petition

DNA

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Tuesday adjourned the hearing of a bail petition filed by Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz senior leader Khawaja Muhammad Asif, in money laundering and assets beyond means case till next week.

The division bench comprising Justice Aalia Neelum and Justice Farooq Haider heard the petition filed by Khawaja Asif.

The bench was appraised at the start of proceedings that National Accountability Bureau (NAB) had filed its reply to the bail petition.

To this, Justice Aalia Neelum asked the defence counsel whether he read the reply. The counsel stated in affirmative, saying that he had read the reply.

However, Justice Aalia Neelum observed that the reply was not available in the file of other member of bench.

She questioned NAB prosecutor whether the bureau did not submit two copies of its reply.

Subsequently, the bench adjourned the matter for next week and directed the NAB prosecutor for submitting another copy of the reply. Khawaja Asif had filed the petition, stating that the bureau had launched investigations against him on the charges of assets beyond means and money laundering. He submitted that all allegations were baseless. He pleaded with the court to grant him post-arrest bail.

Forest deptt  
sets up  
nurseries

FAISALABAD: The forest department has set up nurseries comprising nine different varieties of environment-friendly saplings for spring tree plantation drive in district Toba Tek Singh. Divisional Forest Officer Muhammad Ali Butt said here Tuesday that tree plantation in district Toba Tek Singh was in full swing like others districts of the division, adding that saplings would be available at Rs 2 per plant in nurseries. He said in Kamalia plantation subdivision range headquarters Kamalia 183,855 saplings of different varieties, including Acacia, Sheesham, had been put on display for sale to the general public. — APP

Two dacoits  
killed, three  
fled after  
encounters

DNA

FAISALABAD: Two dacoits were killed while three others fled after police encounters at two sites on Tuesday.

A police spokesman said two bandits snatched cash and mobile phones from citizens near Sandal College on Faisal Bajwa Road and escaped. On information, policemen chased the outlaws and opened firing on them.

In retaliation, the police killed robber Zaheer Ahmad received serious injuries and died on way to hospital while his accomplice fled.

Meanwhile, policemen ordered for surrendering three accused near Chak No110-JB on Link Road but they opened firing on them. During an encounter, Kashif died on the spot whereas his two accomplices fled. The police took the body and weapons with a motorcycle into custody and started a search for other accused.

846 shopping malls,  
schools sealed

The district administration sealed 846 shopping malls, restaurants, marriage halls and private schools over violation of the anti-coronavirus SOPs and the lockdown rules during the past 17 days in the district. Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ali said on Thursday that anti-coronavirus SOPs were being implemented in letter and spirit in district.

He said that during the past 17 days, the administration sealed 56 private schools, 565 shopping malls/ plazas, 188 restaurants and 37 marriage halls.

Govt fulfills agreement by  
presenting resolution in NA

Martyrdom of five policemen could not be forgotten, who had sacrificed their lives in line of duty, while 800 other personnel were attacked and wounded during the protests by the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hussain on Tuesday said the government had fulfilled the agreement by presenting a resolution in the National Assembly where a parliamentary procedure had to be adopted. Briefing media persons outside the Parliament House about the Federal Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Imran Khan, he said the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) had objected to the text of the resolution. Other parties had the right of disagreement and the government could not dictate to

them, he added. Special Assistant to the PM on Political Communication Shahbaz Gill also accompanied him during the media talk. Fawad said whatever was to be done, had to be within the ambit of the 1973 Constitution. The decision of declaring Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) as a proscribed organization could not be reversed, however its leadership had the option of going for an appeal.

"The government acts in accordance with the Constitution as no monarchy is in place in the country," he remarked.

The minister said the cases against those, who had attacked the police personnel and martyred five of them,



would not be withdrawn, which they would have to contest in the courts of law. The minister said martyrdom of five policemen could not be forgotten, who had sacrificed their lives in line of duty, while 800 other personnel were attacked and wounded during the protests by the TLP. Those arrested under the

Maintenance of Public Order could be released by the government, he added.

Fawad strongly condemned the attitude of PML-N leader Shahid Khaqan Abbasi towards the National Assembly Speaker during the session.

It was unfortunate that he had been the country's prime minister, but had al-

ways adopted a hypocritical attitude and did not know how to address the Speaker, he said talking to the media after the National Assembly session.

Referring to the PML-N leaders, Fawad said, "For them chairs have come down, they haven't gone up and they have not reached these positions in terms of mental qualities." All the members should adopt a polite attitude in the Parliament, he stressed. The minister expressed the hope that the PML-N itself would condemn Khaqan Abbasi's statement against the Speaker.

Fawad said the national institutions were destroyed in the past when the opposition parties were in power.

The opposition parties, he said, tried their best to sell the PDM's (Pakistan Democratic Movement) chooran (digestive mixture) and overthrow the government but failed. Their duplicity had rather been exposed as they were fighting for Islamabad and not for Islam, he added.

The minister said the Parliament should not be made a 'wrestling arena'. The opposition should not make fun of the Parliament through their inappropriate words and acts, he added.

He accused the opposition leaders of having hypocritical conduct as they were posing that it were they who had the pain for all the problems of Pakistan in their hearts.

236 bags  
sugar  
seized from  
Sammundri

DNA

FAISALABAD: Assistant Commissioner Samundri Faisal Sultan cracked down against the sugar mafia and seized 236 bags of sugar weighing 50 kg from the house of a man named Saleem in a village of 473 GB. Talking to media, Assistant commissioner said that the seized sugar weighed 11,800 kg which was to be sold in the black market. He said that the black mafia creates a shortage of sugar in the market and then sell it at high prices and such sugar mafia would never be forgiven. Later a team under the supervision of Assistant Commissioner Sadar Umar Maqbool took action on storage of sugar in Chak 251 RB and seized 40 bags of sugar from a private house which will be sold in the general market at official rates. The Assistant Commissioner Sadar said that sugar hoarders will be dealt strictly.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan chairs the meeting of Federal Cabinet in Islamabad on Tuesday. — DNA

PM committed  
to reunited  
Muslim Ummah:  
Governor Sarwar

LAHORE: Governor Punjab Chaudhry Mohammad Sarwar has said that Prime Minister Imran Khan is custodian of the honor of Holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) and represents the whole ummah.

In a statement issued from the Governor's House here on Tuesday, he said the Muslims have an unflinching faith to protect the honor of the Last Prophet of Allah, Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) and no compromise is possible in this matter, adding that love of Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) is part of Muslim's faith. — DNA

Police held 15  
for gambling

DNA

FAISALABAD: Factory Area police have arrested 15 people on charge of gambling during the last 24 hours.

Police said on Tuesday that police team raided at Sir Syed Town, Nazim Abad, Rehmania Road and Samanabad and arrested Rasheed, Naveed and thirteen others red handed while gambling on playing cards.

The police also recovered stake money, mobile phones and other paraphernalia from their possession.

**Girl recovered; kidnapper held**

City Jarawalwa police claimed on Tuesday to have recovered a teenaged girl who was kidnapped four months ago.

Police said on Tuesday that Laiba (15) resident of Ali Colony was abducted from Al-Hafiz Garden on December 14, 2020. The police after registering a case started investigation and traced the whereabouts of the kidnappers in a rented house near Fish Farm and Sheroana Bridge.

A police team headed by SHO City Jarawalwa Rana Asghar conducted a raid and succeeded in recovering the girl safe and sound from the clutches of abductors. The police have also arrested an accused.

Master Motors  
introduces  
Changan M9  
Sherpa

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: One of Pakistan's leading automobile companies, Master Changan Motors Limited is proud to announce the dubbing of its pickup M9 as 'Sherpa'. Master Group has always taken pride in operating and serving the people of Pakistan and Muhammad Ali Sadpara outshines the definition of an ordinary man. Sadpara is the only Pakistani who ventured to climb on 8 out of 14 world's highest mountains. He was part of the team (which included Italian alpinist Simone Moro) that completed the first-ever winter ascent to the summit of Nanga Parbat in 2016. His exemplary endeavors are praised by the international mountaineer community, and he will always be remembered as a hero in Pakistan.

According to Sadpara's peers, he is a climber who is tough as a nail and a "jolly good fellow". Due to his resilient nature, he accomplished to climb 148,000-meter peaks and he has helped countless summit seekers achieve their dreams all the while carrying considerable loads on mountain gateways. Similarly, Changan pickup M9 has supported numerous individuals and business owners to transport items from one place to another in a safe and reliable way. Hence, it seems befitting to dub this vehicle as a 'Sherpa' to commemorate the expeditions of Muhammad Ali Sadpara. As part of the Master Group, one of Pakistan's leading industrial brands, Master Changan Motors has always taken pride in lauding Pakistani heroes and legends.

Master Changan Motors is now proud to introduce the M9 pickup, dubbed the 'Sherpa' as a tribute to the incredible Pakistani mountaineer M. Ali Sadpara, who went missing and was declared dead during an expedition to the K2 Summit.

DC Sargodha for action  
against profiteers

MEHBOOB AHIR

SARGODHA: Deputy Commissioner Naila Baqir directed the price magistrates to launch strict action against profiteers during the holy month of Ramadan. Addressing a meeting of price magistrate and traders here on Tuesday, she said that those involved in profiteering and hoarding would be dealt with an iron hand. She warned that price magistrate would be responsible for dearth in their respective areas, if they failed to control overcharging. The DC ordered to sell sugar at controlled rate in the market.

Naila Baqir appealed to the grocers to sell commodities at controlled rates.

**Man killed in road accident**

A man was killed and another was injured in a collision

between a Hyundai vehicle and a passenger coach in Sahiwal police precincts.

Police sources said on Tuesday that the accident took place at Sultanpur Road near Sahiwal. As a result, driver of Hyundai, Shaftaq, died on-the-spot, while another person, Faisal, sustained severe injuries. Police shifted the body and the injured to a local hospital.

**Six held with narcotics**

The police arrested six accused and recovered narcotics and illegal weapons on Tuesday. The police said different police stations conducted raids and arrested the accused with 3.120 kg hashish and three pistols.

The accused were identified as Muhammad Junaid, Kamran Hassan, Muhammad Shabbir, Abu Bakr and others.

Separate cases were registered against the accused.

DC Faisalabad visits 'Sabzi  
Mandi' monitors bidding process

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ali was visiting vegetable market early in the morning on daily basis to examine bidding process of fruits and vegetables so that prices are kept under control. He visited vegetable market Ghulam Muhammadabad and check prices, availability and records of fruits and vegetables. He instructed market committee to be there at bidding process to control over pricing of commodities. He also checked availability and quality of lemon, tomatoes and other items. He also examined Corona SOPs and instructed strictly to wear face masks to increase security for the safety of buyers and sellers. Assistant Commissioner City Syed Ayub Bukhari, Extra As-



sistant Director Agriculture Muhammad Usman and other officers were also there.

**Flour sale continues at Rs.375 per 10 kg**

The process of selling 10kg heavy weighted bags of flour at the subsidized rate of Rs 375 in 19 Sasta Ramadan bazaars in the district is being continued and a total of 26962 bags were sold yesterday. According to details in Akbar Chowk Gulistan Colony last Ramadan Bazaar 912 bags were sold.

Similarly, 912 bags were sold in Chatri Wali ground Jinnah Colony, 1350 bags in Faizan Madina Chowk Susan Road Ramzan Bazaar, 1464 bags in Fawara Chowk Batala Colony near Kashmir Park People's Colony No. 2, 1875 bags in Ramzan Bazaar in Iron Market D-Type Colony, 3496 bags in Kaleem Shaheed Park Narwala Road, 852 bags in Ramzan Bazaar in Millat Road Green Town Stop near Star Petroleum and CNG,



HYDERABAD: Hindu women's are busy in praying during the Nivratri day at a local temple of the city. — DNA Photo by Jan Ali Laghari

FCCI welcomes  
appointment of Shaukat  
Khan Tareen as FM

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) President Engineer Hafiz Ehtasham Javed welcomed the appointment of Mr. Shaukat Tareen as new finance minister and hoped that he would not only protect the national interest but also revived the economy on positive and sustainable basis. He said that reshuffle in cabinet is a normal procedure and Prime Minister Imran

Khan could nominate and hand over specific responsibilities to any cabinet member according to his needs and the capability of the concerned minister. "The approach of the Prime Minister is holistic and comprehensive", he said and added that PM choice should not be analyzed in one's individual perspective. About Mr. Shaukat Tarin, he hoped that he would restructure the economy on solid and sound footings so that the ultimate national objective could be achieved.

## Chairman NAB reviews data of NAB Lahore

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Justice Javed Iqbal, Chairman National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Tuesday chaired a meeting to review performance of NAB Lahore especially conviction made under Section 10 of National Accountability Ordinance (NAO) during the year 2018 to 2020. Maj (R) Shahzad Saleem, DG NAB Lahore informed that under the dynamic leadership of Justice Javed Iqbal, during the year 2018 to 2020. According to a press statement, the persons were convicted by the learned Accountability Courts, Lahore under section 10 of NAO-1999.

The detail of persons convicted under section 10 of NAO-1999 during 2020 is as under: 1. State Vs Muhammad Tahir Khan, ac-

cused Muhammad Tahir Khan was convicted by the Accountability Court on 21.04.2020 with a fine of 45,000 Ponds.

2. State Vs Faisal Kamran, Khurram Qureshi etc, accused Faisal Kamran was convicted by the Accountability Court on 04.09.2020 with a fine of Rs. 33.1 million. 3. State Vs Faisal Kamran, Khurram Qureshi etc, accused Khurram Qureshi was convicted by the Accountability Court on 04.09.2020 with a fine of Rs. 33.1 million.

4. State Vs Nazir Ahmed Khan etc, accused Nazir Ahmed was convicted by the Accountability Court on 28.10.2020 with a fine of Rs. 5.119 million. 5. State Vs Nazir Ahmed Khan etc, accused Nazir Ahmed was convicted by the Accountability Court on 28.10.2020 with a fine of Rs. 7.288 million. 6. State Vs Nazir Ahmed Khan etc,

accused Nazir Ahmed was convicted by the Accountability Court on 28.10.2020 with a fine of Rs. 24.706 million. 7. State Vs Nazir Ahmed Khan etc, accused Nazir Ahmed was co

8. State Vs Nazir Ahmed Khan etc, accused Nazir Ahmed was convicted by the Accountability Court on

28.10.2020 with a fine of Rs. 28.06 million. 9. State Vs Zaheer Nasir etc, accused Zaheer Nasir was convicted by the Accountability Court on 25.11.2020 with a fine of Rs. 1.5 million.

10. State Vs Zaheer Nasir etc, accused Maqsood Ahmed was convicted by the Accountability Court on 25.11.2020 with a fine of Rs. 1.5 million.

11. State Vs Zaheer Nasir etc, accused Zeeshan Ahmed was convicted by the Accountability Court on 25.11.2020 with a fine of Rs. 1.5 million.

12. State Vs Asad Kamran, accused Adnan Qayum was convicted by the Accountability Court on 21.12.2020 with a fine of Rs. 7.2 million. 13. State Vs Asad Kamran, accused Sulman Farooq was convicted by the Accountability Court on 21.12.2020 with a fine of Rs. 7.2 million.

14. State Vs Asad Kamran, accused Sulman Farooq was convicted by the Accountability Court on 21.12.2020 with a fine of Rs. 7.2 million.

## Briefs

### 764 more persons get COVID jabs

SHAHEEN HANIF

RAWALPINDI: The total district tally of coronavirus vaccination on Tuesday reached to 62,959 with inoculation of 764 more persons against the deadly virus during the last 24 hours.

Deputy Commissioner Capt. (R) Anwar UlHaq informed this during his visit to the Corona vaccination center here at the Sports complex.

He said that during the last 24 hours in its ongoing drive to check violation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) at shopping centers, four shopping centers were sealed and a fine of Rs 35,500 was imposed on them.

The teams also carried out an inspection of 12 marriage halls and 68 restaurants and sealed four restaurants over the violation besides imposing a fine of Rs 21,400 on them, he added.

The DC said that the 3rd wave of the COVID-19 pandemic was more deadly than the previous in Pakistan as the number of COVID-19 patients was increasing rapidly in the district.

Anwar said that if "we want to defeat the COVID-19, we must follow the SOPs regarding it, including wearing face mask, maintaining social distance and avoiding crowded places"

### Mechanism in place to monitor sugar prices

IBRAR KHAN

RAWALPINDI: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Capt. Anwar UlHaq Tuesday said an effective mechanism was in place to monitor the prices of essential commodities especially sugar in order to provide relief to the consumers during the holy month of Ramzan.

During a visit to Ramzanasta bazaar set up at Choor Chowk, he said the required stock of sugar has been provided to dealers and no scarcity or artificial price hike would be tolerated in this regard.

He said stern action would be taken against those shopkeepers involved in hoarding, profiteering and adulteration.

Anwar said that an effective system was also in place for uninterrupted supply of Sugar, fruit and vegetable at the designated sale points.

### 22,285 confirmed cases reported

DNA

RAWALPINDI: With 210 new cases reported during the last 24 hours in the city, the number of totals COVID 19 infected patients reached to 22,285 including 20,546 from Rawalpindi and 1739 from other districts.

According to data issued by the District Health Authority, "Presently 206 confirmed patients were admitted to various facilities of the city including 31 admitted in Holy Family Hospital, 21 in Benazir Bhutto Hospital, 125 in Institute of Urology, 21 in Fauji Foundation Hospital, three in Hearts international hospital and two in district headquarter hospital." The report showed that among patients reported during last 24 hours, 46 belonged to Rawal Town, 52 to Potohar town, 33 to Rawalpindi Cantt, 13 to Gujar Khan, 22 to Taxila, 12 to Kahuta, eight to Murree, 10 to KalarSyeda, three to Kotlissattian, three to Islamabad, Two to Azad Jammu and Kashmir and one each from Chakwal, Attock, MandiBahuddin and Vehari. Only seven patient have been died during the last 24 hours including six from Rawalpindi and one from another district, he added.

## Sanjrani seeks report on violation of tax exemption

The report was sought by the Chairman Senate after a meeting of a 40 member's delegation of industrialists from ex FATA with the Chairman



ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani has sought a report from Ministry of Finance, FBR and Ministry of Law on violation of tax exemption extended to traders and investors of erstwhile FATA through a legislative process in the Parliament. The report was sought by the Chairman Senate after a meeting of a 40 member's delegation of industrialists from ex FATA with the Chairman here at Parliament House on Tuesday.

The delegation apprised the Chairman senate that after the merger of FATA in 2018, tax exemption

was given for 5 years, but on the contrary, through various tactics, the steel and Ghee industry has been deprived of this exemption in the Finance Bill 2019. Chairman Senate assure the delegation that relevant Ministers and representatives of concerned Ministries and departments would be called for a meeting to solution of the issue. The delegation while apprising the Senate Chairman regarding the behavior of FBR said that the board does not facilitate nor give concessions as per law. The trader's delegation told the Chairman that after the integration of FATA in 2018, tax exemption was given for 5 years but on the contrary

and playing various tactics, the steel and Ghee industry has been deprived of this exemption in the Finance bill 2019. "The most ironic is that all kinds of bank accounts of the business class associated with these industries have been frozen", the delegation apprised the Chairman. Due to the unwanted behavior of the concerned authority, more than 40 steel units and some units of Ghee industries were shut down, left thousands unemployed. Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani assured the delegation that their rights would never be compromised in any way and tax exemption for 5 years will be ensured accord-

ingly and in line with Law. The Chairman Senate has sought a report from the Ministry of Law, Ministry of Finance, and FBR in this regard and in the light of the demands of the trade delegation. The Chairman Senate ensured the delegation that after two days, Ministers and representatives of concerned Ministries and Institutions will be called for sorting out an appropriate solution of the prevailing issue. He further added that the Prime Minister of Pakistan has also, on several occasions directed the concerned ministries to provide concessions for the promotion of trade activities and development of industries in the Ex-FATA to

develop these areas at par with other parts of the country. However, the law passed by the concerned departments against the industries of the erstwhile FATA is being violated which will be allowed in any case, the Chairman assured. The Chairman Senate asked the delegation to remain optimistic about the resolution of the matter and focus on promoting business activities and creating jobs in erstwhile FATA. He said that the business community of EX-FATA should also be fully prepared for the post-concession situation so that they could compete with the industries established in other parts of the country.

## CDA collects 3,000 tons garbage from federal capital



ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) administration is using its own resources to clean up the city. In this regard, a total of 3000 tons of garbage is collected from all over the city in which 1600 tons of garbage is being collected daily from the sectoral area while 1400 tons of garbage is being collected and disposed from the suburbs and rural areas of Islamabad.

According to the details, the present administration of the Capital Development Authority (CDA) is striving to modernize and improve the san-

itation system in the city. What's up, In the said suburbs, Sohan, Pandorian, Zia Masjid, Khanna Bridge, Lehtar Road, Tarlai, Tramri and other areas are using their resources to collect 1400 tons of garbage daily. On the other hand, control the sanitation situation in the city. The company has 2100 laborers.

At present, the company has 7 Garbage Compactors, 9 Dumpers, 6 Buckets, 2 Mechanical Sweepers, 7 Skip Lifters, 2 Excavators, a Suzuki Mini Dumper, 3 Shehzar Mini Dumpers, 4 Suzuki Mini Dumpers, 1500

Garbage in different markets. 1200 Garbage Trolleys One Ton Capacity, 200 Garbage Skip 13 Ton Capacity have been placed at different places of the city to keep the city clean, and there are other missionaries including blades. The Sanitation Department cleans streets, neighborhoods, houses and main highways on a daily basis, while rural and suburban areas of the city are cleaned after a gap of two to three days.

The Capital Development Authority (CDA) strives to provide modern facilities to the citizens. - DNA

## Minimum Fitrana fixed at Rs140 per person

MEHMOOD ABDULLAH

ISLAMABAD: This year's minimum Sadaqa-e-Fitr or Fitrana, an obligatory charitable donation all Muslims are required to pay during Ramazan, has been set at Rs140 per person, said former Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee Chairman Mufti Muneer Rehman on Tuesday. Under the Islamic Shariah, the rate for Fitrana per person can be based on one of the prices of flour, dates, raisin, cheese, or barley. The minimum amount that should be given in charity is Rs140 with respect to wheat, in accordance with barley it is Rs320, with respect to price of dates and raisins it is Rs960 and 1,920 respectively. The Fidy amount needed to be paid for the 30 days with respect to wheat price is Rs8,400; with respect to barley Rs19,200; with respect to dates Rs57,600; and with respect to raisins Rs115,200. Sadaqa-tul-Fitr, also known as Zakatul-Fitr, is a small amount of food to be given in charity before Eid-ul-Fitr prayers. It is not advisable to pay after Eid prayer. However, if a person has failed to pay Fitrana at proper time, then he/she should pay it as soon as possible. This amount is separate from the annual payment of Zakat, which is one of the pillars of Islam. Unlike Zakat, which is calculated annually as a percentage of extra wealth, the Sadaqa-tul-Fitr is to be paid equally by every Muslim man, woman and child. Islam obliges its followers to pay the required amount to the most deserving people including relatives or neighbors before offering the Eid prayers to ensure that monies donated are able to be distributed amongst those most in need in order for them to join in with Eid celebrations. "The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) ordained Zakat ulFitr (Fitrana) to purify the fasting person from indecent words or actions, and to provide food for the needy. It is accepted as Zakat for the person who gives it before the Eid prayer; but it is a mere Sadaqah for the one who gives it after the prayer."

## Unity needed for political challenges

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Senator Aoun Abbas Buppi on Tuesday stressed upon the need of nation unity to counter the current political challenges in the country. All political parties need to rise above their political interests and work unitedly to end incidents of blasphemy, he said while talking to a private news channel. He said the government was pursuing a policy of dialogue and reconciliation, adding, government only wants to hold a national debate with the consensus of all political parties to discuss the issue of blasphemy and its laws. He said every citizen had deep love for the Prophet (PBUH), adding "such devotion must not be misused". He said there should be no two opinions that all the parliamentarians were Aashiq-e-Rasool (SAW) but nobody would be allowed to resort to violence. "The Muslim world must also play its role for bringing peace in the world and counter Islam phobia, adding, all Muslim countries should play their active role according to the spirit of Islam and guide the humanity." Islamic scholars in country to show Muslims right path because it is their responsibility. "It is unfortunate that today we are divided into different sects," Senator added.

## Dr. Sania calls on Finance Minister Shaukat Khan Tarin

RAJA PERVAIZ

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Sania Nishtar, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety / Chairperson BISP called on the Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Shaukat Tarin at the Finance Division today. Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Revenue Dr. Waqar Masood and Secretary Finance Division also participated in the meeting. The SAPM on Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety / Chairperson BISP briefed the Finance Minister about working of flagship Ehsaas Emergency Cash Program regarding direct cash transfers to under-privileged women



amid COVID-19 pandemic. At present, the program provides Rs. 12,000/- each to more than 15 million deserving families.

The SAPM also outlined the provision of subsidies for Ehsaas beneficiaries through a chain of Utility Stores outlets across Pakistan and local grocery stores. The underlying rationale is to support the under-privileged and mar-

ginalized households through targeted subsidization policy with focus on poverty reduction and women empowerment.

The Finance Minister commended Ehsaas program as one of the largest social protection programs in the world which is critically acclaimed by the development partners including IMF, WB and ADB. Pakistan's landmark Ehsaas Emergency Cash program has played a significant role in mitigating the economic hardships of the marginalized groups of the society.

The Finance Minister affirmed support and facilitation to Ehsaas program and urged to replace untargeted subsidies with targeted ones to make it more sustainable in the long run.

## EVM to be remodeled as per int'l standards

The committee members included Joint Electronic Advisor (JEA), MoST, Principal Research Officer, NIE, Dr. Kamran Latif, Research Officer, NIE, Noman Ali and a representative from COMSATS University

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: National Institute of Electronics (NIE) will incorporate the latest features in its locally manufactured Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) following the international standards to ensure its effectiveness for making the elections totally transparent and preventing any chance of rigging. This was revealed by the Director General NIE, Abdul Majeed Soomro in an interview with APP on Tuesday. The DG informed that the Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST) has formed a five member committee under the chairmanship of Managing Director National Radio and Telecommunication Corporation (NRTC), Tofique Ahmed to prepare a proto-type of the EVM within a month, keeping in view the demands and requirements of

Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). The committee members included Joint Electronic Advisor (JEA), MoST, Principal Research Officer, NIE, Dr. Kamran Latif, Research Officer, NIE, Noman Ali and a representative from COMSATS University. Soomro conveyed that the ECP being End-user has been requested by the ministry to provide demands/ requirements/specifications of the EVM to be indigenously developed. Giving the historical perspective, the DG briefed that the first version of EVM was developed in the year 2015 when Election Commission of Paki-

stan (ECP) decided to use this technology for conducting elections and floated a tender, inviting different companies for its production.

NIE participated in the tender along with many other international companies but the decision could not be made at that time. Since then, NIE had been working on this technology on its own along with incorporating the latest features in it as per the modern requirements. The machine will be further improved as per recommendations of the committee and will be finally presented for trials, Soomro said. The DG informed that the EVM comprised

over three components (machines) including Ballot box which print the ballot paper and keep its record secretly, Vote Casting Unit which has electronic symbols and a Control Unit which will be used by ECP to operate the procedure and get the results. Since the technology had been developed keeping in view the importance of data security and accuracy of election results, the results gathered through EVM can be double checked and verified through ballot paper printed within the machine which would eliminate any chances of rigging. The EVM will show the total number of votes as well as the number of votes bagged by different political parties soon after closing of the voting process. The software and hardware of EVM has been purely developed by this institute and its software security is encrypted data which cannot be accessed by others.

## CDA retrieves 20 kanal state land

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The administration of Capital Development Authority (CDA) on Tuesday conducted operation against illegal constructions and encroachments at H-9 Kachiabadi and almost 20 kanal of state land was retrieved.

According to detail, the administration of CDA is continuously conducting operations against encroachments and illegal constructions.

In this regard, the operation was conducted at H-9 KachiAbadi under the supervision of the department of Enforcement. Heavy machinery of the department was used in the operation.

More than 20 kanal government's land was retrieved during the operation and six boundary walls were also demolished.

Administration of CDA vowed to continuously conduct such operations in coming days.

## 11 schools fail to achieve enrollment targets

FAISAL MUNIR

ATTOCK: District Education Authority Attock Tuesday decided to initiate proceedings under PEEDA Act 2006 (amended 2017) against the heads of 11 boys high schools for not achieving enrollment targets.

The copy of the letter available to media, states that on the basis of material placed before DEO (SE) Attock, it is concluded that negligence on the part of the heads towards their obligatory duties has been proved against them and punitive proceedings should be initiated vide PEEDA Act 2006 on charges of misconduct and inefficiency against them.

The school heads against whom punitive proceedings will be initiated include head of GBHS (Govt Boys High School) Kot-Sundki, GBHS Fatehullah, GBHS Pourmiana, GBHS Bhoigar, GBHS Mahoor, GBHS Maira Sharif, GBHS Saghri, GBHS Injra, GBHS PindSultani, GBHS GulialKalan and GBHS Barwala.

## NCM differs with Shoab Suddle's report

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The National Commission for Minorities (NCM) does not agree with the contents of Dr. Shoab Suddle's one Man Commission report. Rejecting the report, Chairman NCM Chela Ram Kewalani said that the report indeed have quite contrary views as comparing to the commission.

Commenting on a news item published in a local daily, Kewalani clarified that the National Minorities Commission comprising eminent and educated personalities from the Hindu, Sikh, Christian, Parsi and Kailash communities was working independently and "One Man Commission" comprising Dr. Shoab Suddle was working separately.

The report published in a section of media last day on the uniform national curriculum was not of NCM but it was submitted by the One Man Commission, said Kewalani. Indeed, the creation of a uniform national curriculum was a commendable and historic step of the present government.

Rafiq Tahir from National Curriculum Council, had been specially invited to the last meeting for a briefing. The members of the National Minorities Commission unanimously praised the efforts of the National Curriculum Council as a commendable and historic step.

## Briefs

## CEO IESCO to hold online katchary on Wednesday

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) Chaudhary Abdul Razaq will hold online katchary on Wednesday to address consumers' complaints. The IESCO Spokesman said that the CEO would listen to the consumers' complaints on telephone number 051-9253105 during 10:30 am to 12:30 pm. The valued customers of Islamabad, Rawalpindi City, Rawalpindi Cantt, Attock, Jhelum Chakwal Circle and surrounding areas are requested to participate in open katchary for immediate solution of their complaints and for submission of their valuable suggestions.

## IESCO issues power suspension programme

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Tuesday issued a power suspension programme for Wednesday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 06:00 AM to 10:00 AM, Capital Steel, New PTN, Fazal Rahbar, Pothohar Steel, I-10/4, Kataria, Khayaban-e-Sir Syed, Farash Town, Karpa, Tufail Shaheed, Club-1, Treat, CM Pak, Rahara, Bahria Enclave, PHA, ISI, Park Enclave, Chatta, Comst University, Al-Rizwan Mill, Al-Qadir Mill, Chakral, Sarkal, Sarpak Feeders and surrounding areas.

## Operation conducted, 41 hotels searched

IBRAR KHAN

RAWALPINDI: Police have conducted a search operation from Marir Hassan to Faizabad to maintain law & order, informed police spokesman. During the search operation, 41 hotels were searched and inmates were questioned. The operation was carried out on the special directives of City Police Officer Muhammad Ahsan Younis while led SP CIA Tariq Mehbob and SDPOs, including SH0 Waris Khan, SH0 City, SH0 New Town, SH0 Sadiqabad, Elite Force, Ladies Police and other law enforcement agencies also participated. City Police Officer CPO Muhammad Ahsan Younis said that the purpose of the search operation to maintain law and order and to ensure implementation of the National Action Plan. The perpetrators should be held adding that operations will continue against such anti-social elements.

## AIUO postpones BA exams in Dist Poonch

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIUO) has postponed final examinations of BA (Associate Degree) in District Poonch, AJK till further orders. This decision was taken in the light of COVID-19 lock down imposed by Office of the District Education Schools, Poonch Rawalakot (AJ&K) in all schools of District Poonch from April 16 - April 28. According to the details, BA (Associate Degree) final examinations were scheduled to commence in District Poonch from April 19 like other parts of Azad Kashmir and rest of the country. However, these examinations of autumn 2020 semester have been postponed in the examination centers including 529, 540, 541, 542, 543 and 549 in District Poonch.

## ICCI, NUML ink accord to promote industry-academia linkages

By signing the MoU, both sides have agreed to work together to create linkages between industry and academia and promote research culture in industry to boost industrialization in the region and produce demand-driven graduates for the industry

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) and the National University of Modern Languages (NUML) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to promote linkages between industry and academia and undertake joint research initiatives for the benefit of the industrial sector. Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan President ICCI and Dr. M. Zubair Iqbal, Pro-Rector, Research & Strategic Initiatives (R&SI) signed the MoU during a ceremony held at NUML University, Fatma Azim Senior Vice President, Abdul Rehman Khan Vice President ICCI, Rector NUML Major General Muhammad Jaffar HI (M) (Retd), Director General NUML/Pro-Rector Plan-



ning and Resources Brig Muhammad Badr Malik, Pro-Rector Academics Prof. Dr. Safeer Awan, Deans, Aslam Khokhar, Umar Hussain, Hafiz Bilal Munir, Omair Khattak and others were also present at the occasion.

By signing the MoU, both sides have agreed to work together to create linkages between industry and academia and promote research culture in industry to boost industrialization in the region and produce demand-driven graduates for

the industry. ICCI would also facilitate the job placement of NUML students in its member companies besides providing them internship opportunities in local industries. NUML will include the sitting President ICCI or his

nominee in its Corporate Advisory Board to get valuable input for development study programs and taking initiatives for creating strong partnership between NUML and ICCI. Speaking at the occasion, Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan,

President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry said that strong industry-academia linkages were of vital importance to conduct research projects for industry to help it in producing value added products in order to improve exports. He said that universities should focus on applied research with a focus to resolve the key issues of industry and enhance industrial efficiency to make it more competitive for exports promotion. He hoped that the MoU signed between ICCI and NUML would be a step in the right direction to promote sustainable industry-academia linkages. He assured that ICCI would cooperate with NUML in providing internships to its students and their job placement in the local industry.



ISLAMABAD: Upon the directives of IGP Islamabad, senior police officers broke their fast along with on-duty personnel to increase their morale. - DNA

## RCCI urges govt to include all for budgetary proposals

RCCI hope that Federal Minister Shaukat Tarin would take all stakeholders into confidence

MEHMOOD ABDULLAH

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) has expressed the hope that newly appointed Federal Minister for Finance Shaukat Khan Tarin would take all stakeholders into confidence before finalizing budgetary proposals for the upcoming fiscal year 2021-22. RCCI President Mohammad Nasir Mirza, in a statement, asked the govt to reduce the electricity and gas prices to lower business costs as the country's economy was facing many challenges including the COVID-19 pandemic. He asked the govt to provide interest-free loans on soft terms to the businesswomen, especially those who

belonged to the cottage industry. "A special Covid-19 concession package should also be announced for women," he said. The tourism was severely affected and a package should be announced for this sector while the corporate tax rate should be reduced to 20%, he added. Nasir said the sales tax rate should also be condensed to a single digit. The president asked government to form a task force for food security and special attention be given to agribased industries. Like the construction package, a concessional package should be announced for other sectors including cotton as its production was affected badly, he added. "A new policy should be formulated regarding seed procurement," he added.

## IHC seeks comments in lawyer's bail case

RAJA PERVAIZ

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Tuesday served notices to respondents on bail petition of a member of Islamabad Bar Council (IBC) in IHC building vandalising case. A division bench comprising Chief Justice Athar Minallah and Justice Mohsin Akhter Kiyani heard the case filed by IBC member Naseer Kiyani. The petitioner's lawyer Yasir Mehmood adopted the stance that his client was not involved in any sort of vandalising in IHC building. The first information registered against him was based on dishonesty, he argued. He said the other lawyers had already obtained bails in the case. He prayed before the court to grant his client post arrest bail and issue release orders. The court sought comments from police and adjourned the case.

## 30,000 special children brought to schools

SHAHEEN HANIF

ISLAMABAD: As many as 30,000 differently abled children, who were out of school, have been brought to educational institutions through an media called 'DGSE' (Directorate General Special Education) aimed at making them useful citizens of the society. "This application has greatly helped the parents and guardians of differently-abled children to find a suitable school in their nearby locations, especially when the prevailing coronavirus situation is haunting everyone," a senior official in the Ministry of Human Rights told media on Tuesday. He said the ministry, in collaboration with National IT Board, had launched a dedicated Media for differently-abled children to assist their parents in selecting suitable nearby educational institutions so that they could apply online without visiting the relevant centers. The App, the official said, also contained the required information about the services and facilities available at the DGSE's centers and institutes as well as in the Federal Directorate of Education. Besides, parents and guardians could check the status of their submitted applications for admission of their children to different schools. He said the application was proving extremely useful for the children with different abilities residing in slum areas of the federal capital.

## Dr Qibla Ayaz assumes charge as CII chairman

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Professor Dr Qibla Ayaz, former Dean of Faculty of Islamic and Oriental Studies of the University of Peshawar, has assumed the charge of Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) chairman on Tuesday.

Dr Ayaz made laudable efforts in bridging the gap between religious scholars and modern researchers during his last tenure as charge of CII chairman (2017-2020). The charge of Council of Islamic Ideology is a constitutional body that advises the legislature whether or not a certain law is repugnant to Islam, namely to the Qur'an and Sunnah. As per law, the charge of CII should have a minimum of eight and maximum of 20 members, including its chairman. The basic criterion for the appointment of charge of Council of Islamic Ideology members is that they should represent various schools of thought, having knowledge of the principles and philosophy of Islam as enunciated in the Holy Quran and Sunnah or having an understanding of the economic, political, legal or administrative problems of Pakistan. It is considered that at least two of the members of the council have to be sitting or retired judges of the Supreme Court or High Court and one member should be a woman, while at least four members should be scholars who have remained engaged in Islamic research or instruction for at least 15 years. The eleven new members of the council including Dr Umair Mahmood Siddiqui, Pir Abul Hassan Muhammad Shah, Hassan Haseebur Rehman, Maulana Hameedul Haq Haqqani, Allama Muhammad Hussain Akbar, Syed Ziaullah Shah Bukhari, Pirzada Junaid Amin, Hafiz Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, Mufti Muhammad Zubair, Syed Habib Irfani and Maulana Nasim Ali Shah will assume their responsibilities on Wednesday.



## COMSTech signs MoU with NETKENT for Scientific Co-op

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: The NETKENT Mediterranean Research and Science University (MRSU), Prof. Tayfun Turgay, in an online ceremony. With this MoU, the NETKENT Mediterranean Research and Science University will be inducted as a member of COMSTech Consortium of Excellence (CCOE). CCoE comprises upon leading science technology and engineering academic and research institutions from OIC member states. By

now 20 top institutions/ universities have become member of CCoE. The aim of CCoE is to create S&T interdependence among OIC member states and build capacity in key areas of STEM through exchange programs. CCoE was established last year by COMSTech and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) under the "Science Diplomacy" initiative of MoFA, Pakistan. Being a member of CCoE, the NETKENT Mediterranean

Research and Science University will be able to exchange faculty, researchers, graduate and postgraduate students, scientific publications, study programs, academic projects or any data or information on mutual understanding basis with any other member university of CCoE. The CCoE membership provides opportunity, to establish joint supervision, research projects, publications and patents, to the member institutions.

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ISLAMABAD: Executive Director, Outreach Assistant to Humanity, Ms. Zorain Elizabeth, Program Manager, Mr. Javed Salik and others posing for a photo during a ceremony organised by Outreach Assistance to Humanity, to commemorate international earth day. - DNA

## PTCL signs agreement with NIFT for bill payment

PTCL customers can now make online payment using any bank account in Pakistan for e-commerce transactions on PTCL website, along with other existing digital payment instruments such as debit/credit cards and digital wallets to pay for their online purchases

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Telecommunications Company Limited (PTCL), signed an agreement with National Institutional Facilitation Technologies (NIFT), to enable and promote its online platform that will allow customers to pay their bills online conveniently and securely through NIFT's ePay digital payment gateway on PTCL's website. The agreement was signed by

Muhammad Amir Siddiqi, EVP Group Financial Planning & Treasury, PTCL and Haider Wahab, CEO, NIFT. Being one of the largest payment processors in Pakistan, NIFT enables secure digital commerce payments through its DFS platform, under the brand name 'NIFT ePay'. PTCL customers can now make online payment using any bank account in Pakistan for e-commerce transactions on PTCL website, along with other existing digital payment instruments

such as debit/credit cards and digital wallets to pay for their online purchases. On the occasion, Muhammad Amir Siddiqi, EVP Group Financial Planning & Treasury, PTCL, said, "This partnership will surely pave way for more efficient, easy and secure bill payment options for our customers. The opportunity to pay the bills directly through bank accounts or wallets in addition to the existing card-based transactions will create a sense of reliability, along with

ease of use for our customers. We are constantly striving to provide our customers with services that add value to their experience." Speaking on the partnership with PTCL, Haider Wahab, and CEO, NIFT, said, "NIFT is extremely delighted to onboard PTCL and sees this as a strategic collaboration that will serve a large customer base across Pakistan for digitizing bill payments through our reliable and secure NIFT ePay platform. This

is a step in the right direction as there is a dire need for providing customers with secure ways to do convenient online transactions in Pakistan. With such partnerships, we aim to achieve and expedite the adoption of digital payments in the country." Through such collaborations, PTCL is constantly on a relentless pursuit to provide convenience to its customers, so that they can enjoy all services while paying their bills from the safety and comfort of their homes.

## 7 outlaws arrested, weapons recovered

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad police on Tuesday has launched a crackdown against criminals at different localities of the district and arrested seven outlaws. According to details, Sabzi Mandi police arrested two accused Zahir Ullah and Sayam and recovered two 30 bore pistol along with ammunition from their possession, a police spokesman said. Homicide unit police arrested accused Waleed arfaqat and recovered one 30 bore pistol from him. Banigala police arrested two accused Ehatsham and Akhtar Zada involved in illegally cylinder gas filling. Cases have been registered against the nabbed person and further investigation was underway. During a special crackdown police teams arrested two offenders from various areas of the city. SSP Operations Islamabad appealed to parents not to allow children to buy or fly kites because it was dangerous. He also sought cooperation of citizens to make the lives of all secure and safe.

## UK red list

THE UK's decision to put Pakistani citizens on the red list of travel-banned countries has sparked outcry from the public and various other government officials—Human Rights Minister, Dr Shireen Mazari, included. As many pointed out the inherent bias against Pakistan seen through this move, the UK has also rightly been lambasted for discriminating against its own citizens—who happen to have Pakistani origins—and treating them unfairly. The decision to put a travel ban on Pakistan was motivated by 'scientific data' that seemed to suggest that we were exporting the virus internationally. While no such data has been published, it is also worth noting that the only report that prompted such an exaggerated response was an incident of quarantine violations. Surely, an entire population of 220 million people should not be held accountable for the actions of a few. One might also keep in mind that the transmission of the more contagious UK variant to Pakistan has also been one of the major causes for a spike in cases. If anything, this only goes to show the double standards that are employed effortlessly by many developed states, which allow for a clamp down on others without acknowledging certain responsibility for themselves. Subjecting our citizens to undue stress is just as unwarranted as the inhumane treatment of the citizens returning from Pakistan—often being denied food despite paying through their nose to fulfil official requirements to re-enter the UK. The exact extent of discrimination can further be observed through inaction by the UK against India which is reporting an astounding 200,000 cases daily—15.1 million cases in total. Already, 73 cases of the Indian variant—which contains mutations that render the vaccine ineffective thereby putting national immunity at risk—have been reported, but placing it on the red list is only a distant thought. Despite cases surging, we are still better off than most countries. It is vital that our government clarifies this fact along with expressing its displeasure about these recent developments. Only through applying pressure, engaging with UK diplomats and refusing to accept such an action will any avenues for reversal be opened.

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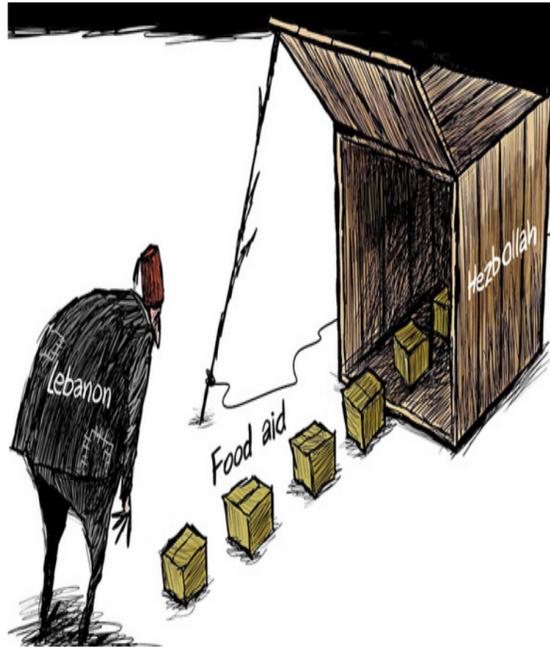
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## Surging virus

PAKISTAN experienced the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic in June, 2020; and now after nine months the number of the country's critical patients suffering from the disease is 30 percent higher than what it was in June. According to the head of the National Command and Operations Centre, Asad Umar, oxygen supply capacity is under severe duress. As the third wave of Covid-19 in Pakistan is becoming increasingly lethal, more and more patients are in need of critical care. Just the number of critical patients in Pakistan is now approaching 5000 which is alarming and calls for immediate actions on an emergency basis. While hospitals in the country are full to the brim, SOP compliance appears to be negligent resulting in ever more cases of infection every day. The situation is getting worse but the government has wasted precious time in the past few months that should have been used to prepare for the looming crisis. There should have been some strict imposition of safety precautions during the winter months in which we saw large wedding parties being held and even conferences and festivals taking place in closed premises where auditoriums were jam packed with people. All this had to take its toll and now we see the result – which is deadly. The latest figures on April 19 as per the government statistics show that there are over 4,500 critical patients with over 82,000 active cases of the infection. Punjab has emerged as the most infected provinces with nearly 48,000 active cases followed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with nearly 14,000. But population-wise the most alarming situation is in the federal capital where the number of infected people is even more than that in Sindh. The death toll in the country is now approaching 16,500 with the country recording 149 deaths in a single day on April 17. This situation is getting critical and the government cannot take it easily anymore. The priority at the moment must be the health of the people and acquiring enough equipment and enough vaccination to cater for a large population, whether this is through public sector purchases or through private means, with many people willing to pay for the vaccine, if it can be made available. Allowing the private sector to bring in vaccines would also remove some of the load from the public sector and perhaps make it easier to have more people vaccinated as quickly as possible. All this needs to be tackled at a war footing; the nation needs medical care for free, which is its fundamental right anyway.

# “Islamophobia-Leftism” or Islamophobia-Leftism?

Azeezah Kanji



Prominent Islamophobia expert Professor Farid Hafez's home was raided by counter-terrorism police in Austria, also in November – part of a series of raids against Muslim academics and activists. And in February, the eminent philosopher and anti-racist, Palestine solidarity activist Professor Cornel West was denied tenure at Harvard University. It seems Bruckner's “weapon of mass intimidation” inhabits the same plane of unreality as Iraq's “weapons of mass destruction”

MEET the latest sensation in the “Islamophobia” demonology franchise: “Islamophobia-Leftism,” the French state's pet bogeyman du jour. According to the anti-Islamophobia discourse, such as anti-colonialism, anti-racism, and feminism – actually serve as sources of oppression, by enabling “radical Islam”. In previous decades, it was “Islamofascism” that was all the rage: connoting Islam's purported affinity not with the left, but the far-right. For centuries before that, it was what might now be called “Islamophobia-Judaism”: the recurrent conspiracy theories conjoining Jews and Muslims as threats to European Christendom, so that “the two infidel races were [treated] as halves of a single body of Semitic aliens,” as analysed by medieval literature scholar Geraldine Heng. As the political sands shift, the bogeyman is perpetually reconfigured to fit the current landscape. To quote 19th-century French Orientalist Ernest Renan, Islam is imagined as “the most complete negation of Europe” – however Europe happens to see itself at the time. When Europe was gripped by homophobia and sectarianism, Muslim societies were criticised for being too non-heteronormative and multicultural – signs of Muslim “degeneracy” remedied through the imposition of colonial rule. Now that the signifiers of “civilisation” have switched, public “intellectuals” like French philosopher Pascal Bruckner complain that Islamophobia is curtailing their ability to freely demonise Muslims for being too intolerant. In anti-racism's “permanent war of all against all,” accusations of Islamophobia are a “weapon of mass intimidation,” Bruckner insists. Meanwhile, the non-metaphorical state of “permanent war” against Muslims persists, and those documenting its atrocities and critiquing its underpinning ideology continue to be subject to marginalisation, suppression and punishment by the state and other institutions of power. For example, the Collectif contre l'Islamophobie en France (Collective Against Islamophobia in France) was liquidated by the French government in November. Prominent Islamophobia expert Professor Farid Hafez's home was raided by counter-terrorism police in Austria, also in November – part of a series of raids against Muslim academics and activists. And in February, the eminent philosopher and anti-racist, Palestine solidarity activist Professor Cornel West was denied tenure at Harvard University. It seems Bruckner's “weapon of mass intimidation” inhabits the same plane of unreality as Iraq's “weapons of mass destruction”. And it serves an analogous function – of depicting the targets of systemic aggression as the aggressors. Bruckner is frequently described as a man of the left, highlighting the incoherence of the term “Islamophobia-Leftism”, which obfuscates the Islamophobia within the left itself. Even the very party accused by French political leaders of being an epicentre of Islamophobia-Leftism, France Insoumise, has hosted speakers claiming that “one has the right to be Islamophobic,” and could barely muster any representatives to participate in a march against anti-Muslim hate after an attack on a French mosque in 2019. The enduring power of Islamophobia is that there's something in it for almost everyone, from right to left. In March, the right-wing Swiss People's Party managed to

break its losing streak in citizens' referendums, with its victorious proposal to banish Muslim women's face-veils from public space – which attracted twice the vote share as the party won in the general election. As did its similarly successful 2009 campaign to prohibit minaret construction, which appealed to feminists by portraying minarets as a symbol of women's oppression. This from the same political organisation that previously fought against a motion to recognise gender equality in marriage. In countries like Germany and France, left-wing parties and activists have been on the frontlines of initiatives to impose state coercion on Muslim women's clothing. For the sake of “liberating” Muslim women, there are now five times more European states legally forcing women to unveil as there are Muslim-majority states requiring women to veil. The Inquisition obsession with stripping Muslims of their head coverings and minarets lives on. In the 15th-century, the problem was said to be the “uncleanliness” of Muslim (and Jewish) blood. Now, it's the incompatibility of Muslims with “our” culture and values. As Black American novelist Toni Morrison wrote, when it comes to racism, “there will always be one more thing”. Islamophobia is a great unifier, transcending even the ideological divide between China and “the West”. Since 9/11, China has repackaged its settler-colonial assault on the Muslim Uighurs of Xinjiang as a “war on terror” exercise: pathologising Islam as a “virus” to be eradicated with mass surveillance and biometric collection, forced labour, forced sterilisation, child separation, criminalisation of religious practices and “re-education” in concentration camps. Yet in the name of resisting Western imperialism against China, some on the left act as denialists and apologists for China's genocidal imperialism, the most damning evidence of which emanates from China's own official documents. At a recent seminar organised by Canadian anti-war groups to “debunk” the Uighur genocide, China's Consul General showed a PR video of Xinjiang that was predominantly images of empty landscapes. Even in China's genocide-denying propaganda, the Uighurs are largely scrubbed out of the picture. Freedom, peace, rights and equality for those within the West's “zone of being” has long been premised on war, domination and dispossession outside of it. Some 19th-century liberal writers sought to shunt off European responsibility for Europe's foundational atrocities – the Crusades, the Inquisition, and genocide in the Americas – by blaming Christians' alleged internalisation of “the principle of Islamism: extermination”. In the present, progressive commentators refer to neo-Nazis as “vanilla ISIS,” Trump's officials as “mullahs,” and Trump himself as “Osama bin Laden's revenge” on America. As if a social order that continues to reap the spoils of the brutalisation of Black, Indigenous and Muslim lives and the theft of Indigenous lands needs to search outside itself for explanations of White supremacy. “Our” violence is rendered an aberration or a reflection of “their” violence; “their” violence is depicted as essential to who they are. Within this framework, Muslims are easily normalised as objects of abuse – explained away as presumptively guilty, or ignored as collateral damage.

As academics Arun Kundnani and Deepa Kumar pointed out, domestic opposition to the US's mass surveillance program dropped off precipitously when it was revealed the targets were mostly Muslims. In the recent debates over expanding counterterrorism to address right-wing extremism, we read in socialist magazine Jacobin that the primary objectionable feature of terrorist listings is that they might be used in the future against left-wing activists – not that such listings have already been used for almost two decades overwhelmingly against Muslims, including charities for donating to humanitarian work in Palestine. Similarly, in the “principled and progressive” Nation magazine, we are told that the problem with militarised policing of American anti-racism protests is that tactics and weapons appropriate for “Iraq and Afghanistan” are now being wielded in places like Portland – where “protesters carry skateboards, leaf blowers, lacrosse sticks, and cardboard signs [as opposed to rockets and guns]” and “some are pregnant”. “No one should be treated this way,” proclaimed author Andrew McCormick. Except, apparently, all the Afghans and Iraqis who have not been spared from military brutality for being pregnant and/or unarmed. A few weeks ago, the Nation even featured a piece praising the “characteristic erudition” of notoriously Islamophobic Canadian journalist Robert Fulford, celebrating him as “the nation's finest cultural critic”. Unmentioned in the Nation's panegyric, some gems of “erudition” from Fulford's steady stream of vitriol include exhorting the Palestinians under occupation as “terrorists” and “indiscriminate murderers,” exalting anti-Muslim ideologue Ayaan Hirsi Ali as a “Muslim Martin Luther,” and exhorting a few months after the Quebec mosque shooting – the most fatal act of political violence in Canada at the time since 1989 – that “we should begin by retiring the word Islamophobia in the interest of a franker attitude to terrorism”. The issue isn't Islamophobia-Leftism, but Islamophobia-Leftism. Across the political spectrum, a common collection of narratives rationalises, minimises and invisibilises violence against Muslims: pitching Islamophobic policies as progressive, projecting Muslims as the paradigm of barbarism, and expurgating the racism of its own past and present. This spectrum offers a series of false choices: between Euro-American imperialism and China's alter-imperialism; between conservative, right-wing racism and liberal and left-wing racism; between being subjugated violently and subjugated slightly more gently (with violence always in reserve). Thinking and working beyond this artificially-restricted consensus are those Muslims who, in solidarity and collaboration with other peoples and movements, are drawing on Islam's prohibition of worshipping anything other than God to challenge human-made hierarchies of oppression: of human over non-human, white over non-white, coloniser over colonised, man over woman, heteronormative over queer, and the wealthy over the dispossessed. “Like sunflowers that only the sun can subjugate,” in the words of French-Algerian decolonial writer and activist Houria Bouteldja. Perhaps this is the real danger posed by “Islamophobia-Leftism”: the possibility not of a more “violently radical” world, but one radically more equal and just.

– Courtesy: Al Jazeera

# Pandemic, education & need for greater investment

Asim Bashir Khan

A close examination points at the fact that consistently dismal state of education financing in Pakistan – that in turn results in the country's dismal education indicators – is not necessarily a culmination of a series of crisis situations. A recent white paper, “Public Invest in Education – COVID-19 & Other Past Emergencies,” establishes that the cuts in education budgets and more specifically within the education development expenditure are a routine practice and have little to do with the fall-out of emergency situations

DURING the past 12 months, approximately 42 million school students of pre-primary to higher secondary levels have been directly affected by the COVID-19 crisis in Pakistan. In addition to pre-existing barriers, recent data emerging from Pakistan suggests that girls' access to formal education is further expected to recede as a result of the steep decline in household incomes. With many households still struggling with the financial toll experienced during the initial lockdown phase, many girls of school-going age are expected to either enter labour to supplement their household incomes or simply be withheld from going to school to curtail household expenses. With this sobering background, Pakistan no longer has the luxury to focus on bringing the massive pre-pandemic figure of 22.8 million out-of-school children into schools but must now actively strategize to prevent a roll-back on important gains made vis-vis education, especially girls' access to education in the last decade. It is important to point-out here that the persistent state of education emergency in Pakistan has a significant fall-out on the country's ability to develop at a faster pace during relatively “good times” and makes Pakistan's economy highly vulnerable to economic shocks during times of emergency such as the current pandemic. A close examination points at the fact that

consistently dismal state of education financing in Pakistan – that in turn results in the country's dismal education indicators – is not necessarily a culmination of a series of crisis situations. A recent white paper, “Public Invest in Education – COVID-19 & Other Past Emergencies,” establishes that the cuts in education budgets and more specifically within the education development expenditure are a routine practice and have little to do with the fall-out of emergency situations. For instance, during 2017 – 2018, Pakistan enjoyed a relatively good financial standing. However, despite this Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan applied more than 40 per cent cuts to their planned budgetary provisions for education while the federal government applied a one-third cut. Similarly, during 2018-19, Sindh slashed its development budget for education by 62 per cent, followed by Balochistan, 54.4 per cent, federal government, 49.1 per cent and KP, 14.7 per cent. Though the actual figures of 2019-20 have not yet been made public, a comparison between budgeted and revised estimates offer the same insight. The Sindh government downward revised the development education spending by 71 per cent, followed by Balochistan 31.9 per cent, KP 25 per cent, Punjab 24.2 per cent and the federal government by 8.2 per cent.

Finally, for the most recent budget (fiscal year 2020-21), the trajectory seems to be a continuation of past trends rather than a result of the fall-out of an emergency situation. Except Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the non-development expenditures saw an increase in all the provinces and the federal government. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was also unparalleled in terms of its planned increase in the education development portfolio, which it enhanced by 46.2 per cent. This was followed by Sindh with a 7.7 per cent increase and the federal government with a 1.4 per cent increase. Balochistan and Punjab, on the other hand, budgeted cuts worth of 23.9 per cent and 16.3 per cent respectively. As per the government's claim of achieving a V-shaped recovery, the cuts in the education development expenditure in Balochistan and Punjab and the meagre increase at the federal level demand an empathetic review during the current fiscal year and a substantial increase going forward. More importantly, structural issues such as incremental budgeting practices, inability to curtail non-development expenses and an absence of needs/targets-based budgeting need serious redressal to create the much-needed fiscal space for Pakistan's feeble education sector. – The writer is an economist and Public Financial Management expert. He is currently a PhD candidate at IBA

## Briefs

## CAA issues permit to 10 players

DNA

KARACHI: The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has issued a repatriation permit to ten members of Pakistan's T20I squad to return back home after the completion of Zimbabwe's T20I series. Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) HAD requested CAA for a travel exemption, allowing players to return back from Zimbabwe, which is included in Category 'C' countries affected by COVID-19. Muhammad Hafeez, Usman Qadir and Asif Ali will reach Lahore on Flight EK622 on the 27th April. Sharjeel Khan, Mohammad Hasnain and Danish Aziz will arrive in Karachi on April 27 on Flight EK600. Fakhar Zaman, Haider Ali, Arshad Iqbal and Muhammad Waseem will arrive in Islamabad on April 28 on Flight EK612. It must be noted Pakistan and Zimbabwe will face each other in three-match T20I series, starting from tomorrow, followed by two matches on April 23 and 25.

## KSRC providing medical assistance

From Page 01

Two Holy Mosques to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan stated that the Kingdom's efforts in supporting Pakistani brethren came from the keenness of the leadership, may Allah protect it, since the era of the founder. May Allah have mercy on him, especially in such crises that the whole world is going through and what the kingdom is doing for Pakistan is undoubtedly a result of the deep fraternal relations between the two brotherly countries. He is distinguished by his strong relationship, calling on Allah to protect the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and to make this work in the balance of their good deeds.

## OPCW considers suspending Syria

FOREIGN DESK

HAGUE: The world's chemical weapons watchdog will decide this week whether to impose unprecedented sanctions on Syria for its alleged use of toxic arms and failure to declare its arsenal. Member states of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) will weigh a French proposal to suspend Syria's "rights and privileges" at the body, including its ability to vote. Damascus is accused of failing to answer key questions after an OPCW probe last year found Syria attacked a rebel-held village with the nerve agent sarin and the toxic chemical chlorine in 2017. "Syria's refusal to faithfully deliver the requested information cannot and must not remain unanswered," the European Union said in a joint statement to the United Nations last week. "It is now up to the international community to take appropriate action."

## Dutch set to ease lockdown

WEB DESK

AMSTERDAM: Lockdown measures in the Netherlands are expected to be eased from next week as pressure to reopen society mounts despite still-high coronavirus infection rates, Dutch broadcasters reported. A nationwide nighttime curfew that has been in place for three months will be lifted on April 28, broadcasters NOS and RTL said, citing government sources. Bars and restaurants will be allowed to gradually reopen next week. The Netherlands has been in varying stages of lockdown for more than six months, as all bars and restaurants have been closed since mid-October and public gatherings of more than two people are banned.

## Russia cracks down on Navalny allies ahead of protests

Navalny's doctors and lawyers on Tuesday arrived at the penal colony in Vladimir, a city 180km (112 miles) east of Moscow, where he is now being held and requested access to him. But they were told the director of the facility was unavailable

FOREIGN DESK

MOSCOW: Russian police detained several allies of Kremlin critic Alexey Navalny on Tuesday and raided two of his regional offices, a protest monitoring group said, a day before his supporters plan to stage mass protests over his treatment in jail. Navalny, 44, declared a hunger strike at the end of March over what he said was the refusal of prison authorities to treat him properly for acute back and leg pain. Following reports about his declining health since then, and recent warnings he "could die at any moment", Russia's prison service on Sunday said he had been transferred to a hospital for prisoners. The service said Navalny's condition had been deemed "satisfactory" but added that he had agreed to receive "vitamin therapy". However, his allies said he had still not received proper medical care, despite being moved. Navalny's doctors and lawyers on Tuesday arrived at the penal colony in Vladimir, a city 180km (112 miles) east of Moscow, where he is now being held and request-

ed access to him. But they were told the director of the facility was unavailable and were kept waiting for hours. "He is very weak. It's difficult for him to speak and to sit up," Navalny's lawyer Olga Mikhailova told reporters outside of the prison colony. Mikhailova called for the opposition figure to be transferred to a civilian hospital in the capital, Moscow. Another of Navalny's lawyers, Vadim Kobzev, suggested he was currently being kept in a solitary ward at the hospital for prisoners, which reportedly specialises in tuberculosis treatment. Kobzev said on Twitter that the Kremlin critic had been given a glucose drip. Navalny's allies also reiterated their plan to take to the streets on Wednesday evening. Authorities have warned people not to take part in the planned demonstrations, which will coincide with Russian President Vladimir Putin's annual state of the nation address. The Kremlin has denounced the rallies as illegal, setting the stage for a confrontation between police and demonstrators and raising the possibility of another bout of extensive arrests. Nationwide

## Doctors denied access to Navalny

VLADIMIR (RUSSIA): Alexei Navalny's doctors were again denied access Tuesday to the jailed Kremlin critic, as lawyers for the hunger-striking opposition figure said he was "very weak" and demanded he be transferred to a civilian hospital. A team of medics has been trying to see the 44-year-old since early this month, after President Vladimir Putin's most outspoken opponent began refusing food on March 31 to demand proper medical treatment for a litany of ailments. Nearly three weeks into the hunger strike, doctors over the weekend warned that Navalny's health was failing so rapidly he could die at "any minute", as the United States threatened Russia with "consequences" in the event of his death. Russia's prison service, which has repeatedly prevented Navalny's doctors from visiting him, said Monday that he had been moved from his penal colony in the Vladimir region some 100 kilometres (60 miles) east of Moscow to a medical facility at another colony in the same region. Navalny's lawyer Olga Mikhailova told reporters outside the prison hospital Tuesday afternoon that he had become "very weak" and that "it's hard for him to speak and sit up". That assessment came after a team of physicians including Navalny's personal doctor Anastasia Vasilyeva travelled Tuesday morning to the new colony and were barred from seeing him. Mikhailova and another lawyer who were, however, given access, said Navalny had agreed to a glucose drip and was given one on Sunday, but noted that nurses had failed multiple times to find his vein, citing that as evidence that the prison infirmary was not up to the task. "Medical care in this particular case is not being given," Mikhailova said. - DNA

pro-Navalny protests earlier this year resulted in thousands of his supporters being detained. In Moscow, the mayor's office said a planned protest would not be authorised because of the coronavirus pandemic. Authorities said the city centre of Yekaterinburg, in the Urals, will be closed to traffic from early evening because of a military parade rehearsal. In an apparent bid to further dissuade protesters, police conducted raids at Navalny's regional offices in the southern city of Krasnodar and the central region of Chelyabinsk, according to OVD-Info, a group which monitors protests and activist detentions. Five pro-Navalny activists in different regions were detained on various charges, it said. Navalny's activist network is facing mounting pressure from Russian authorities. On Friday, state prosecutors in Moscow said they wanted to label his regional groups and anti-corruption foundation as "extremist", a move that would essentially outlaw their activity. Human rights activists say the designation would paralyse their activities and expose their members and

donors to prison sentences of up to 10 years. Navalny's case has also plunged relations between Moscow and the West to post-Cold War lows. The European Union and United States have urged Russian authorities to grant Navalny immediate access to medical treatment, while US President Joe Biden's White House said on Monday that Moscow would be held to account for his fate. Those comments were echoed by top EU diplomat Josep Borrell, who said the bloc held Russian authorities "responsible" for Navalny's "health situation". Both Washington and Brussels have also called for Navalny's release from prison. The Kremlin critic was arrested in January upon his return to Russia from Germany, where he spent five months recovering from a nerve-agent poisoning that he blames on Russian officials. The Kremlin denies such allegations. In February, he was sentenced to two and a half years in prison for violating the terms of his probation while convalescing in Germany. Navalny has rejected the case against him as fabricated.

## UK vows to slash emissions

LONDON: Britain on Tuesday vowed an ambitious 78 per cent cut to carbon emissions by 2035, but faced calls for more policy specifics from sceptical environmental groups ahead of US-led summit talks. Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced his latest legally binding target, which is 15 years earlier than once planned, ahead of staging COP26, the UN's annual climate gathering, in Glasgow in November. On Thursday, Johnson will also address a climate summit hosted by US President Joe Biden, as he attempts to make Britain a world leader on the issue. "We want to continue to raise the bar on tackling climate change, and that's why we're setting the most ambitious target to cut emissions in the world," he said in a statement. "We want to see world leaders follow our lead and match our ambition in the run-up to the crucial climate summit COP26, as we will only build back greener and protect our planet if we come together to take action." The UK has set a target of becoming carbon neutral by mid-century and has already ramped up its targets. In December, it unveiled plans to cut greenhouse gas emissions by more than two-thirds, compared to 1990 levels, this decade. Britain's carbon dioxide emissions have already halved since 1990, taking the country half-way to its prior 2050 commitment, according to a study released last month. But environmental group Friends of the Earth said the UK government is "struggling to meet its existing, less ambitious climate goals". "Targets for cutting emissions are important, but without the right policies they simply won't be achieved," it added. - DNA

## US slams Russian plan to block Black Sea

FOREIGN DESK

WASHINGTON: The US State Department has branded as an "unprovoked escalation" reported Russian plans to block parts of the Black Sea, which could ultimately impact access to Ukrainian ports amid heightened tensions over Moscow's military manoeuvres. The US and its European allies have expressed concerns regarding Russia's military build-up in recent weeks and fear Moscow might be planning to invade Ukraine. Russia, which backs separatists in eastern Ukraine, annexed Crimea in 2014. Russian state media have reported that Moscow intends to close parts of the Black Sea to foreign military and

official ships for six months, which could affect access to Ukrainian ports in the Sea of Azov, which is connected to the Black Sea through the Kerch Strait. On Tuesday, more than 20 Russian warships took part in military exercises in the Black Sea, the Interfax news agency reported, citing a statement from Russia's Black Sea fleet. Russia has temporarily restricted the movement of foreign warships and what it called "other state ships" near Crimea. "This represents yet another unprovoked escalation in Moscow's ongoing campaign to undermine and destabilise Ukraine," State Department spokesman Ned Price said in a statement. "This development is

particularly troubling amid credible reports of Russian troop buildup in occupied Crimea and around Ukraine's borders, now at levels not seen since Russia's invasion in 2014," he added. Last week, Washington slapped sanctions on Russia and expelled its ambassadors over Moscow's interference in last year's US presidential election, cyber-hacking, bullying Ukraine and other alleged "malign" actions. Days later, Russia expelled US diplomats in a tit-for-tat move. Ukraine and Russia have traded blame over a spike in violence in the conflict in eastern Ukraine, where Ukrainian troops have battled Russian-backed separ-

tist forces in a conflict that Kyiv says has killed 14,000 people since 2014. The US Federal Aviation Administration on Monday urged airlines to exercise "extreme caution" when flying near the Ukraine-Russian border, citing potential flight safety risks. EU's top diplomat Josep Borrell said on Monday that more than 100,000 Russian troops have amassed on Ukraine's border and in annexed Crimea. He said no new economic sanctions or expulsions of Russian diplomats were planned for the time being. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, after addressing EU foreign ministers, called on the EU to impose new sanctions on Russia.



LIVERPOOL: Players battling for the possession of ball during a premier league match between Leeds United and Liverpool. -DNA

## 'Stop worrying about Shaheen's workload'

DNA

HARARE: Pakistan men's team head coach Misbah-ul-Haq has requested critics and fans to stop worrying about the workload of the 21-year-old pacer Shaheen Shah Afridi. Left-arm pacer Shaheen's workload management has been under the radar as he played all seven matches (three ODIs and four T20Is on the tour of South Africa). The 46-year-old Misbah, while talking to reporters in a virtual presser, sarcastically said that the whole world is concerned more than team management over Shaheen's workload. "We are counting his practice overs and we know how to utilize him when needed.

We select him according to team requirements and where we feel that he needs rest, we will look at it. People should stop worrying," Misbah said. On the other hand, Misbah said that management has to see every aspect while forming the final XI as they can't try the whole bench strength even against the low-ranked sides. "We wish to play every selected player, however, it's not possible to make unnecessary changes. No one takes responsibility besides captain and coach when team doesn't perform up to the expectations," Misbah said. "Yes you try new players but it's important to form a combination that guarantees you win in matches and series," he added.

## FIFA vows 'consequences' for Super League clubs

DNA

MONTREUX (SWITZERLAND): FIFA president Gianni Infantino on Tuesday warned that clubs involved in the European Super League could face "consequences", as the backlash built against the deeply divisive plans. Infantino leant his support to European football's governing body as it attempts to quash an initiative that threatens its prized Champions League and the health of domestic competitions such as England's Premier League. "It is our task to protect the European sport model, so if some elect to go their own way then they must live with the consequences of their choices," Infantino said at UEFA's congress in Switzerland. "They are responsible for their choices." Twelve powerful clubs - six from England, and three

each from Spain and Italy - have signed up for the Super League, which offers guaranteed spots for its founding members and billions of dollars in payments. Liverpool, Arsenal, Chelsea, Manchester City, Manchester United and Tottenham Hotspur are the English clubs involved, together with Barcelona, Atletico Madrid and Real Madrid from Spain and Italian trio Juventus, AC Milan and Inter Milan. Currently, teams have to qualify for the Champions League each year through their national competitions, and face a lengthy group phase before reaching the high-profile latter stages. The Super League would guarantee a spot for its founding members every year, removing the uncertainty of qualification and the accompanying risks to revenue. The breakaway plan prompted a furious reaction from fans and officials, with UEFA

## UEFA calls breakaway clubs to correct 'huge mistake'

WEB DESK

NYON: UEFA on Tuesday called the breakaway clubs to correct their mistake as 12 European football clubs declared Monday that they founded the European Super League, an alternative mid-week tournament that UEFA and its member associations do not recognize. "At this point, I would like to address the owners of some English clubs. Gentlemen, you made a huge mistake," UEFA President Aleksander Ceferin said during the UEFA Congress. "Some will say it is greed, others [will say] disdain arrogance, flippancy, or complete ignorance of England's football culture. But actually, it does not matter," Ceferin said and adding that the clubs have time to correct their mistake. "What matters is that there is still time to change your mind. Everyone makes mistakes," Ceferin also slammed the Super League. "Selfishness is replacing solidarity. Money has become more important than glory, greed more important than loyalty, and dividends more important than passion." However, Ceferin stated that this crisis will make the UEFA "stronger and football stronger than ever" and warned the Super League organizers as the UEFA will not let them capture the game. "... All the governments are with us [UEFA], all the fans are with us, all the media are with us. Only some greedy people, a few are on the other side. Are we allowing them to take football? No," he said.

president Aleksander Ceferin in saying on Monday it was motivated by "greediness, selfishness and narcissism", and Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp saying its closed nature was "not right". Klopp's Man City counterpart Pep Guardiola also came out against a closed competition, which he said is "not sport". "It's not a sport when success is already guaranteed, it's not a sport if it doesn't matter if you lose," said the Spaniard. On Tuesday, Ceferin implored club owners, particularly those of Premier League teams, to row back on the plans. "There's still time to change your mind. Everyone makes mistakes," said the Slovenian. "English fans deserve to have you correct your mistake, they deserve respect." Three more clubs are expected to sign up, including "at least two" from France, a source told

AFP. Qatar-owned Paris Saint-Germain are a notable absentee, while Bayern Munich, the reigning European champions, have distanced themselves from the project. "Paris Saint-Germain holds the firm belief that football is a game for everyone," said PSG president Nasser Al-Khelaifi in a statement. Five more clubs will qualify annually for the 20-team, midweek competition, where two groups of 10 will precede two-legged quarter and semi-finals and a one-off final. The competition is due for launch "as soon as is practicable". It constitutes a serious threat to UEFA, which together with the English, Spanish and Italian football authorities said the clubs could be banned from domestic and European competition. The British government also said it was considering invoking competition law to block the breakaway.

## Talha Talib wins bronze medal

ATHAR SUFI

KARACHI: Pakistan's weightlifter Talha Talib has bagged a bronze medal in snatch in the Asian Weightlifting Championship. The Gujranwala-based Talha lifted 148kg weight in snatch in the 67-kilogram weight category to win bronze in Uzbekistan's capital Tashkent. It is his first medal in the Asian Championship. This is also a new national record. Meanwhile, Talha was unable to win in clean and jerk and total as he finished fourth with 167kg in clean and jerk and ended fifth with a total of 315kg. China bagged gold and silver in total with the bronze going to Uzbekistan. It must be noted that Talha is four time National Champions.

## TLP protest ends as NA takes up resolution

From Page 01

The mover, through the resolution, also demanded the provincial governments to allocate specific sites for protests in all districts so that citizens' daily life was not disrupted. During debate, PML-N stalwart and former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi regretted that the government called an emergency session of the National Assembly (it was originally set to take place on April 22) and did not speak to the Opposition about its intention to do so. "The way to go about it is that you speak to the Opposition. I will say again that there is no two ways about the sanctity of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). [But] this resolution is unfortunately insufficient. He requested that the Opposition be given an hour so they can review the resolution." You have presented the resolution. We will debate and include the additional provisions it should have and put them before you, so that the House passes an agreed upon resolution," Abbasi said. Later, in an unfortunate turn of events, a heated exchange took place between Abbasi and the speaker. It followed briefly after the resolution for the formation of a committee was declared accepted by the speaker. It cannot be concretely said what sparked Abbasi's anger. Abbasi was seen in footage from the session approaching the speaker and saying: "You are making it [...] controversial. Have you no shame?" "Hold your tongue," said the speaker in response. "You always speak such things and behave in such a manner." As things intensified, Abbasi added: "I will take off my shoe and hit you." "I too will do such a thing then. Please stay within your limits," the speaker said to Abbasi, asking him to return to his seat. Meanwhile, Maulana Asad Mehmood of JUI-F regretted that the "Opposition was not taken into confidence" over the resolution. "You wanted to call an emergency session but you did not even bother to take the Opposition into confidence," Mehmood said. Addressing Speaker Asad Qaiser, he said: "You are not the government's speaker, you are the speaker of the entire parliament."

## Pakistan to receive 2mn COVID-19...

From Page 01

people aged above 60-year-old and health professionals. The country will start vaccinating people in the age group 50-59 from next week, Planning and Development Minister Asad Umar announced on Saturday. He tweeted that the NCOC in today's meeting decided to start vaccination of people aged from 50 to 59 from Wednesday (April 21), encouraging once again everyone to register themselves for the vaccination. The National Command and Operation Centre started registering citizens above 50 years of age for COVID-19 vaccination from March 30. "Registration of those who are 50 plus for covid vaccination will be opened on March 30th. Registration of those who are 60 and older has already been open. Encourage everybody who is 50 plus to register when the registration is opened for them on 30th," Asad Umar had tweeted.

## Briefs

## S.Africa set to resume J&amp;J vaccine rollout: minister

## FOREIGN DESK

JOHANNESBURG: South Africa is days away from announcing a decision to resume inoculations with the Johnson & Johnson Covid-19 vaccine, the health minister said Tuesday, following recommendations by a regulatory authority. The country, the worst affected by the pandemic on the continent, last week suspended its vaccination drive over potential blood clotting risks reported by the United States.

At the weekend the medicines regulatory body South African Health Products Regulatory Agency (SAHPRA) advised that the vaccinations should be resumed. "They (SAHPRA) are feeling comfortable that we can proceed," Health Minister Zweli Mkhize said at a Johannesburg public hospital that was recently gutted by fire.

"We are quite comfortable that this matter is going to be resolved in such a way that in a few days' time we should be able to indicate that the Johnson & Johnson process will proceed," Mkhize said. So far South Africa has immunised around 290,000 people, mostly health care workers, since February.

## US to issue Covid travel warnings

## WEB DESK

WASHINGTON: The State Department has urged Americans to reconsider any international travel they may have planned and said it would issue specific warnings not to visit roughly 80 percent of the world's countries due to risks from the coronavirus pandemic. The US has not had a global advisory warning against international travel since August, when guidance was revoked by the administration of former president Donald Trump.

The advice issued by the department is not a formal global advisory. Instead, it says the State Department will start using Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) standards as it prepares health and safety guidelines for individual countries. Because of those standards, about 80 percent of countries will be classified as "Level 4" or "do not travel." Travel is also discouraged for the remaining 20 percent, though not as emphatically. It says people with plans to visit those countries should reconsider before proceeding.

## Former US VP Walter Mondale dies

## WEB DESK

WASHINGTON: Former United States Vice President Walter Mondale, a liberal icon who famously told voters to expect a tax increase should he win the presidency, died on Monday, US media reported. He was 93 years old.

No cause was given for Mondale's death, according to reports citing a statement from his family.

"Well my time has come. I am eager to rejoin Joan and Eleanor," Mondale said in a statement to his staff and released to the public after his death, referring to his late wife Joan, who died in 2014, and daughter Eleanor, who died in 2011 at age 51. "Before I go I wanted to let you know how much you mean to me."

Mondale served as vice president under Jimmy Carter from 1977 to 1981. "Today I mourn the passing of my dear friend Walter Mondale, who I consider the best vice president in our country's history," Carter said in a statement, extending his condolences to his former number two's family. "He was an invaluable partner and an able servant of the people of Minnesota, the United States and the world," Mondale became a more engaged vice president than many who preceded him.

## Armenia derails unblocking of regional communications

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said that Yerevan will give its consent to the Zangazur corridor only in exchange for the opening of the Nakhchivan corridor for the Armenians

## DNA

BAKU: The trilateral statement signed between Baku, Moscow and Yerevan in November 2020, opened new economic and transport opportunities for the region. The agreement reached following the 44-day war, not only ended Armenia's three-decades-long occupation but also stipulated the unblocking of transit communications in the region. Clause 9 of the statement specifies that Armenia must provide security guarantees for the Zangazur corridor that will connect Azerbaijan's Nakhchivan exclave to other parts of the country through the territory of Armenia.

However, Armenia has so far been reluctant to fulfil its obligations under the deal to help open economic and transport communications in the region that had been blocked due to the

conflict. Recently, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said that Yerevan will give its consent to the Zangazur corridor only in exchange for the opening of the Nakhchivan corridor for the Armenians. Experts believe that this way, Pashinyan announced a bargain or simply blackmailed Azerbaijan, making it clear that Armenia is going to use the issue of the Nakhchivan corridor to the fullest. Pashinyan also displayed his lack of understanding of the peace deal, by declaring that the trilateral statement contains no text on the corridor to Nakhchivan.

However, the statement does contain a clause that demands that "The Republic of Armenia guarantees the safety of transport links between the western regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic [NAR]

in order to organize the unimpeded movement of citizens, vehicles and goods in both directions. Control over transport links is carried out by the bodies of the Border Service of Russia's FSB [Federal Security Service]. By agreement of the Parties, the construction of new transport communications linking the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic with the western regions of Azerbaijan will be provided." Commenting on Pashinyan's confusing statement, Baku-based Day.az said: "This is pure manipulation because regardless of the name of the transport corridor, its geographic parameters are very specifically defined, and everyone who has a mind should understand that from Zangilan it is possible to get to Nakhchivan under the supervision of Russian border guards only through Armenia's territory, and more specifically,

through Zangazur." As for other communications that operated before the conflict unleashed by Armenia, they were not destroyed by Azerbaijan and can be used after reconstruction, the website said. "But Pashinyan and his team must understand that neither the Gazakh-Ijevan railway nor other transport and economic communications will be open for Armenia until it stops blackmailing and proceeds to a constructive dialogue. Bargaining is completely inappropriate here... Setting conditions is a tool that was not available to Armenia even during the period of occupation and the lasting status quo. To expect to use it today, when all the levers are in the hands of Azerbaijan, is simply madness," Day.az said. Azerbaijani political analyst Ilgar Valizade said that Armenia's refusal to comply with the 9th clause of the trilateral agreement of No-

vember 10 is another proof that Armenia's political leadership and, more broadly, Armenia's political elite and its attitude to the issue, is the only obstacle to the post-war development. "Today, after Armenia suffered a crushing defeat, it is completely incomprehensible why they are pursuing the previous policy without obvious results. Here we see a lack of political will, an attempt to look for answers to the current situation in the past, where there are none, and a reluctance to accept realities, draw conclusions and turn the sinking ship towards recovery and development," Valizade said. The expert stressed that the Armenian leadership, which signed the trilateral deal, does not at all realize its actions. "They signed the statement, pledged to fulfil specific points, but they are not doing it. In my opinion, it is necessary to develop

a mechanism for forcing Armenia to fulfil its obligations. Otherwise, what's the point and sense of this document? Unfortunately, practice shows that Armenian has never fulfilled the obligations assumed within the framework of any structures and formats. Based on this practice, it is necessary to consider Armenia's behaviour and take measures for the fulfilment of agreements reached with its participation," he said. Valizade drew Pashinyan's attention to the fact that clause 9 of the peace deal stressed the need to restore the communication linking the western regions of Azerbaijan with Nakhchivan. Although the name of the corridor is not given, its geography is clearly spelt out. "This is precisely the Zangazur corridor because there is no other way to connect the western regions of Azerbaijan with the NAR," he said.

## Egypt sacks rail authority chief

## FOREIGN DESK

CAIRO: Egypt's railways chief has been sacked following a string of deadly train disasters, two days after the latest accident that cost 11 lives.

"The goal of these decisions is not merely about leadership changes of the authority but are in line with the next stage which demands...a complete upgrade of the railway network," the transport ministry said on Tuesday.

The changes "underway aim to provide better services, working around the clock to serve commuters and to upgrade...this essential service which transports millions of passengers yearly", it said in a statement. Transport Minister Kamel el-Wazir's shuffle of 10 top officials in Egypt's embattled railways authority, including its head Ashraf Raslan, follows an uproar in the Arab world's most populous country over mismanagement of dilapidated train lines.

Calls on social media have urged the minister himself to step down but he has stood firm.

Egyptian rail accidents are mostly blamed on poor infrastructure and maintenance.

## DR Congo launches Covid-19 vaccination

## FOREIGN DESK

YAOUNDE: The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) on Monday kicked off COVID-19 vaccination of high-priority groups.

Health Minister Eteni Longondo launched the campaign at the University Clinics of Kinshasa. Some diplomats including the representative of the EU were present at the launching of the vaccination campaign. The Central African country received 1.7 million AstraZeneca vaccine doses through the UN-led COVAX facility last month.

"We invite people to be vaccinated because this vaccine is effective," Longondo said, ensuring that the authorities have taken arrangements in the event of possible complications.

"No one will be safe until everyone is safe. Vaccination is one of the most effective and safe public health interventions," he added. In a tweet, EU ambassador to DRC Jean-Marc Chataigner said he took part in the launching of the vaccination campaign on Monday morning at the invitation of the Congolese authorities. "I got vaccinated with the Minister of Health and some colleagues!" Chataigner said.

The Central African country has recorded 28,956 coronavirus cases, with 25,841 recoveries and 745 deaths, according to the health ministry.

## G7 FMs to meet in person

LONDON: Britain announced Tuesday that G7 foreign and development ministers will hold their first face-to-face meeting in two years next month, as part of the country's presidency of the wealthy nation grouping.

The last meeting of foreign ministers from the world's leading economic powers took place in the seaside resort of Dinard, northwest France, in April 2019.

Contact since then has been forced online by the global coronavirus pandemic.

Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said strict Covid-secure measures, including daily testing, would be in place for the meeting, which takes place in London from May 3 to 5.

His office described it as a "crucial opportunity to revitalise in-person diplomacy", and would focus on the global response to the pandemic, in particular on vaccines.

The meeting was a chance "to show how the world's biggest democracies work together" on a range of pressing issues, he added in a statement.

Other areas to be discussed include targets for girls' access to education, climate finance goals, and ways to tackle famine and food insecurity. G7 leaders are expected to attend their annual summit in Cornwall, southwest England, in June. Last year's event was cancelled in the United States. - APP

## MBS, Xi discuss climate change

## FOREIGN DESK

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman made a phone call to Chinese President Xi Jinping on Tuesday, Saudi Press Agency reported. During the call, the two leaders reviewed the recently announced Saudi Green Initiative and the Middle East Green Initiative to combat environmental challenges in the region. The crown prince announced the two initiatives in late March that aim to form partnerships with regional countries to tackle afforestation, reduce carbon emissions by 60 percent, and protect the marine environment, among other projects.



DUBAI: Foreign minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi held a meeting with minister of foreign affairs and international cooperation UAE Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, at ministry of foreign affairs, UAE. - DNA

## Chad President Idriss Deby dies visiting front-line troops: Army

Longtime President Idriss Deby has died of wounds suffered on the front line in the country's north

## FOREIGN DESK

N'BJANENA: Chad's longtime President Idriss Deby has died of wounds suffered on the front line in the country's north, where he had gone to visit soldiers battling rebels, the armed forces said. Deby, 68, "has just breathed his last defending the sovereign nation on the battlefield" over the weekend, army spokesman General Azem Bermamou Agouna said in a statement read out on state television on Tuesday, a day after Deby was declared the winner of a presidential election.

The exact circumstances of Deby's death were not immediately clear. The army said the president had been commanding his army at the weekend as it battled rebels who had launched a major incursion into the north of the country on election day on April 11. Agouna also said a military council led by the late president's 37-year-old son, four-star General Mahamat Idriss Deby, would replace him. A curfew has been imposed and the country's borders have been shut in the wake of the president's death.



Al Jazeera's Hiba Morgan, reporting from the capital, N'Djamena, said the establishment of the military council is not in Chad's constitution. "What the constitution says is that in the absence of the president or in case he dies, then the speaker of the parliament takes charge of the country for 40 days and so a transition is put in place until elections are held," she said. "[But] the military announced that the legislative assembly has been dissolved and that the constitution also has been dissolved, so what they are doing is that they replaced the constitution with their own set of rules."

But it suffered a setback over the weekend. Agouna had told Reuters news agency that army troops killed more than 300 fighters and captured 150 on Saturday in Kanem province, about 300km (185 miles) from N'Djamena. Five government soldiers were killed and 36 were wounded, he said. FACT said in a statement on Sunday that it had "liberated" the Kanem region. Such claims in remote desert combat zones are difficult to verify.

Deby was a herder's son from the Zaghawa ethnic group.

His latest election victory had never been in doubt, with a divided opposition, boycott calls and a campaign in which demonstrations were banned or dispersed. Deby had campaigned on a promise of bringing peace and security to the region, but his pledges were undermined by the rebel incursion.

The government had sought on Monday to assure concerned residents that the offensive was over. There had been panic in some areas of N'Djamena on Monday after tanks were deployed along the city's main roads, an APP journalist reported.

## Cotton yarn import vital to save textile industry

## NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Faisal Moiz Khan, President North Karachi Association of Trade & Industry (NKATI), has appealed the government to allow the import of cotton yarn and end all taxes, duties on cotton yarn import for a long-term to compete with regional countries so that textile industry may be saved from catastrophe. In a meeting held at NKATI, appreciating the federal government's decision to withdraw import duty on cotton yarn, the industrialists said

that the government needed to take further steps to pull the country out of the severe economic crisis caused by the coronavirus. The meeting was attended by Senior Vice President NKATI, Shabbir Ismail, Vice President, Naem Haider, members of the managing committee and members of NKATI. Faisal Moiz Khan further said that the industrial community is very grateful to Prime Minister Imran Khan and Advisor for Commerce, Textile, Industry, Production & Investment, Abdul Razaq Dawood for their efforts.

## Saudi-led coalition says it intercepts Houthi drone

## WEB DESK

RIYADH: The Saudi-led coalition fighting Houthi rebels in Yemen said on Tuesday it had destroyed an explosive drone fired towards Khamis Mushait in the south of Saudi Arabia.

A military spokesman for the Houthi movement then said they had fired a drone at and hit Abha International Airport, which is near Khamis Mushait, according to a report by the Houthi-run Al Masirah TV.

There was no Saudi confirmation of a hit on Abha and the Houthi report could not be independently verified. Riyadh says it intercepts most of the drones and missiles which the Houthis say they launch at airports, airbases and energy infrastructure, but some do inflict damage. The coalition intervened in Yemen in 2015 after the Houthi took control of the capital, Sanaa, in late 2014. The Houthi group, which holds most of northern Yemen, has kept up regular cross-border attacks on Saudi Arabia and a ground offensive in Yemen's Marib region at a time the United States and the United Nations are pushing for a ceasefire agreement.

## Czechs ask allies to expel Russian diplomats

## FOREIGN DESK

PRAGUE: The Czech Republic on Tuesday called on its EU and NATO partners to expel Russian diplomats in solidarity, accusing Moscow of orchestrating an "unprecedented terror attack" on Czech territory. Foreign and Interior Minister Jan Hamacek said he would summon the Russian ambassador Wednesday to disclose further steps after the expulsion of 18 Russian diplomats believed by Prague to be secret agents, and of 20 Czechs from Moscow in retaliation. "We are calling for collective action of EU and NATO countries

aimed at solidarity expulsions," Hamacek told reporters.

The call comes after Prague accused Russian secret services of orchestrating a fatal explosion on Czech territory in 2014 with the alleged culprits identified as suspects in the 2018 poisoning of former Russian double agent Sergei Skripal.

Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babis said the incident which killed two people was "an unprecedented terror attack on our territory which is unacceptable".

The expelled diplomats left their posts at the sprawling Russian embassy and the much smaller Czech representation on Monday. "We have expelled 18 officers

of the (secret services) SVR and GRU and we are able to prove that every single one of them was just that," Hamacek said. He said he had summoned Russian Ambassador Alexander Zmeyevsky to protest against what Prague views as a disproportionate response.

"It is only logical that if the Czech Republic takes further action, the Russian ambassador must be the first to hear it," Hamacek said. Citing an intelligence report, the Czech government has said that Russia's military secret service GRU orchestrated two explosions in 2014, one of which killed two people and caused extensive material damage.

In connection with the blasts, Czech police are seeking two men also identified as suspects in the 2018 poisoning of former Russian double agent Sergei Skripal in Salisbury, England.

The Czech government also decided on Monday to rule Russia's atomic energy agency Rosatom out of a tender to build a new unit at a Czech nuclear plant.

Hamacek further said the Czech government would stop considering buying the Russian-made Sputnik V vaccine against Covid-19.

Babis said Monday that the ammunition targeted in the explosions belonged to a Bulgarian arms dealer who probably sold arms to entities fighting against Russia. The attacks happened in the

same year that Russia annexed the Crimean peninsula from Ukraine and a conflict broke out between Ukrainian forces and Russia-backed rebels in the east of the country. Babis said the fatal attack was "fumbled," as the military material was probably meant to explode on its way to Bulgaria and not on Czech territory.

The Bulgarian arms dealer, the Emco company owned by entrepreneur Emilian Gebrev, denied any deals involving the depot at that time.

Gebrev himself was the victim of an attempted poisoning in 2015 in the Bulgarian capital Sofia, and an investigation for his attempted murder is ongoing.

**Briefs**

**Foreign direct investment falls by 35pc**

DNA

KARACHI: Foreign direct investment (FDI) has kept falling during the current fiscal as it declined by 35 per cent at the end of the third quarter, reflecting no improvement in the situation for investors. According to State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) data issued on Monday, the FDI fell by 35.1pc to \$1.395 billion during July-March FY21 compared to \$2.15bn in the same period of last fiscal. The inflow in March was just \$167.6 million compared to \$278.7m in the same month of last year – a decline of 40pc. However, as the inflow in March this year slightly improved compared to February when the inflow was \$155m, the FDI trend shows that the overall trend is on the decline. The FDI had dropped by 30pc during the first eight months of the current fiscal, and due to the 40pc decline recorded last month it has now fallen by 35pc after nine months. However, the situation on external front is much better as the current account of eight months of FY21 is surplus with \$881m and the SBP reserves have reached a four-year high.

**Vaccination for citizens of age 50-59 starts today**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations, and Coordination will start vaccination of senior citizens of age 50 to 59 years from Wednesday across the country as per procedure being adopted for other age groups. According to an official of the ministry, for registration, citizens of this age group should send SMS with computerized National Identity Card (CNIC) number to 1166 from any mobile number or visit the website of the National Immunization Management System (NIMS) which is nims.nadra.gov.pk. He said that the vaccine centre and date will be communicated through SMS as per schedule while citizens can get complete information about the vaccination process while using NIMS's website with having facility of registration for vaccination also. He said that foreign nationals can register for the Covid-19 vaccination program on the provision of a passport number along with a valid mobile number to check whether the information is available on NIMS website for registration for vaccination.

**Tarin vows to achieve economic stability**

IBRAR KHAN

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Shaukat Fayyaz Ahmad Tarin on Tuesday reiterated government's firm commitment in undertaking reforms to achieve macroeconomic stability, build fiscal resilience and stimulate economic recovery amid and post COVID-19 scenarios. The minister during a virtual meeting with Managing Director (Operations), World Bank, Axel van Trotsenburg, shared a brief overview of the current economic situation and outlined several initiatives taken to accelerate economic recovery during COVID-19 pandemic. Among others, Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Division Omar Ayub Khan; Minister for Power Muhammad, Hammad Azhar; SAPM on Power, Tabish Gauhar; SAPM on Revenue, Dr. Waqar Masood; Secretary Finance Division, Secretary Power, Secretary Economic Affairs Division, Chairman FBR and other senior officers of the Finance Division participated in the meeting.

**Pak calls for 'flexibility' in UNSC reform talks**

Ambassador Akram said that Pakistan, which is a member of the Uniting for Consensus group, remains firmly opposed to additional permanent members in an enlarged Security Council, but seeks expansion in the two-year non-permanent category

DNA

NEW YORK: Pakistan has called for flexibility to achieve the required consensus among all United Nations' member states to break the impasse in the long-running negotiations to restructure the UN Security Council. "The principle and the single most important requirement is flexibility on part of all groups and all member states, to try to accommodate each others' positions," Ambassador Munir Akram said, as the Inter-Governmental Negotiations (IGN) aimed at making the 15-member Council more effective, representative and accountable. "It is only by building consensus that we can breathe new life in the IGN pro-

cess," the Pakistani envoy told delegates, amid continuing campaign by the so-called Group of four – India, Brazil, Germany and Japan – for permanent seats at UN's high table. Ambassador Akram said that Pakistan, which is a member of the Uniting for Consensus (UfC) group, remains firmly opposed to additional permanent members in an enlarged Security Council, but seeks expansion in the two-year non-permanent category. "We do not believe in enlarging the 'centers of privilege' through the permanent membership of the Security Council, which was the subject of objection by many members," he said, noting that they had caused major impediment to efficient functioning and decision-making in the Council.

"Expansion in the permanent membership would not be a solution to the legitimacy and effectiveness of the Security Council," the Pakistani envoy said. "As we have said before, the problem cannot be the solution." The UfC group, he added, was committed to an equitable enlargement of the Security Council, in particular to enlarging the representation of those regions, which are underrepresented and have been historically discriminated against during the course of history. Full-scale negotiations to reform the Security Council began in the General Assembly in February 2009 on five key areas – the categories of membership, the question of veto, regional representation, size of an enlarged Security Council,

and working methods of the council and its relationship with the General Assembly. Despite a general agreement on enlarging the Council, as part of the UN reform process, member states remain divided over the details. The G-4 have shown no flexibility in their push for expanding the Council by 10 seats, with six additional permanent and four non-permanent members. On the other hand, the UfC group has proposed a new category of members – not permanent members – with longer duration in terms and a possibility to get re-elected. The Security Council is currently composed of five permanent members – Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States – and 10 non-permanent members

selected to serve for two years. In his remarks, Ambassador Akram underscored the need for consensus among the membership of the UN General Assembly in order to have the ability to affect the Charter amendment, which is required to be adopted by the large majority as well as by all permanent members of the Security Council, to accomplish the reform. On its part, the Pakistani envoy said, the UfC, had demonstrated considerable flexibility, pointing out that the group had presented proposals and offered ideas to achieve consensus. "Unfortunately," he said, "we have not seen a similar spirit of flexibility on behalf of certain other groups." "The UfC has displayed and will continue to work in a

spirit of compromise and consensus." Amid the existing divergences in the approach to reshape the Security Council, Ambassador Akram urged IGN's co-chairs – ambassadors of Poland and Qatar – to broaden the areas of convergence. In this regard, he noted considerable convergence in two issues – the relationship between the Security Council and the General Assembly and the size and working methods of the Security Council. He said there was also agreement on equitably enhancing the representation of under-represented regions, especially from Africa, Asia and Latin America and for enhancing transparency and inclusiveness in the Security Council's work and decision-making.

**FIA interim challan reveals mills, agents' nexus**

ATHAR SUFI

KARACHI: Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) on Tuesday submitted an interim challan in the sugar scandal, revealing how mill owners and satta mafia earned Rs110 billion through hiking price of the commodity. According to the interim challan submitted before a judicial magistrate by the FIA, satta agents in Karachi were communicating through 16 WhatsApp groups and continued to hike the price of the commodity. "They increased the prices of x-mill rates using their front men and caused an artificial shortage of the commodity to earn an amount of Rs110 billion," it said. The report found that satta mafia members in Karachi artificially hiked the sugar prices in the city and created an artificial gap between the demand and supply of sugar in the market. Sharing their modus operandi, the report shed light as to how despite making initial payments on speculative prices, the satta agents used to refrain from lifting sugar from the mill. The agency said that they have carried out a forensic audit of the electronic devices used by the accused to understand the mechanism adopted by the satta members besides also collecting data of their transactions from banks.

**Rahul Gandhi tests positive for covid-19**

NEW DELHI: Indian politician Rahul Gandhi has tested positive for coronavirus and is isolating at home. According to a tweet by the Congress lawmaker, he is currently feeling mild symptoms of the virus. He urged all those who had remained in contact with him over the past few days to follow all safety precautions. "After experiencing mild symptoms, I've just tested positive for COVID. All those who've been in contact with me recently, please follow all safety protocols and stay safe," Rahul Gandhi, 50, wrote. Sources close to the Indian politician said he hasn't met his mother and Congress president Sonia Gandhi for the last 12 days. He also hasn't met his sister, Priyanka Gandhi. Following his tweet, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi also prayed for his political rival's recovery. "I pray for the good health and quick recovery of Lok Sabha MP Shri Rahul Gandhi," he tweeted. – Agencies

**Niger delegation calls on Pak envoy**

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of businessmen called on Ambassador of Pakistan in Niger Ahmed Ali Sirohey. The businessmen reiterated their regard and thanks to the dedication of embassy in enhancing diplomatic ties between Niger and Pakistan, said a press release received here on Tuesday. They informed the reason for their visit to the embassy and in regard the audience of Ahmed Ali Sirohey with President Bazoum held last week, they pointed out the pertinent issues raised by the ambassador, especially economy and business development. The delegation requested for a new and strong partnership with Pakistani businessmen and exporters. Moreover, they showed their interest to a bilateral agreement with Pakistan businessmen to invest in Niger. They wished happy month of Ramadan to the Government of Pakistan as well as the embassy. The ambassador appreciated their promptitude and highlighted again the purpose of his official visit to President Bazoum Mohamed. He assured the delegation of the engagement and upcoming projects by the Government of Pakistan to the Niger Government so as to extend brotherhood ties and improvement of the latter's economy. – APP



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Kashmir Committee Shehryar Khan Afridi called on the Ambassador of Saudi Arabia, Mr Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki. – DNA

**Ombudsman presents report to President**

ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi has directed the Federal Insurance Ombudsman to ensure protection of the policy holders' interests. He was talking to Federal Insurance Ombudsman Dr. Muhammad Khawar Jamil who called on him in Islamabad on Tuesday and presented report for the year 2020. President said the federal Insurance Ombudsman should provide immediate justice in cases of maladministration of insurance companies, and in this regard scope of the institution should be further widened. On the directions of the President, a relief of 2.13 billion rupees was provided to the affected insurance policyholders. Despite the coronavirus, 2183 complaints were addressed during the last year. – DNA

**Senior journalist Absar Alam shot in Islamabad**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Senior journalist and former chairman of the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) Absar Alam was shot in Islamabad on Tuesday, the journalist said. The journalist said unidentified men shot him and made a run for it. According to police, Alam was shot in the stomach but is in a stable condition. Police added that the journalist was taking a walk in a park situated in the capital's F-11 area when unidentified men came and shot him. Later, a video of the wounded journalist travelling in a car surfaced on social media.



He can be heard saying he was walking outside his home when he was "shot by someone". "My message to those who shot me: I will not be intimidated," Alam adds. Minister for Interior Sheikh Rasheed, taking notice of the incident, has ordered the Inspector General of Islamabad to launch an inquiry and immediately arrest the people involved.

**Chinese envoy lauds role of 'China Window'**

PESHAWAR: Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Nong Rong Tuesday lauded the role of Peshawar based Chinese information and cultural center 'China Window', in promotion of Chinese culture and assured for full support to the center. "We will continue our support to this institution in future as well and hope that the China Window will also try to do its best in bringing the people from different schools of thought of both the countries closer to each other in future too," he remarked. "We also acknowledge with appreciation the conduct of a prestigious ceremony to mark the 70th Anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relationships between the People's Republic of China and Pakistan," said Nong Rong. – APP

**Dialogue with India depends on IIOJ&K situation: FM**

Kashmir is not a bilateral; rather an internationally recognized issue as there are numerous United Nations Security Council resolutions on it

DNA

ABU DHABI: Minister for Foreign Affairs Shah Mehmood Qureshi has said dialogue between Pakistan and India will only take place if the situation in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir improves. In an interview with Khaleej Times, the Foreign Minister said Kashmir is not a bilateral; rather an internationally recognized issue as there are numerous United Nations Security Council resolutions on it. He said if India and Pakistan want lasting peace in South Asia, they will have to discuss Kashmir issue to find a resolution according to the aspirations of Kashmiri people, as it cannot be put back burners. He said Pakistan is comfortable with the role the UAE can play to improve relations between India and Pakistan. "Friends generally, including the UAE, have always said



that the two countries should sit and resolve issues through a dialogue. India has always been hesitant of a third-party mediation; we welcomed it and were never shy of it," said Qureshi. "We want to move ahead, but in order to get there, India, which is responsible for vitiating the environment will have to create a conducive and enabling environment, for the dialogue to take place," the Pakistani Foreign Minister said. Pakistan will appreciate anyone and everyone including UAE to play a positive and constructive role, but the initiative will have to be indigenous, he remarked. "Pakistan would appreciate anyone and everyone, including the UAE, playing a positive and constructive role," he added. "We welcome third-party facilitation but, no matter what friends say, the initiative has to be indigenous. The political will has to be demonstrated by leadership of India and Pakistan. They can be suggestive and facilitators but, ultimately, it is the people of

South Asia who have to decide what kind of future they visualise for the posterity," Qureshi told the newspaper. "For example, the recent recommitment to the 2003 ceasefire understanding is a good development because Kashmiris on both sides were suffering from unprovoked firing. That, in my view, is a positive development," Qureshi said. "The fact that the Indian Prime Minister sent messages to the Pakistani Prime Minister on National Day is a positive development. Also, a toned down rhetoric is a positive development," he added. "The fact that India wants to see a peaceful Afghanistan and region means that they recognise it won't happen if there are two important players not seeing eye to eye," he said, noting that India will have to revisit some of the unilateral actions that it took which is against the spirit of peace and bilateral discussion.

**Governor visit Sindh districts on PM directives**

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI/THATTA: Sindh Governor Imran Ismail committed that growing health and deprivation of Sindh people will be addressed and not leave at the mercy of anyone. This he said while on Malir and Thatta districts visit on Tuesday. On the directives of Prime Minister, Governor Sindh said that the people of Sindh suffering by failed policing system, the situation in Sindh is very critical. He described major health issues can be resolved through health cards, if Sindh government show interest, whereas, rest of three provinces are getting health cards

**PTI workers corner media**

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI/THATTA: Pakistan Tehreek Insaf (PTI) workers cordoned off Governor Sindh during press conference and Journalists pulled back, while on Malir and Thatta visit on Tuesday. Despite presence of trained official protocol there, young PTI workers shouted on journalists in the month of Ramadan.

he told. Governor Sindh said we are real followers of our Prophet and his sanctity is the most important for us. French president committed de-

Journalist community expressed sorrow over this attitude and appealed PTI leadership for well trained workers deployment otherwise keep them away during press conferences. It is pertinent to mention here that PPP workers never stopped media to cover the events, even during VVIP protocol of Chief Minister and other ministers. It was a completely different attitude observed by untrained PTI workers that stopped media persons attending press briefing.

fame to our religion and offended Muslims, but if we speak out the Holocaust tragedy is consider the same..? Governor said Prime Minister also explained this issue to the

matters will be settled amicably he told. Governor Sindh disclosed that development packages for 14 districts have been given and further phase 2 will be announced on the visit of Prime Minister. He said we will coordinate Sindh government at every step, as we help according to 18th amendment, they are free to decide. Earlier, Sindh Governor Imran Ismail reached Malir Bin Qasim offered Fateha at the residence of PTI Leader Dr. Masroor Ali Syal's uncle sad demise. Later, accompanied the Pakistan Tehreek Insaf leaders and workers visited Thatta district on the directives of Prime Minister next visit of province.