



Islamabad POST

Monday, April 03, 2021

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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Government Act: The pride of the Republic of Poland

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Electronic voting is 'unreliable'

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Apologizes for leaked comments

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Sehr & Iftar Timings

CITY	SEHR	IFTAR
ISLAMABAD	03:43 am	06:53 pm
FAISALABAD	03:50 am	06:50 pm
KARACHI	04:31 am	07:04 pm
LAHORE	03:44 am	06:45 pm
SARGODHA	03:49 am	06:52 pm

FIQA JAFARIA

CITY	SEHR	IFTAR
ISLAMABAD	03:33 am	07:03 pm
FAISALABAD	04:00 am	07:00 pm
KARACHI	04:21 am	07:14 pm
LAHORE	03:33 am	06:55 pm
SARGODHA	03:39 am	07:02 pm

Iran, Afghan border closed for 2 weeks

The revised policy will be effective from midnight May 4-5 till midnight May 19-20

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) on Sunday reviewed border management protocols with neighbouring Afghanistan and Iran as new Covid-19 variants emerge in the region. "The current policy of Land Border Management with Afghanistan and Iran has been reviewed to ensure regulated inbound pedestrian movement and effective management of COVID protocols at Border Terminals (BTS)," read the statement issued by National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC). The revised policy will be effective from midnight May 4-5 till midnight May 19-20. The policy will only be applicable to inbound pedestrians with no effect on the existing cargo/trade (bilateral/ Afghan Transit Trade) movement. According to the NCOC statement, border terminals (BTs) will remain open for seven days a week. "Employment strength of LEAs/health staff at BTs will be increased for implementation of testing protocols and to control high traffic density," read the statement. The coronavirus monitoring body said inbound pedestrian movement would cease with effect from midnight May 4-5 with the exception of Pakistani nationals in Afghanistan and Iran who desire to return to their country and in extreme medical emergency cases etc. It also said that all outbound pedestrian movement is permissible.

Covid death toll crosses 10,000 mark

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: At least 113 more lost their lives to coronavirus in Pakistan, raising the total death tally to 18,070 nationwide on Sunday. About 45,275 coronavirus tests were conducted in the country, out of which 4,414 came back positive, showed the data by National Command Operation Centre (NCOC). The positivity ratio was recorded at 9.74% in the country as of Sunday. The number of recoveries has reached 722,202 across the country so far. Moreover, the number of active cases in the country stands at 89,661 as of today. The national death toll after the recent deaths stands at 18,070. Out of those, 8,550 were residents of Punjab, 4,658 of Sindh, 3,350 of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 691 of Islamabad, 237 of Balochistan, 107 of GB, and 477 of AJK. Given the surge in cases, NCOC has decided to ban processions on Youm e Ali due to the worsening coronavirus situation in the country.

Briefs

Eastbay Expressway completion by Oct

ISLAMABAD: Work on the Eastbay Expressway Gwadar project is in final stage that would be completed by October 2021, Chairman CPEC Authority Lt. Gen (Retd) Asim Saleem Bajwa said on Sunday. In his tweet, Asim Bajwa said that the 14.5 kilometers offshore expressway had already been completed while the remaining 4.5 km onshore road was under construction and 92 percent of work had been completed. He said the project which is being executed under China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), created 2000 direct. The Expressway will connect the port with the second phase of the Free Trade Zone (FTZ) which will facilitate the business climate of the zone and the port alike. The expressway will also provide primary connectivity of the port and its free zone with the network of national highways.

Covid-19 vaccine is very effective

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to Prime Minister on National Health, Dr Faisal Sultan has said that the COVID-19 vaccine is very effective to protect citizens from medical complications of many virus variants. In a statement, he said keeping in view the detection of new COVID-19 variants in Pakistan and raising questions on the effectiveness of vaccine process, the country men are advised to must go for vaccination against the virus to avoid facing more complications and hospitalization. He made it clear that there are so many variants of COVID-19 in the world presently, and some virus variants have a tendency of having more chances of re-occurrence of infection.

Electronic voting is 'unreliable': Shahbaz PML-N escape from negotiations unfortunate

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President and former Punjab chief minister Shehbaz Sharif has rejected the proposal of electronic voting machines (EVM) use in the elections, terming it unreliable. Shehbaz Sharif, who is also the Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly, said the EVM voting system had been rejected all over the world. Even the Election Commission of Pakistan has declared it not credible, he said, adding how such an important national responsibility could be carried out at the whims of a singular person. Shehbaz said the sensitive task of electoral reforms needed people's trust and willingness. He said it is parliament which truly manifests people's hopes and trust. But the doors of parliament have been locked for the last three years, he added. He emphasized that all the stakeholders' and people's say be sought before introducing any electoral reforms. He reminded that PML-N

introduced historic electoral reforms in 2018 with consultation of all political parties including Tehreek-e-Insaf. He said nobody objected to those reforms. The historic draft of those electoral reforms which carries signatures of all political parties is still available, he maintained. Shehbaz said when the opposition was talking about positive proposals and a viable economic agreement, it was humiliated by raising the NRO issue. He boasted

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hussain said on Sunday Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz escape from negotiations on electoral reforms was very unfortunate. In a tweet, he said that their claim that the reform process has to be done by the Election Commission instead of the Parliament showed that they have no understanding of the system and no interest in reforms. Why would a party always coming to power through conspiracies talk of electoral reforms, he remarked.



that it's only the PML-N that could bring about electoral reforms in the country because his party had the courage to take political opponents on board. The PML-N leader maintained that credibility came when justice, transparency and rule of law were prevalent in the country. He advised the government instead of talking about electoral reforms, it should take care of the tattered

Continued on Page 06



ANKARA: President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erodgam broke his fast with labourers at a factory, on the occasion of the Labour Day. - DNA

Afzal Latif new Secy Estab

PM is set to reshuffle his cabinet as well

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: A BPS 21 officer of Pakistan Administrative Services (PAS) Afzal Latif is being appointed as the new Secretary Establishment. Afzal is currently working as Federal Secretary Industries and Production. Afzal Latif has served on a number of key positions. He has also served as the Chairman Capital Development Authority. The government is also removing the Secretary Petroleum Division. The fuel inquiry report had found him guilty as well. Sources say, the Prime Minister is set to reshuffle his cabinet as well. Faisal Vowda may be given a ministerial slot.

Next budget to focus inflation control: PM

The prime minister also seeks proposals from the senior party leadership regarding the next budget

SHUJAAT HAMZA

PM makes surprise visit of Islamabad localities

ZUBAIR AHMED

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan Sunday instructed his economic team to give a special focus on the development projects and measures to control the inflation while formulating the upcoming annual budget. Chairing a meeting to discuss the next annual budget and national economy, he said that besides ensuring the completion of ongoing development projects, new projects should also be designed in accordance with the public needs. National Assembly Speak

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Sunday made surprise visit of different localities of the federal capital to inspect the business activities, implementation of anti-COVID standard operating procedures as well as development works. The prime minister personally drove the vehicle setting aside the protocol. He visited the modular carts placed in G-11 Markaz under Ehsaas Program's Rerhi Baan initiative. He questioned the cart owners about the position of their businesses. The prime minister, who also wore a mask, also advised a boy at a cart to wear the mask as part of the government's efforts to strictly implement the anti-COVID precautions amidst third wave of the pandemic.

Continued on Page 06

PM calls meeting on GSP plus

ISLAMABAD: Prime minister Imran Khan has called an emergency meeting today regarding GSP plus status. The development came after the European Parliament had passed a resolution seeking review of Pakistan's GSP plus status. The meeting will review the possibilities after the passing of EU resolution. On Friday, Pakistan said it was disappointed at the adoption of a resolution at the European Parliament on blasphemy laws in the country. "The discourse in the European Parliament reflects a lack of understanding in the context of blasphemy laws and associated religious sensitivities in Pakistan - and in the wider Muslim world." - DNA

Lifesaving aid arrives in India as death toll hits new record

The country of 1.3b reported 3,689 deaths on Sunday - the highest single-day rise yet in the pandemic, to take the overall toll to more than 215,000

NEW DELHI: More emergency medical aid from foreign donors to alleviate a dire oxygen shortage arrived in India on Sunday, as Covid-19 deaths in the South Asian nation rose to a new record. Sources say the actual deaths may be 10 times higher in India as reported in media or on other social media platform. India is setting almost-daily records for new infections and deaths as the virus crisis engulfs overstretched hospitals in cities and spreads into rural regions. The country of 1.3 billion reported 3,689 deaths on Sunday - the highest single-day rise yet in the pandemic, to take the overall toll to more than 215,000. Just under 400,000 infections were added, bringing the total number of cases past 19.5 million. The latest figures came as medical equipment, including oxygen-generation plants, was flown into the capital New Delhi from France and Germany as part of a huge international effort. "We are here because we are bringing help that... will save lives," Germany's ambassador to India, Walter J. Lindner, said as 120 ventilators arrived late Saturday. "Out there the hospitals are full. People are sometimes dying in front of the hospitals. They have no more oxygen. Sometimes (they are dying) in their cars." French ambassador Emmanuel Lenain said his country wanted to show solidarity with India. "The epidemic is still going on in one country. The world won't be safe until we are all safe. So it's a matter of urgency," he said early Sunday following the delivery of eight oxygen-generation plants and dozens of ventilators from France. - Agencies

EU Parliament's resolution and our response

COMMENT

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI



THE European Parliament on April, 29, 2021 adopted a resolution calling for a review of the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP+) for Pakistan. The resolution was presented by Renew Europe, a liberal, pro-European political group of the European Parliament. It was adopted with a majority of 681 votes against six. The resolution says Pakistan has violated the conditions of its Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus status. The GSP+ is a special component of the GSP scheme that provides additional trade incentives to developing countries already benefiting from GSP. The GSP+ status granted to Pakistan requires the country to demonstrate progress on the implementation of 27 international core conventions. This condition constitutes a strong leverage for the European Union in terms of monitoring any direct advocacy with

Pakistan. Since the grant of GSP Plus in 2014, Pakistan's exports to the European Union have registered marked increase. The main sectors that benefited from GSP Plus have been textile and garments, which besides earning foreign exchange for the country, provided employment opportunities, especially for females. So, there is no doubt that GSP+ status has contributed greatly towards boosting the industrial sector of Pakistan. But the question that what triggered the European Parliament to vote against Pakistan needs some soul searching. The reason appears to be more of a political nature rather than the one mentioned in the resolution. Pakistan and European Union have enjoyed excellent working relations mainly because EU regards Pakistan as an important regional player and country that used to cater to manpower needs of the majority of European countries in the past and even in present as well, though this subsistence has decreased to a great extent. Keeping in view of the past practices, I don't think the EU would go to the extent of rescinding this status for Pakistan. As regards blasphemy laws, and rights of

the minorities in Pakistan, the respective governments in collaboration with the security establishment of the country, have done a great deal to address these issues thoroughly and seriously and that is the reason that the frequency of such cases has been brought to minimal. Curbs on freedom of expression in Pakistan are not new phenomena. It was there even at the time when the EU approved the GSP+ status for Pakistan back in 2014. And probably so was the case with minorities rights and blasphemy laws etc. Prima facie, the move seems to be politically motivated. As we know France being the leading EU country, has biggest number of seats in the European Parliament. Being the founding member, it enjoys colossal clout within and without the bloc. The recent happenings in Pakistan including demonstrations by the banned Tehreek-e-Laibaik Pakistan against France and the French ambassador may have contributed towards adoption of the European Parliament resolution. The saner voices in Pakistan strongly believe that acts of TLP cannot be regarded as the acts of the whole country. Without going into details as to who was behind the

TLP protests and who encouraged them to stage mass gatherings, the satisfying element is that the outfit has been sorted out with the clear intention that such happen it will not be allowed to do it again. Pakistan and European Union are tied in strong bonds of relationship that is based on shared values and common objectives of peace, prosperity and development. The Pakistan-EU relationship has strengthened steadily over the years and is pursued through sound institutional mechanisms and dialogue processes therefore this relationship must not be allowed to derail or affected due to petty issues. The worst time in Pakistan-EU relations was perhaps the year 2002 when the EU election observer group headed by John Walls Cushman came up with a highly critical report about the general elections in Pakistan. That commission sought to pin-point a number of loopholes in the entire election drill and therefore had recommended a review of relations with Pakistan. All such points that have been raised in the recent European Parliament resolution were there in the 2002 report as well. But as we witnessed how that

report was literally discarded by the European Union itself and the EU bosses chose to continue working with the military dictator of the time. All said and done, Pakistan needs to look into points raised in the resolution earnestly. There are still issues that need to be addressed not because the outside world wants it so, but we have to do it for our own sake. People will start harvesting benefits of true democracy only when it is followed and implemented religiously. There is no doubt that credentials of democracy in vogue in our country are weak, which is probably the key reason for Pakistan's being lagging behind in social, developmental and all other sectors that relate to well being of the common folks. And above all, the passing of the resolution has exposed futility of our missions especially present in the EU countries. It also speaks volumes for the inefficiency of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which miserably failed in preempting the situation. Nevertheless the Ministry still can do something to mend fences. It has to engage proactively with the stakeholders in order to avoid any eventuality.

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Briefs

Fire in hospital's ICU kills 18 in India

DNA

GUJRAT: At least 18 people, including two healthcare workers, were killed in a fire at a COVID-19 hospital in the western Indian state of Gujarat late on Friday night, officials said on Saturday, in the country's latest deadly hospital accident.

The fire started around midnight in the intensive care ward of the Patel Welfare Hospital, a designated COVID-19 facility, in Bharuch city, 115 miles (185 km) north of state's main commercial city, Ahmedabad. "Sixteen patients and two staff members have died in the fire. Twelve of them died due to fire and smoke," said R.V. Chudasama, a superintendent of police in Bharuch. "Preliminary investigation shows the fire was caused because of a short circuit," he said.

Local news channels showed footage of a hospital ward completely destroyed in the fire. Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in a tweet he was "pained by the loss of lives due to a fire at a hospital in Bharuch."

India's healthcare system is struggling to cope with the coronavirus crisis, which has killed 211,853 people and infected more than 19 million, according to health ministry data on Saturday. A dozen people were reported killed after a fire in a hospital treating COVID-19 patients in a suburb of Mumbai on April 23. Earlier 22 patients died at a public hospital in Maharashtra where Mumbai is located when oxygen supplies ran out due to a leaking tank.

Airblue flight leaves behind passengers' luggage

DNA

ISLAMABAD: An Airblue flight PA-213 reached Islamabad International Airport on Saturday leaving behind the luggage of all passengers at the Sharjah Airport. The passengers lodged their protest against the airline's negligence. However, the protest by the passengers came to an end after the airline management had promised they would bring the luggage back to the country as soon as possible. Separately, a Pakistan International Airline (PIA) flight PK-452 from Skardu to Islamabad was cancelled after a delay of four hours.

The flight ought to take off at 12:20 pm today (Saturday) but the plane's tyres were low-pressured. See Also: CAA limits int'l flights to 123 from 590 Sources say PIA Engineering is responsible for the maintenance of plane's tyres but the relevant machine was not operational and hence the PIA took services of the Pakistan Air Force (PAF). The TV channel reported that the national carrier has aimed to boost domestic tourism with more flights to and from the tourist sites but on the other hand, the PIA has not been dealing with such small technical issues timely.

Federal Cabinet likely to be reshuffled

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Once again the sword of Damocles is hanging on the heads of federal cabinet ministers as there are reports doing the rounds that the prime minister is unhappy with the ministers and mulling changes in his cabinet.

According to a private television channel report, Prime Minister Imran Khan is not satisfied with his ministers' performance and he would soon announce changes in his cabinet team. The sources informed efforts are on for Faisal Vawda's re-entry into the cabinet. They said a new minister will head Ministry for Water Resources. Wide-ranging changes could not be brought about earlier in the cabinet due to the opposition of now estranged PTI leader Jehangir Khan Tareen.

PM focus is on welfare of common man: Farrukh Habib

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Focus of Prime Minister Imran Khan is on the welfare of common man and targeted policies in different sectors are being launched to extend maximum relief to the deprived segments of the society, said State Minister for Information & Broadcasting Mian Farrukh Habib.

He was addressing a media press conference in his hometown after taking over the portfolio of State Minister for Information & Broadcasting today. He paid best gratitude to the vision of Prime Minister Imran Khan who has been striving hard to encourage middle class in politics so that a political change could be initiated instead of putting the country at the mercy of handful elite of mafias. He said that sufficient number of politicians from middle class had entered into

the assemblies while Faisalabad has also been given due representation in the federal cabinet.

Regarding Labor Day, he said that workers are the most precious asset of Pakistan. "National development is duly linked with the labor class", he said and added that PTI government is also taking due care of this segment. He said that during corona related lockdown, a special Ehsas program was launched to provide relief to daily wage earners.

He was appreciative of vision of Prime Minister Imran Khan who opted to smart lockdown instead of switching over to complete lockdown in view of our socioeconomic conditions. He said that export sector was allowed to continue its activities under strict SOPs. Similarly, the construction sector was also partially opened for the mitigation of jobless workforce. He said that this strategy of smart



lockdown was appreciated globally as it not only contained the unemployment but also generated much needed economic activities. He said that Ehsas Kafalat program was initially launched for 4 million people but in view of fall-out impact of corona, its scope was extended to 12 million population in addition to helping the poor segments living below poverty line. He further told that a ma-

and half of the assembly staff have been called back on the complaints of the Pakistanis. About EOBI (Employees Old-age Benefit Institute), State Minister Farrukh Habib said that its total collection was only Rs.17 billion which has now been enhanced to 28 billion. Similarly, the basic pension has been enhanced from Rs.6000 to Rs.9000. It will help them to overcome the negative impact of inflation. He was critical of the illogical policies of Ishaq Dar and said that previous government has made Faisalabad a graveyard of textile. However realizing the importance of this foreign exchange-earning and job creating sector the Prime Minister announced special textile package for its immediate revival. Special incentives were offered to five major export sectors with a clear direction to ensure expeditious payment of DLTL, sales tax and other

refunds. Energy package was also announced which provided substantial relief to the industrial sector. He said that State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) also played a proactive role by offering long term finance at 3-4 percent interest rate. Existing as well as new startups are fully exploiting from this facility and importing new machineries to upgrade their technologies. He said that improvement in quality will not only help Pakistan to earn more foreign exchange but in return the workforce would also get better salaries.

Commenting about recent elections in Karachi, he said that winning candidate got only 5% votes and hence he could not represent the entire constituency. He criticized the opposition and said that PML-N and PPP are fighting with each other and hence they failed to play their positive role as a strong and unified opposition.



LAHORE: People queue to get sugar in Lahore. Sugar is not easily available despite govt claims. - DNA

PHP arrest 34 proclaimed offenders

DNA

FAISALABAD: Prevention of crime is cardinal objective of Punjab Highway Patrol. SSP Punjab Highway Patrol, Region Faisalabad Mirza Anjum Kamal said while releasing monthly performance report of April, 2021. As per detail, total 340 cases were registered under different sections and 338 criminals were arrested in the drive against hardened criminals. While talking with media, SSP told that 2 Kalashnikovs, 4 Rifles 12 Bore, 13 pistols 30 Bore, with 119 bullets and 20 cartridges were recovered. Furthermore, total 333 liter liquor,

320 Gram Cannabis and 106 Gram Heroin was recovered and culprits were sent to jail. As many as 34 proclaimed offenders were arrested and put behind the bar. As many as 123 cases were registered against reckless drivers U/S 279 PPC. Moreover, 6 lost children were found and reunited with their relatives. Help rendering was extended to 1230 commuters. As many as 77 temporary encroachments were removed for free flow of traffic. Motorcycle is widely used during robbery/Dacoity, in order to prevent road robbery, total 56 Motorcycles were impounded U/S 134 PO, 115 MVO and 550 Cr.P.C.

Mobile education unit distributes 16930 pamphlets

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: Prevention is better than cure. This is the high time to display responsibility in the third lethal wave of Corona Virus. SSP Punjab highway patrol Mirza Anjum Kamal said while releasing Mobile Education unit performance report of April, 2021. While talking to media he told that Mobile Education unit of Punjab

Highway Patrol (PHP) Region Faisalabad has relentlessly pursued awareness campaign in four Districts of Region Faisalabad to educate public about appropriate safety precautions, traffic rules and COVID-19. In this regards, pamphlets, brochures and leaflets distributed among road commuters. Further, he told that Incharge MEU Muhammad Rizwan Bhatti and his team visited 20 educational institu-

tions, 20 Patrol pumps, 20 Banks, 16 villages, 16 Union councils, 17 Hospitals, 36 Goods Transport, 35 Commercial Markets, 36 Bus/Rickshaw stands, 39 Public places, 39 Road shows, 03 awareness seminars and distributed 16930 Pamphlets among citizens and road users to create awareness about Road safety and mobilization to fight against deadly Pandemic. Every day, accidents happen due to

human error. The use of helmet and seat belt reduces mortality during accidents. While talking to awareness billboards about PHP helpline 1124, SSP said that Mobile education unit has erected billboards in the beat areas especially at the start and finishing point of beat areas. MEU has pasted reflectors on slow moving vehicles especially trolleys, trailers and slow moving vehicles.

CM Buzdar visits different parts of Lahore, checks SOPs

DNA

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Sardar Usman Ahmed Buzdar on Sunday has visited different parts of Lahore without protocol and examined the implementation of restrictions and adherence to Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) by the people against COVID-19. According to sources, the CM appreciated the administration, Pakistan Army and business community for observing SOPs and strict implementation to prevent the spread of deadly virus in the city.



On the occasion, he said that the infection can be controlled only by strictly following precautionary measures. The move came after Pakistan reported 113 deaths in the last 24 hours by novel coronavirus as the number of

positive cases has surged to 829,933. The nationwide tally of fatalities has jumped to 18,070 on Sunday. According to the latest figures by the National Command and Operation Center (NCOC), 4,414 persons tested positive

for COVID-19 in the past 24 hours. Punjab remains the worst-hit province in terms of deaths and cases followed by Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Till now 8,550 individuals have lost their lives to the epidemic in Punjab 4,658 in Sindh, 3,350 in KP, 691 in Islamabad, 477 in Azad Kashmir, 237 in Balochistan, and 107 in GB. Furthermore, 304,889 coronavirus cases have been confirmed in Punjab, 284,738 in Sindh, 119,277 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 75,892 in Islamabad, 22,528 in Balochistan, 17,297 in Azad Kashmir and 5,312 in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Doctors, 16,000 workers got infected from COVID in Pak

ISLAMABAD: More than 16,000 healthcare workers, mostly doctors, have contracted COVID-19 in the country with 153 of them succumbing to the deadly infection. According to sources, the healthcare workers affected by COVID-19 included 9,555 doctors, 2,296 nurses, and 4,154 other healthcare professionals. The sources in the health ministry said that currently 564 health professionals are self-isolating at their homes and 22 others are treated at hospitals. "15,266 healthcare workers have so far recovered from the infection," they said. Sharing province-wise details, the sources said that most of the healthcare professionals suffered or died from the virus in Sindh province. "3,362 doctors, 1,098 nurses, and 1,299 other health staffers contracted COVID-19 in the province with 53 of them succumbing to death," they said. - DNA

Ordinance for informal labourers to be presented

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (OPHRD) Sayed Zulfikar Abbas Bukhari on Sunday said that effort were afoot to amend the Employees Old-Age Benefits Institution's (EOBI) laws for inclusion of the informal workers in its pension net. The OPHRD ministry would present an ordinance before the federal cabinet in the coming days to bring majority of the country's informal employment under the government's pension scheme, the SAPM told an online session hosted by the Corporate Pakistan Group (CPG)

and Nutshell Group on social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter.

He said the ordinance, once approved, would also enable the overseas Pakistani workers to become registered pensioners through submission of self-contributions to the EOBI.

Zulfikar Bukhari told the forum that revenue generation of the EOBI had surged significantly as its structural flaws were rectified completely during the two and half year tenure of the present government.

"When our government took over, the monthly pension amount was stood at Rs 5,250; within about 18 months, we took that up to Rs 8,500, with a 62 per cent increase," he maintained.

The SAPM said his goal was to bring the monthly pension of EOBI pensioners at par with minimum wage by improving the organization's assets that had been dormant for the past 15 years and worth trillions of rupees. Highlighting the present government's pro-expatriates initiatives, he said before the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf government came into the power, only blue-collar workers were considered under the OPHRD ministry domain. Now it had been changed as all overseas Pakistanis including the citizens of second and third generations of Pakistani origin families were taken care of by the ministry, he added.

He said prior to the coronavirus pandemic, the OPHRD ministry set

a record by sending around a million people abroad for the various job assignments. "It is a record in itself if we analyze the data from the last 20 years in comparison, and this is happened due to the good-will of Prime Minister Imran Khan and his relationship with other countries." He pointed out that problems of overseas Pakistanis were being resolved on fast-track basis as lands worth billions of rupees had been handed over to them after retrieving it from 'land mafia'. He also mentioned his ministry's efforts for ensuring full-fledged participation of the Pakistani expatriates in the electoral process. Referring to success of the Roshan Digital Account, he said the ultimate aim was to transform it into

a digital challenger bank by adding more incentives for the overseas Pakistanis. Several incentives for the expats were on the cards to boost remittances by curbing the Huwala and Hundi.

To a query, he said the government was now imparting only trainings in demand-driven trades instead of traditional ones. An agreement with Japan had been signed to export Pakistani manpower. As regards tourism promotion, a National Tourism Coordination Board had been set up that took numerous steps including a 5-year action plan and 10-year tourism policy. "The plan is to have Integrated Tourism Zones in each province where all tourism related infrastructure and facilities are available.

Rescue-1122 provided service to 6924 people

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Rescue-1122 provided emergency service to 6924 people of various incidents in different parts of the district during the month of April last.

District Emergency Officer (DEO) Ehtisham Wahla said on Sunday that Rescue-1122 received 122,832 calls including 7431 were of emergency, 20108 for information and 95293 bogus calls in April last. He said that Rescue-1122 responded on 2224 calls pertaining to road accident, 4354 medical, 191 fire incidents, 220 crimes, 5 drowning, 5 building collapse and 432 miscellaneous calls. As many as 463 people died, of them 19 people were killed in road accidents during the last month.

2 laborers killed after falling from height

DNA

FAISALABAD: Two laborers were killed after falling from height at an under construction house, in the precincts of Millat Town police station.

Rescue-1122 said on Sunday that Humayun Jahangir (28) and Adnan Dastgir, residents of Khanewal, were busy in shuttering work in an under construction house in Gattwala Commercial Hub at Sheikhpura Road when they slipped accidentally and fell onto the ground. They died on the spot. On information, the police reached the spot and handed over the bodies to their relatives after completing necessary formalities.

10-day closure of businesses condemned

DNA

LAHORE: The Patron in Chief APPTMA, Mr. Gohar Ejaz has rejected the decision of the Government for Eid ul Fitr holidays from 10th to 16th May 2021.

While expressing his concerns, stated that this will bring the whole country practically shut down for 10 days from Saturday, 8th May to Monday 17th May 2021.

Shutting down the country for 10 consecutive days is unacceptable as it would create a lot of glitches for the economy, industries, particularly the exporters who will not be able to dispatch their shipments abroad due to the complete closure of banks, ports, customs, and all other departments during excessive holidays.

He warned that we cannot afford such extended holidays as they will result in giving losses of up to billions of rupees to the national exchequer and terribly affect business activities particularly the exports. Simultaneously, it will badly affect and deprive the daily wage earners of the country of their desperately needed earnings for continuous 10 days. Workers will find it impossible to feed their families creating a social disaster.

He particularly highlighted the Textile Industry that despite the issues and hardship, committed to double the exports. Textile manufacturers have orders in hand and are working day and night to dispatch shipments according to the agreed schedule. This decision will end up in the cancellation of orders which will not only result in losses to manufacturers but also to the country. Keeping in view the social overall business climate and economic crises being faced by the country, Mr. Gohar Ejaz requested the Government to review the decision of Eid ul Fitr holidays from 10th to 16th May 2021. The holidays should only be from 13th to 16th May 2021. The government should not shut down production and transportation for 10 days as the country simply cannot sustain such production and export loss.

Briefs

CDA renovated 8 bus stops

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Capital Development Authority (CDA) has restored eight bus stops across the city after completion of renovation and repair work. Most of the stops were shabby due to the negligence of previous administrations of the civic body, its official told media. Taking notice of the situation, the CDA chairman had directed the authority officials to fix that in no time to provide better transportation facilities to the capital dwellers, he added. Some new stop were also being built at various locations in the city, including Shaheed-e-Millat, Melody Market, and Aabpara Market, he said. The authority, he said was making all-out efforts to restore the natural beauty of the capital city by utilizing its available resources. Similarly, the chairman has decided to install some new sit-outs across the city to provide recreational facilities to the citizens, he noted. During first phase, it would be established at Sector F-6 Markaz, Agha Khan Road, and School Road. The work would be completed by next week.

Seven cops succumbed to Covid, 262 test positive

DNA

ISLAMABAD: At least seven personnel of Islamabad police succumbed to Covid-19 and 262 tested positive while safeguarding the lives of citizens against the pandemic. The Islamabad Inspector-General of Police (IGP) Qazi Jameel-ur-Rehman said in a video message, the other day. The officers from the rank of constable to Deputy Inspector General (DIG) got infected from the virus, he added. At present, he said, over 300 cops were on the frontline in the fight against the novel coronavirus, adding that morale of the force was high and they were busy in service of the residents. "Every 'Jawan' is dedicated to public service," he remarked. The Capital police were assisting the local administration and other law enforcement agencies to ensure the implementation of anti-coronavirus standard operating procedures (SOPs) across the city. He further stated that Islamabad police stood by its citizens in this difficult time. A ban was imposed on the issuance of driving license for a period of three-month due to coronavirus while the traffic police have been directed not to penalize the road-users in case their license has expired.

Pak begins marketing ICT professionals in Japan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has begun a process to market its professionals from Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector in Japan, aimed at fetching a maximum quota in the jobs recently announced by Tokyo for the overseas workers. Overseas Employment Corporation (OEC), an attached department of the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (OHRD), has recently signed a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) with Inter-SES (a private organization) for the purpose, a senior officer said in a media interview. Under the partnership, the Inter-SES would not only market the highly qualified workforce in Japan but also share the jobs' demand, emanating from Japanese companies, with the OEC, he said, adding it would be posted on an online portal, www.jobs.oec.govt.pk to inform the youth about the new and lucrative employment opportunities.

Experts slam US recognition of Armenians killing as 'genocide'

Devcom-Pakistan webinar urged the Muslim leadership and the independent media to stand united against the US decision, and the EU and UN statements against the Islamophobia for a counter-narrative, just and a rational campaign against the religious prejudices.

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: Speaking at a webinar on Saturday, the geopolitical experts termed the US President Joe Biden's decision a politically motivated step whereby he has recognized Armenians killings by the Ottoman Empire in World War-I as "genocide". Taking up 106 years old matter with an unfair approach by the US shows the white Christian community's influence in US politics. It is unjust and partial decision against a long time NATO partner while the historic events and statistics reveal the facts contrary to the quoted ones for the 'engineered recognition of a so-called genocide'. They urged the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) to stand strong against the mala fide decision of the US president against Turkey. They also suggested the Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan to mobilize likeminded countries to write a strong protest against the politically motivated US decision that is being engineered to pressurize Turkey for vigorously taking up Islamic values and tradition not only in Turkey but across the globe. Development Communications Network (Devcom-Pakistan) or-



ganized the first-ever webinar on the topic "US-Turkey stand-off on the killings of Armenians in World War-I: Putting up the right context" on Saturday. The panel of experts included Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs Chairman Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, Geopolitical analyst Lt. General (Retd) Talat Masood, Director ORSAM Centre for Middle Eastern Studies (Ankara) Professor Dr. Ahmet Uysal, senior journalist from Washington Anwar Iqbal, senior media professional from London Reham Khan, Devcom-Pakistan Executive Director Munir Ahmed, senior visual artist and art entrepreneur

Mahreen Elahi (Karachi), development expert Naseer Gillani, senior journalist from London Hamza Azhar Salam. Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed it is yet another moment in history when we all Muslim countries and friends of Turkey shall unite together against an engineered and politically motivated decision by the US president. A political commitment with a white Christian Armenian community in the selected districts of the United States is being honored. While taking up this decision, the US president shall have kept in mind that the opposition to the Armenian stance is a much bigger pop-

ulation in the US. Turkey is also a very strong economic partner of the EU and the US besides being a significant member of NATO. The media across the globe shall be mobilized as a counter-narrative building against this illegal decision showing the US double standards. Their eyes are closed on Myanmar, Kashmir, Rwanda, Nagorno Karabakh, and many others. Lt. General (Retd) Talat Masood the US decision against Turkey and many other such decisions show extreme prejudice against Muslims while Islamophobia is being happened through different deliberate attempts by the US and some

of the Europeans countries. The EU has recently condemned Pakistan for its very rational statement on Islamophobia. To get respect and honor, the Muslim countries need to understand the strength of unity to become a politically and economically strong bloc. A unanimous and firm stance in favor of Turkey and Islamophobia could lead to some rational behavior towards the Muslim world. Turkey is standing up against the West and the US, we all shall come together to support it. Professor Dr. Ahmed Uysal negated all the statistics quoted against Turkey for the recognition of war killings as baseless

and contrary to the historic facts. "We are not accepting any pressure from the West and the US for our internal and external policy, and we would not even if they impose any more such decisions on Turkey. We have defeated the US and its supporters even in the undemocratic events that have happened in Turkey. We stand united against every malicious campaign against Turkey, and ready to have a forum of likeminded experts, think tanks, and media to combat the challenges confronting Turkey and all the Muslim world and the friends. Devcom-Pakistan Director Munir Ahmed said Turkey is the rising Muslim leadership that is considering a threat to the US and EU vested interest in the region and in the Muslim world. The country is also a strong voice against Islamophobia, so the non-Muslim powers have to plant strategies against Turkey. The joint forums shall kick off counter-narrative campaigns in different countries supported by respective Turkish embassies. This is unfortunate the Turkish embassy in Islamabad was absent from the webinar despite several requests. This is really shocking that many leading think tanks in the region and EU and the US refused to participate.

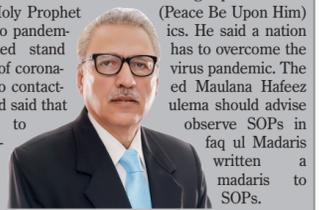


ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan chairs a meeting to discuss country's overall Economic condition and forthcoming budget. - DNA

President urges adherence to SOPs during Majalis

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi on Sunday, in a telephonic conversation with Allama Sajid Naqvi, stressed upon strict observance of standard operating procedures (SOPs) during Ramzan ul Mubarak and Majalis to contain spread of coronavirus. During the conversation, the president further said that people should wear face masks and observe social distancing. Elderly people should perform religious duties at home. Allama Sajid Naqvi assured the president of the complete observance of SOPs during Majalis, a press release said. The president urged ulema to advise people to stick to these SOPs. He underlined the need for acting upon the advice of the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) with regard to pandemic with a united stand trying times of coronavirus also contact-Jalandhari and said that the faithful to mosques, Wa-had already a letter to implement



FIA receives 4547 complaints in 2021

ISLAMABAD: Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) received 4547 complaints during the ongoing year (2021) regarding unsolicited and fraudulent calls where common people were financially deceived. Out of 4547 complaints, 1815 were converted into regular inquiry and 145 cases were also registered in this regard, an official source told media on Sunday. The source said that the Cyber Crime Wing (CCW) of FIA registered 3706 inquiries as well as 154 cases in year 2020 while 1798 inquiries were held and 158 cases were registered in 2019. He said that complaints were registered under various sections of Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA), 2016. - APP

'Koye Bhooka Na Soye Fund' opened for public donations

SBP has advised banks to make available pre-printed deposit slips to facilitate the public

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: 'Ehsaas: Koye Bhooka Na Soye Fund' has now been established to solicit public donations for expansion of Ehsaas Koi Bhooka Na Soye program nationwide. The fund has been set up on the special instructions of Prime Minister Imran Khan. The setting up of this fund in the holy month of Ramazan is an important step that invites public and civil society to contribute towards building a welfare state where no one goes to bed hungry as per the vision of the Prime Minister. Public can deposit donations in cash or through crossed cheque in favor of, 'Ehsaas: Koye Bhooka Na Soye' through branches of any of

the commercial banks operating across the country. Contributions can also be made at field offices of State Bank of Pakistan Banking Services Cooperation in 15 cities across the country. State Bank of Pakistan has advised commercial banks to make available pre-printed deposit slips at their counters to facilitate the public in depositing the donations. Banks have also been advised to prominently display the 'Fund Account Number' and 'IBAN' on their websites and ATM screens enabling donors to make donations through Alternate Delivery Channels. Overseas Pakistanis can also send their donations to any commercial bank in Pakistan using the account details given on the banks' websites. Overseas Pakistanis maintaining Roshan Digital Accounts (RDA) in Pakistan can also contribute to the fund through their RDAs. According to the Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Poverty Alleviation and Social Protection, Dr. Sania Nishtar, "We are setting up a robust fund governance mechanism at the Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Division in order to ensure that all decisions related to funding utilization and deployment are strictly rule-based and transparent." For integrity and efficiency of donor management operations, Ehsaas is setting up a 'Donation Management System'. Once fully operationalized, the system will assist funders in terms of transparency, fund utilization, and traceability.

PM Imran development package in GB lauded

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan Affairs Ali Amin Khan Gandapur on Sunday lauded Prime Minister Imran Khan for announcing a 'historic package' for the development in Gilgit-Baltistan. "The package worth Rs370 billion will usher in a new era of progress in the region," the minister said in a statement. He said GB development package would bring improvement in all sectors, adding that the region would emerge as a base camp for development in Pakistan. Gandapur said Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf government has initiated development projects in Azad Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan to remove the deprivation of people.

Govt plans to expand network of Labor colonies

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Information Secretary Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf (PTI) Ahmad Jawad Sunday said that his government was taking practical steps to help the poor under 'Naya Pakistan housing program' the network of state-of-art labor colonies would further, expand to the entire country. All modern facilities such as schools, hospitals, roads, parks, water supply, electricity, sewerage and mosque were provided in labor colonies, he said while speaking to PTV news channel. "Transparent allotment of flats would be available in Labor Housing Colonies in KP, Punjab and other cities of the country," he added. He said work on labor colonies of Punjab and KP is in full swing and a number of decisions taken by the current government will be

useful for the workers for years to come. He also appreciated the step of the Punjab government for increasing the minimum monthly wage to Rs 20,000 of labor, adding, the announcement of Punjab's first minimum wage aims to solve poverty in the working class and to ensure that workers could handle a soaring cost of living in the future. He said the government will prioritize and safeguard the welfare of workers from all levels to ensure no one is left behind. Prime Minister Imran Khan always prefers the welfare of poor people and tries to mitigate their pain through various government welfare projects under Ehsaas umbrella, he added. PTI government would protect laborers' rights at all costs and they would not have to sleep on roads after the construction of labor colonies and panagahs.

KSA to endow King Salman grand mosque to IIU

The IIU President told that the Mosque will also meet the requirement of the university's population for the prayers as thousands of the officials will use this Grand Mosque

ISLAMABAD: Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques has decided to build King Salman bin Abdul Aziz grand mosque at the New Campus of International Islamic University (IIU), told Hathal-Homud Alotaibi, the university President during an interview with Saudi Press Agency. Thanking His Highness for keen interest in meeting the infrastructural needs of IIU and also hailing Saudi Arabia's continuous efforts of building Mosques across the world, he said that the concept of the design is inspired from a verse (35) of

Surah An-Nur "Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth". He further said that the Mosque will have a huge complex that will also be a hub of research, dialogue and learning where scholars and students will benefit from the facility. The IIU President told that the Mosque will also meet the requirement of the university's population for the prayers as thousands of the officials will use this Grand Mosque. Talking about the design, he said the proposed model



of the Mosque is an exceptional representation of Islamic arts and architecture as well as its conceptualization in the light of a verse of Quran e Kareem makes it unique. Dr. Hathal opined that the Mosque's construction will be a milestone towards achievement of the lofty goals of the university. There will be an ample ca-

capacity in the inner hall of the Mosque where as many as 4000 male and 2000 female will offer prayer, while the yard will also have a capacity to accommodate 6000 people. There will be a library and a museum, while there will also be a Muhammad bin Salman Auditorium for conferences in the Mosque. Commenting on the endowment of the grand Mosque, Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to Pakistan, Mr. Nawaf-saeed Al-Malki said that the Mosque is a gift for the Muslims from the Custodian of Two Holy Mosques

and it will be another valuable addition that will further strengthen bilateral ties between both brethren countries Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. He also hailed services of King Salman bin Abdul Aziz for his untiring efforts for the progress of Muslim world and told that the King Salman bin Abdul Aziz Mosque at IIU will be a symbol of Saudi Arabia's commitment to promote education. He also appreciated services of IIU adding that it is one of the vital institutions of Islamic world. - Agencies

PC-1 approved widening of IJP road

ISLAMABAD: The government has approved PC-1 amounting to Rs.6739 million to widen IJP Road and ensure smooth flow of traffic on it. The PC-1 amounting to Rs.6739 million has been approved and the consultants have been appointed and detailed design along with estimates for the work are under the process of approval, an official source in Interior Ministry said. He said the routine repair as well as maintenance such a necessary patchwork is being carried out for smooth flow of traffic while a project has been approved for complete rehabilitation of road including its widening. - APP

Briefs

UNICEF provides PPEs worth US\$14.5 mln

ISLAMABAD: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is set to provide US\$14.5 million PPEs (Personal Protective Equipment) to Pakistan to help contain the spread of Covid-19 pandemic in the country.

According to the document of the UNICEF Pakistan is supporting Ministry of National Health Services Regulations & Coordination, to procure PPEs test kits and medicines for a total value of US\$14.5 million with funding support from World Bank (US\$8.5 million), ADB (US\$0.5 million and Gavi The Vaccine Alliance (US\$5.5 million).

The PPEs will be distributed to hospitals, isolation centers, quarantine areas and frontline vaccinators. So far PPEs worth US\$2 million have been delivered and handed over to MNHS-R&C for distribution.

UNICEF is arranging the shipment of more PPEs through WFP Transport Common Services to arrive through Karachi, starting 13 July, on behalf of MNHS-R&C.

The WFP flights are being made available for free to all COVID-19 response humanitarian actors. A total of 168 test kits (1,000 tests per kit) with a total value of US\$ 2.4 million, funded from World Bank funding are expected to arrive in Pakistan. — APP

8 criminals including a wanted member held

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad police arrested eight criminals including a wanted member of Former jail bird gang and recovered snatched cash, mobile phone, motorbikes, narcotic and weapons along with ammunition, a police spokesman said on Saturday.

According to details SSP (Operations) Dr. Syed Mustafa Tanveer has directed all zonal officers to accelerate their efforts to curb crime in the city.

Following these directions SP (Saddar-Zone) Capt. (R) Hamza Hamyun constituted special police team under the supervision of DSP Saddar Sajjad Bukhari including SHO Tarnol Rasheed Ahmed along with other officials. Police team arrested a wanted member of former jail bird gang identified as Noor Din and recovered snatched cash, mobile phone, motorbike and weapons along with ammunition from him. Cases have been registered against him and further investigation is underway.

Further-more under the supervision of DSP Saddar Circle SHO Golra Asim Ghaffar along with other arrested two members of bike lifter gang identified as Faizan and Ramzan and recovered stolen motorbike from their possession. Meanwhile Sihala police arrested a drug peddlers namely Zaheer Abbas and recovered 300 gram hashish, 500 gram heroin and 450 gram opium from him. Khana police arrested an accused Unair and recovered one 30 bore pistol from him.

A limited number of people to perform I'tikaf

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A very limited number of dedicated faithful would start performing seclusion activities, known as I'tikaf at specified and secluded corners of countrywide mosques from Monday afternoon with the pledge to strictly follow Covid-19 guidelines and maintain social distance by avoiding large gatherings.

The faithful have been enjoined to adhere strictly to the COVID-19 protocol during the I'tikaf, said Basharat Shah, the head of Masjid management committee of a Jamia Masjid, Islamabad. I'tikaf is a period starting from 20th Ramadan where Muslims seclude in the mosque for ten days in search for Lailatul Qadr (Night of Majesty) and for seeking forgiveness of Almighty Allah by abandoning their routine business.

President ICCI, DC ICT visit markets to ensure SOPs

It was for the first time in the history of Islamabad that President ICCI along with Deputy Commissioner ICT and their teams conducted joint visits to various markets for enforcement of coronavirus SOPs

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) along with Hamza Shafaqat, Deputy Commissioner Islamabad visited various markets of the federal capital including G-10, G-11 and F-10 Marakaz to ensure enforcement and implementation of Covid-19 pandemic SOPs.

Rana Waqas Anwar Additional Deputy Commissioner (General), Babar Sahib Din Additional Deputy Commissioner East, Mehreen Baloch Assistant Commissioner, Khalid Chaudhry Convener ICCI Traders Committee, Raja Abdul Majeed Convener ICCI Administration Committee, Presidents of respective markets and police officials also accompanied them during these visits.

It was for the first time in the history of Islamabad that President ICCI along with Deputy Commissioner ICT and their teams conducted joint visits to various markets for enforcement of coronavirus SOPs.

They inspected meat shops, bakeries, grocery stores, food outlets, clothing shops



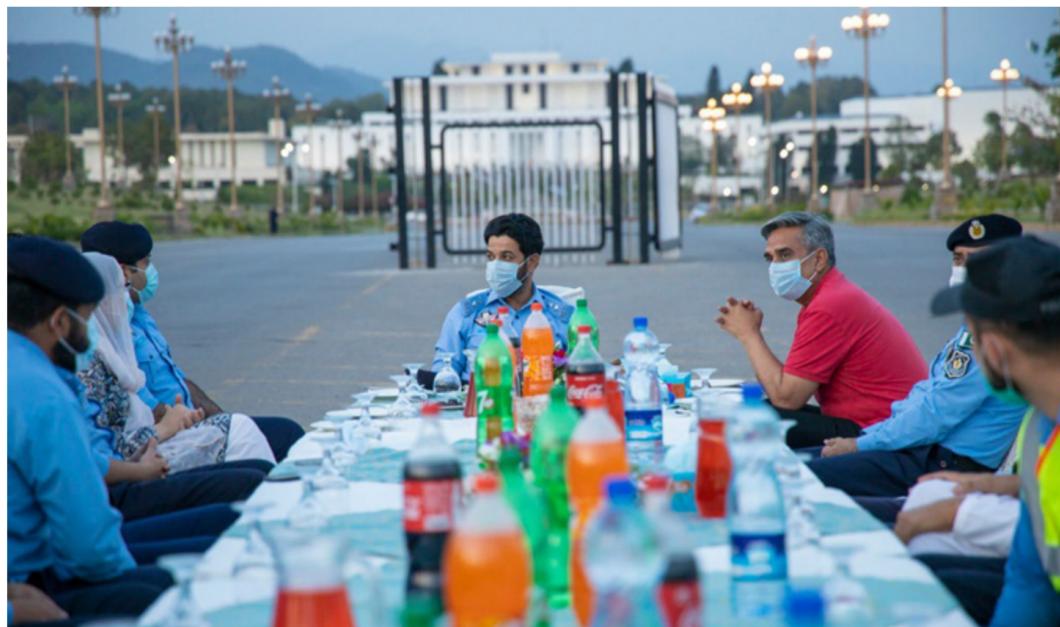
and various retail shops in markets to ensure that traders and customers were following SOPs. Speaking at the occasion, Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan said he was happy to note that most of the traders and customers were following SOPs and the overall situation was much improved in the city. He hoped that with such strict implementation of SOPs in markets, the cases of Covid-19 pandemic would

come down in the coming days. He said the purpose of this joint visit was to fully endorse and support the efforts of ICT Administration for compliance of SOPs in markets. He said that ICCI has set a good example of close cooperation with local administration to control the coronavirus and urged that trade bodies and business communities in other major cities should emulate them

and cooperate with administrations to control the spread of this deadly virus. He said it was a moral obligation of the trading community to make sure that people were wearing masks in markets in order to make the commercial centers and cities safe places from Covid-19. He said that such joint visits would also be made to other markets in the entire capital to make sure that SOPs were followed in mar-

kets. Therefore, he urged that as the business community was extending full cooperation to the Administrations in enforcement of SOPs, the government should enhance the business hours, especially during the last week of Ramadan for Eid shopping as the businesses have already suffered great losses due to lockdowns and restrictions of timings and ample time for business activities would

enable them to recover some losses. Hamza Shafaqat, Deputy Commissioner Islamabad said that today a new precedent was set in the federal capital in cooperation with President ICCI for the enforcement of SOPs. He thanked Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan and the trading community for joining hands with the ICT Administration in efforts to control the Covid-19 pandemic. He said that the ICT Administration was already overloaded with many responsibilities due to which spending more resources on the enforcement of coronavirus was difficult for it. Therefore, the cooperation of ICCI and the trading community was very helpful in enforcement efforts. He said that during joint visits, more awareness about SOPs was created in the general public, warnings were issued, some shopkeepers were fined while few arrests were also made for violations. He said that a new model was presented in the federal capital for the rest of the country that the business community and administration in every city should jointly work for enforcement of SOPs.



ISLAMABAD: Police officials breaking fast during their duty, in front of the Parliament House. — DNA

Pakistan's first PhD in nursing awarded to AKU alumnus

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's first-ever doctorate in nursing has been awarded by the Aga Khan University's School of Nursing and Midwifery to Dr. Khairulnissa Ajani.

Dr. Ajani has been assistant dean of teaching, learning and undergraduate programmes at AKU SONAM since 2017. She was the first candidate to enroll in the school's PhD programme launched in 2015.

As part of her PhD, Dr. Ajani conducted research into hypertension (high blood pressure) — a condition that affects one in three adults in Pakistan. She developed an intervention to evaluate how behavior change strategies could help patients better manage their health. For Muslims, the honor of all the prophets and the sanctity for preservation of the heavenly books is part of the faith. Pakistan wanted international legislation to respect the sanctity of all religions, Tahir Ashrafi remarked.

The difference between freedom of expression, freedom of religion and blasphemy was very explicit and clear which did not mean to desecrate the other religions.

NUMS-NIH USA to train professionals in clinical trials

Clinical trials are conducted to learn whether experiments first conducted in the laboratory and on animals can be applied to human beings

KHAYAM ABBASI

RAWALPINDI: National University of Medical Sciences (NUMS), in collaboration with the National Institutes of Health (NIH), USA, Bethesda, has trained hundreds of medical professionals in clinical research which can help broaden research base and improve Pakistan international funding prospects for its promotion, said organizer of the training Dr. Rehama Gilani here on Sunday.

The Covid-19 pandemic in particular, has reinforced the importance of clinical research in the country. The Vice Chancellor of the university Lt Gen Syed Muhammad Imran Majeed HI (M) (Retd) said "In the

current scenario, there is a vital need to conduct clinical trials for the Covid-19 vaccines to determine their effectiveness and clinical efficacy in the Pakistani population and our collaboration with NIH, USA will provide trained human resource, dedicated infrastructure and understanding of the ethical and legal processes." Dr. Rehama Gilani who is certified in Principles and Practices of Clinical Research from Harvard Medical School, USA and has completed Clinical Research Management training at NIH said that "Introduction to the Principles and Practices of Clinical Research" (IP-PCR) was a specialized clinical research training for clinicians, nurses and

medical students. NUMS has already trained around 250 healthcare workers and students since 2018. A Certificate of Completion is awarded to the participants who score 75 per cent or higher marks in the final exam conducted by NIH USA, she added. NUMS has been accorded a prestigious status of a "Remote Site" by NIH USA being a national and research-focused university and having met their strict criterion for the purpose of conducting this course which is being offered by the university through its own resources. "The aim of this course is capacity building of physicians, scientists, medical and dental students, nurses, public health professionals to design and

CDA for action against encroachment

ISLAMABAD: Officers and workers of Capital Development Authority (CDA) continued their action against encroachments and illegal constructions on Sunday. Mega operations were conducted in Malpur and Dhoke Choorra. 475 kanal government's land was retrieved. Land grabbers had constructed buildings on government's land. According to detail, CDA is continuously conducting operations against encroachments and illegal constructions in the city. Enforcement Directorate conducted an operation against encroachments at Malpur Dhoke Choorra on Sunday. Heavy machinery of the department of MPO was used in the operation. Notices were issued to grabbers before taking action. But, they did not themselves demolish the constructions after receiving the notices. — DNA

Martyrdom of Hazrat Ali R.A conference held at PAC

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: In connection with the 1402nd Martyrdom Day of Amir-ul-Momineen Hazrat Ali (R.A), 'Martyrdom of Hazrat Ali Conference' was organized by Markazi Imam Hussain Council in collaboration with Punjab Arts Council here Sunday.

The conference was presided over by eminent scholar Dr. Ghazanfar Mehdi, Chairman Markazi Imam Hussain Council. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Ghazanfar Mehdi said that highlighting the teachings of Hazrat Ali (R.A) would make it easier to understand the state of Madinah.

He said that Hazrat Ali (R.A) was at the same time the ruler of the State of Madinah and the head of knowledge, wisdom and defense affairs. He said the caliphate of Hazrat Ali (R.A) was ideal where justice as well as the economic needs of the people were taken care of.

Qaiser Hussain said that Hazrat Ali (R.A) and his family sacrificed for the protection of Islam. Babar Ali Khan Baloch, Allama Ayaz Zaheer Hashmi, Ali Abbas, Allama Shakeel Akhtar, Ruqiyah Shah Bibi, Sebtin Raza Lodhi, Akhlaq Zaidi, Ghulam Rasool Balti and other speakers also shed light on the life of Hazrat Ali (R.A).

Later, a resolution was passed demanding the government that Hazrat Ali's Nahjal-Balaghah being the largest book on ethics after the Quran and Hadith, should be included in the curriculum from universities to colleges and schools.

The conference was held online due to coronavirus pandemic.

2 bodies found from property dealer office

FAISAL MUNIR

ATTOCK: Bodies of two property dealers were found from their office under mysterious circumstances in limits of Attock Police station remits on Sunday. Police sources said that bodies of two persons were recovered from a property dealing office located near Teenmela chowk in limits of Attock police station. Police sources said that some visitors spotted bodies of two men lying in a property office and informed local police who rushed to the spot and shifted the bodies to district headquarters hospital. Later they were identified as 55 years old Malik Aabid and 41 years old Ish-tiaque. Police while quoting medico-legal officer of the hospital have said that the bodies have no injury or bullet marks and during preliminary medical examination it was found that their death was caused by consuming some poisonous food or drink and real cause of death would be ascertained through report of autopsy from Lahore.

Traders demand increased security

RAWALPINDI: Trade bodies of the city on Sunday demanded of the district administration to increase security around all markets areas as Eid shopping is gaining momentum with each passing day.

President Markazi Anjuman-e-Tajran Sharjeel Mir while talking to APP, said there should be policemen in plain clothes present at vulnerable areas and ready to converge on a single whistle in case of an emergency.

Besides, he said there are a large number of beggars, who apparently seek alms but are also involved in criminal activities like pick-pocketing and snatching different items from the people visiting the markets.

Mir informed that in a meeting with Deputy Commissioner Capt. Anwar U Haq last day, he asked the DC to give special permission to stallholders related to cosmetic and other women-children items till 11 PM during the last days of Ramzan.

President Moti Bazar Chaudhry Iqbal also asked the quarters concerned to beef up the security of city markets especially during Ifar time. — APP

Ashrafi rejects EU Parliament's resolution

Blasphemy law is not being misused, some individuals and institutions wanted to damage Pakistan's dignity, honor and relations by spreading false and baseless propaganda, said a media statement

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Special Representative to Prime Minister on Religious Harmony and Middle East Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi on Saturday rejected European Union resolution and invited ambassadors of EU and United States to visit Pakistan to ascertain religious freedom in Pakistan. Ashrafi flanked by representatives of different religious scholars said, the European Union resolution was contrary to the facts, based on ignorance, as not a single case regarding misuse of blasphemy law reported in Pakistan during the last

six months. Blasphemy law is not being misused, some individuals and institutions wanted to damage Pakistan's dignity, honor and relations by spreading false and baseless propaganda, said a media statement. The honor of all the prophets and the sanctity for preservation of the heavenly books is part of the faith. Pakistan wanted international legislation to respect the sanctity of all religions, Tahir Ashrafi remarked.

The difference between freedom of expression, freedom of religion and blasphemy was very explicit and clear which did not mean to desecrate the other religions.



The protection of minorities' rights was the responsibility of the state which was being fulfilling. The Constitution of Pakistan guarantees the protection of rights of all citizens of the country. Pakistan could not support riotous

writings and hateful speeches and the entire Pakistani nation stood with the Prime Minister of Pakistan in his stance for the elimination of Islamic phobia and blasphemy. According to a survey by Al-Jazeera TV, the Muslim Ummah has termed Prime Minister Imran Khan as the representative and leader of the Muslim Ummah on the stance taken to eradicate Islamophobia and blasphemy. The judiciary of Pakistan has made decisions in accordance with the constitution and law of Pakistan, said Ashrafi adding that the instances regarding forced conversions has reduced significantly. Hafiz Tahir Ashrafi said the Prime

Minister Imran Khan on the invitation of Saudi Crown Prince Ameer Muhammad bin Salman leaving Saudi Arabia on a three-day visit where he would meet Saudi Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman and political and religious leaders of Saudi Arabia and perform Umrah and would also visit the Roza-e-Rasool Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). Responding to a question, Hafiz Ashrafi said that during the visit, Prime Minister Imran Khan would discuss practical steps on legislation regarding Islamophobia and Blasphemy with Saudi Arabia's political and religious leadership and secretary general OIC (Organization of Islamic Cooperation).

Cross-border attacks

THE past two days have only shown how peace in Afghanistan not only affects the region at large, but Pakistan specifically as well. The US first moved a bipartisan bill in its Senate, opening up export zones in both Afghanistan and Pakistan as a post-September plan to bring some much-needed growth and economic opportunity. These Reconstruction Opportunity Zones (ROZs) would allow for both Afghan and Pakistani citizens to use these points to export certain commodities to the US without any duties levied. If the list of products exempted is extensive enough to accommodate those in the area, this is a positive step for both Afghanistan and Pakistan. But questions of development aside, there is still the lingering security question that remains unaddressed. The attack on Friday that killed four Pakistani citizens in Afghanistan as a reminder of how all those in the region stand to benefit from peace in Afghanistan.

The four-member Extended Troika on Peaceful Settlement in Afghanistan—comprising Pakistan, China, Russia and the United States—have implored both the Afghan government and Taliban to curb cross-border attacks from Afghan soil. This statement in itself is a win for Pakistan, which has been raising this issue without much interest for a long time.

But the only way to truly stop these incidents to ensure Afghanistan itself is stable and peaceful. This extended troika has a job on its hands. September is quickly approaching and there is no indication of restarting the dialogue within Afghanistan. If a new set up is not in place before the withdrawal is complete, a bloody and violence civil war for supremacy among all factions is expected. This violence will naturally spillover into the region as well. If however, the Taliban are brought to the negotiation table, the non-state actor and the existing government can work out a way with less bloodshed. The defence forces and the Taliban at least can find peace and can work together towards eliminating any other groups—such as the TTP—that pose a threat to the region. There is little time left. The priority now is to finalise the process forward.

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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

ABC CERTIFIED

Vol: 01 Issue: 342

Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960

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



Electoral reforms

IN a country where Form 45 has almost become a political term; where the counting of less than 100,000 votes can take hours; and where not a single election has been tainted by accusations of the euphemistically termed 'foul play', it is odd that the 'electoral reforms' buzzword has been banded about but not really been taken up seriously. It has been obvious for some time that Pakistan's crumbling electoral system is in need of reform. In fact, over the past decades, almost all political parties have talked about electoral reform as the essential ingredient to make the electoral system more representative and fair. Unfortunately, little has been done other than the occasional bouts of hand-wringing over the need for such reforms. Now the recent by-elections in Daska and in NA-249 in Karachi, each with their own controversies, have drawn further attention on the need to focus on ideally building a consensus between all political parties on electoral reforms.

There have justifiably been concerns among political observers that people's trust in democracy and the electoral process has dwindled considerably by the mishandling of both the recent by-elections. And all of it will require all political parties to sit on the same table and agree on the reforms. There is no point in any reform if there is no political consensus around it. The electoral malpractices we have witnessed recently do not only require reforms on paper; they also call for political will on the part of all major political parties. Good ethical and political attitudes are a prerequisite for such reforms. When institutions that should be entirely non-partisan display explicit or implicit partisanship, no functional democracy can come into being. Electoral reforms – much like efforts at accountability or any other well-meaning initiative – will only work if they are not used as a red herring by any stakeholder in the process. A strong belief in upholding the constitution is what has led to governments in other parliamentary democracies to follow free and transparent elections, no matter how much acrimony exists among parties. That is the kind of adherence to constitutional principles, electoral rules and the law of the land that we need in Pakistan. If we cannot ensure a fair and free election, conducted by an impartial body, we cannot claim to be a democracy.

The pride of the Republic of Poland

Andrzej DUDA



The 230th anniversary of the enactment of the Polish Constitution, the first in Europe, should be an inspiring holiday for the whole of today's Europe - writes Andrzej DUDA

FILLED with the joy of spring, we are celebrating a great Polish holiday whose origins date back to the 18th century. It marks the anniversary of the Constitution signed on the 3rd of May 1791 also known as the Government Act or the Constitution of 3 May. It was Europe's first and the world's second modern act of this type and a truly momentous piece of legislation. Its adoption by the Great Sejm of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth held in Warsaw was a historic breakthrough. The legacy of the Constitution, the idea of a political system it contains as well as its liberating and democratic message all make an important contribution to European heritage. Indeed, the 230th anniversary of the enactment of the Constitution should be an inspiring holiday for the whole of today's Europe.

Great constitutional acts often result from political or cultural crises that require careful reflection on the light and dark sides of the previous course of events. However, it takes great skill to reform wisely rather than destroy everything based on utopian ideas divorced from the realities of history. A new order cannot be decreed arbitrarily on paper, but must be derived from authentic human experiences, desires and aspirations.

One example of a successful combination of visionary outlook and realism is the world's first constitution adopted in the United States of America as a response to the challenges of history. Creators of the Constitution of 3 May of 1791 also grounded their plans for reform in a specific political and social context. The Act they drafted proved to be a well-chosen cure for the ailments of the Republic. Its aim was to strengthen the rights and freedoms of citizens as well as the governability and stability of the state. It was designed to make that state strong enough to be independent and successfully resist hostile activities of neighbouring powers which sought to dominate the Republic and, eventually, steal its land. It was not by chance that Catherine the Great's Russia and Frederick II's Prussia made efforts to discredit Poles in the eyes of the international community as incapable of self-determination and effective government. The Constitution of 3 May proved the contrary, showing that Central and Eastern Europe, the Republic of the Polish Eagle and Lithuanian Pannonia, home to many nations and cultures, was the birthplace of solutions that were modern as well as visionary, commonsense and pioneering.

Today's anniversary is a good opportunity to recount the long and glorious political tradition of the old Republic, a tradition of the rule of law, democracy and parliamentarism that represents an important part of our identity. It is worth pointing out that the rich republican traditions inspired by the achievements of ancient Rome and Greece were present in Poland as early as the 14th century. Granted in 1430, the

Polish privilege of the nobility *neminem captivabimus* ("we shall not arrest anyone without a court verdict") preceded by far the English Habeas Corpus Act from 1679. The act *nihil novi sine communi consensu* ("nothing new without common consent") – prohibiting the monarch from passing any laws that were not approved by the parliament – comes from 1505. From 1573, kings were elected in free, universal elections by all members of the nobility who made up about 10% of the population. The Warsaw Confederation of 1573 is believed to this day to be a paragon of religious tolerance. Finally, the very founding of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1569 – a common state of Poles and Lithuanians established as a voluntary, equal union – was an extraordinary phenomenon in the Europe of that time which may be considered an archetype of today's European Union.

And so the Constitution of 3 May – changing the 18th-century Republic into a constitutional monarchy based on the separation of powers and guaranteeing legal protection to citizens – was a logical continuation of our traditions. Notably, this seminal and innovative constitutional reform was the result of a political process rather than an armed revolution and bloody repressions against whole social classes. The main theme of the Constitution was the idea of the community of citizens: Long live the King, long live the Sejm, long live the Nation, long live all estates. This historic act is a source of great pride for us.

Enemies of freedom decided that the modern, liberal Constitution of 3 May posed a threat to their interests. Absolutist, imperial Russia, supported by Prussia, started a war against the Constitution and did its best to destroy its legacy. Nonetheless, the work accomplished by the Constitution lived on. Future generations carried the memory of the groundbreaking reform of the political system, this great upsurge of thought and spirit aimed at a much-needed modernisation based on the most noble, universal values. The heritage of the 3 May Constitution is an integral part of the finest European

traditions. It is no accident that the Constitution of 3 May was hailed as "one of the first sources behind the idea of the European Union" during the commemorations of the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome.

I am convinced that, even today, we can all draw on the ideas that founded the May Constitution and on its legacy, including when we consider the future model of European integration and possible amendments to European treaties. The following principle from the Constitution should be a source of constant inspiration: All power in civil society should be derived from the will of the people. Democratic deficit and insufficiently recognised representation of citizens in EU decision-making processes are some of our most important common challenges – it is interesting to note that the tension between the need for democracy and meritocracy can also be found in the provisions from the May Constitution. Similarly, the document tried to find ways to reconcile tradition with modernity as it combined Enlightenment ideas with Christian values defined as the foundation of European unity. It must be underlined that the Government Act of 1791 was based on the very principles that we ourselves treat as the bedrock of the European civilisation and order: respect for human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity. They are an axiological beacon that we must never lose sight of.

This is why I want to share with you the great pride and joy on the 230th anniversary of the Constitution of 3 May. It is a great holiday for Poles, Lithuanians and all the nations of Central and Eastern Europe that contributed to the achievements of the former Republic, but, beyond that, it is also our shared, European holiday. Let it be an inspiration for an even better and more integrated Europe. Let it be, to quote the old song, "the dawn of May".

– The writer is the Foreign Minister of Poland. The text was published simultaneously with the Polish monthly „Wszystko co Najważniejsze” in cooperation with the Polish Institute of National Remembrance and KGHM.

Kazakhstan eager to share inter-ethnic model

Aiman Zhussupova



The United Nations and the OSCE have previously commended Kazakhstan's model of encouraging interethnic relations based on respect, and its efforts to strengthen the unity of the nation. The Assembly itself has established formal links with the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, the Center for Global Dialogue and Cooperation

WHEN Kazakhstan became an independent state in 1991, the risk of interethnic conflicts was one of the most critical problems for the post-Soviet nation that inherited the world's fourth largest nuclear arsenal. This was exacerbated by forecasts of large-scale armed conflicts and the risk of loss of statehood. The predictions were not unfounded.

Kazakhstan's population was split along ethnic and linguistic lines. It was classified as a particularly diverse society in the Index of Ethnolinguistic Fractionalization, calculated in 2001 by US researcher Philip G. Roeder, which analyzed the degree of ethnic and linguistic diversity in various countries. The situation looked even more complicated when applying the theory of overlapping lines of division, according to which the probability of a violent conflict multiplies if two such lines, for instance ethnic and social, overlap. Clearly aware of these risks, in the early 1990s, Kazakhstan's first President Nursultan Nazarbayev outlined the key ideas of a new policy in the field of nation-building – the preservation of interethnic harmony, ethnic diversity, and the equality of citizens, regardless of their ethnic and religious affiliations. To strengthen and support interethnic harmony in the country, the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan, a unique civil society organization, bringing together representatives of 130 ethnic groups, was created in 1995.

The Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan has undergone substantial development over the years and its authority is now recognized internationally. Several public structures of the Assembly have been created: councils of public accord, councils of mediation, a club of journalists, a scientific expert council, a youth movement, an association of entrepreneurs, among others. Furthermore, since 2007, the Assembly has been given power to delegate nine of its representatives to the Mazhilis (lower house of the Kazakh Parliament). The experience and policy of Kazakhstan in the

field of maintaining interethnic peace and harmony is of genuine interest to international organizations and states. Of course, in practice, each country's situation is unique. Nevertheless, the Kazakh model, which has demonstrated its viability, is studied closely by many, with some countries developing somewhat similar structures. The United Nations and the OSCE have previously commended Kazakhstan's model of encouraging interethnic relations based on respect, and its efforts to strengthen the unity of the nation. The Assembly itself has established formal links with the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, the Center for Global Dialogue and Cooperation, and state and non-state structures of numerous countries.

One example of an entity created to pursue similar goals, albeit in a different environment, is the European Council on Tolerance and Reconciliation (ECTR), an NGO that was established in France in 2008 to monitor tolerance in Europe. The ECTR prepares practical recommendations for governments and international organizations to improve interreligious and interethnic relations on the continent. It focuses on combating xenophobia, anti-Semitism and racial discrimination in the modern world. In 2012, the ECTR proposed to the European Parliament a Model National Statute for the Promotion of Tolerance, defining the basic principles and concepts of tolerance, and the principles of relations between various social groups. As part of ECTR's work, the European Medal of Tolerance was established to honor and reward achievements in the promotion of tolerance in Europe and countering intolerance.

It is clear that the preservation of interethnic harmony is a basic condition for the development of any multi-ethnic country. Today, ethnic Kazakhs account for approximately 68.5% of Kazakhstan's population, meaning that other ethnic groups make up 31.5%. Nearly 30 years after Kazakhstan gained independence, Nursultan Nazarbayev, who is the chairman of the Assembly of the People of Kazakh-

stan, reaffirmed his adherence to the principle of unity in diversity, stating in 2020: "Peace, harmony and unity remain the key priorities of state policy. This is a principled position in the field of interethnic relations, and it will not change." He noted the existing demand for a new inclusive policy in the field of interethnic relations, pointing out the importance of developing measures aimed at deepening the integration processes of society. He also pointed out that the Assembly should put particular effort into consolidating tolerance and preventing xenophobia among the younger generations. Interethnic accord and a society's "zero tolerance" policy to any expressions of xenophobia is never always guaranteed. These processes require constant attention. Various factors, such as evolving ethnic composition of a society, socioeconomic conditions and, to a certain extent, external policy factors play a role.

The policy of interethnic relations and strengthening peace and harmony is being continued and developed by the country's current President, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev. The Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan is there to play an important role in this. Over the last 25 years, the Assembly has evolved from a consultative advisory body to a legitimate advocate of the interests of Kazakhstan's society, including through parliamentary representation. The Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan continues to face new tasks to this day. But there is no doubt that over the past quarter of a century it has contributed to interethnic and interreligious harmony in the country. Kazakhstan managed not only to preserve, but also significantly strengthen its socio-political stability. In the conditions of a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional Kazakhstan, this policy became a guarantee of peace, which is the foundation for the successful development of any state.

– The writer is an expert of the Institute of World Economics and Politics (IWEP) under the Nursultan Nazarbayev Foundation (Kazakhstan)

Briefs

Madrid election puts PM on the defensive

MADRID: Madrid votes Tuesday in a closely watched regional election which surveys suggest will deliver a serious drubbing to Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez's Socialist Party. In a country still divided over its 1936-39 civil war and the dictatorship of Francisco Franco that followed, echoes of the past have entered campaign rhetoric with parties labelling each other "reds" and "fascists". The polarisation has drowned out debate over the Madrid regional government's handling of the pandemic and the policies of the conservative Popular Party (PP), which has governed Spain's richest region since 1995. Polls suggest the PP will win by a wide margin although they will fall short of a majority in the Madrid regional assembly and will need the support of far-right party Vox to govern. Aside from the verbal insults, the campaign has been marked by death threat letters with bullets sent to top politicians, including the leader of far-left party Podemos, Pablo Iglesias. Podemos is the junior partner in Sanchez's minority coalition government. Isabel Diaz Ayuso, the outgoing leader of the Madrid regional administration who is a rising star in the PP, set the tone for the campaign in March when she called the early election, saying it would allow voters to choose between "Socialism or freedom". - APP

Lankan Covid fundraiser match hit by virus

COLOMBO: A charity cricket match in Sri Lanka aimed at raising money to help fight the coronavirus pandemic was cancelled Sunday as a former Test captain tested positive, the country's governing body for the sport said. The T20 match was due to be played on Tuesday at Pallekele, a day after the final day of the second Test between Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. "The Charity Match... between the Sri Lanka Greats XI and Team Sri Lanka will not go ahead as planned due to the prevailing health situation in the country," Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) said in a statement. Officials said the decision was taken after Upul Tharanga, 36, tested positive for the virus. "Sri Lanka Cricket also took into consideration the safety of the players," SLC said. The Sri Lanka Greats XI included legendary players Sanath Jayasuriya and Aravinda de Silva. Sri Lanka is going ahead with the two-match Test series against Bangladesh without spectators as the country faces a third wave of infections. The sharp rise in cases has prompted the authorities to ban public gatherings and lock down several areas from Sunday.

German FA president urged to resign

BERLIN: German Football Association (DFB) president Fritz Keller faced calls to resign on Sunday after he sparked outrage by comparing his deputy to a Nazi judge. Presidents of the DFB's regional associations, which run Germany's semi-professional and amateur leagues, announced after weekend crisis talks that Keller had lost a vote of confidence and has been "asked to step down from his position". DFB general secretary Friedrich Curtius was likewise asked to vacate his role after losing a confidence vote. The turmoil comes after Keller in a recent meeting likened DFB vice-president Rainer Koch to Roland Freisler, the infamous head of the Nazi party's court in the 1940s. Freisler was also a participant at 1942's Wannsee Conference, where it was decided that 11 million Jews should be sent to death camps. The remark triggered a storm of criticism and Keller has since apologised to Koch, acknowledging that his words were "totally inappropriate, notably towards the victims of Nazism". - APP

Pak merchant hails online entrepreneurial culture

"The entrepreneurial culture is very good for the youths, as they have the opportunity to develop themselves, even if they may not be successful," he added

DNA

BEIJING: Pakistani merchant hails online entrepreneurial culture in China, according to report carried by China Economic Net (CEN) on Sunday. "I've seen many Chinese in their early 30s start their own business online. It's a very good entrepreneurial culture and so I started my own e-business here," noted Usman Ashraf, a Pakistani entrepreneur living in Bei-

jing, China, with his wife. This past 4 years had seen his accomplishment of education and career in China. While Usman was still a graduate student in BLCU, he attended many conferences, business seminars and exhibitions, and these activities, as he put it, empowered him to live in China and start his career with the Chinese people.

Usman appreciates the "startup culture" in China very much. In China, there are many individual busi-

ness people. "The entrepreneurial culture is very good for the youths, as they have the opportunity to develop themselves, even if they may not be successful," he added. As per Usman, China is a major exporter that exports all kinds of goods to every corner of the world and Pakistan is set to be a main hub of export due to China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). "Ten years ago, there was

no online marketing or online shopping in Pakistan, but now it's growing very fast, so it's a great opportunity for me to enter this market," he explained. Usman graduated from Beijing Language and Culture University (BLCU) and launched a footwear brand called Hawks in December 2019, to export footwear products from China to Pakistan on Daraz, Pakistan's biggest online shopping application that connects sellers and buyers virtually.

In 2020, many industries have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, Usman's business has been boosted instead since he shifted to online business. "Due to the pandemic, many offline shops suffered but my online businesses didn't," he said. "All the transactions can be done through WeChat and other online payment systems," Usman's wife Qurrat ul Ain came to China 5 months ago, and she has been impressed by many ad-

vanced and convenient technology in China, too. "Technology makes everything easy here," she mentioned that she's still in the learning stage, but she likes to use WeChat and other online payment systems. "Chinese people call me 'Batie' (iron-clad brothers). We don't feel that we are working in a foreign country and this is our second home. The online entrepreneurial culture is quite attractive here," Usman further mentioned.



MANCHESTER: Manchester United fans on Sunday stormed the Old Trafford stadium protesting against the club ownership. - DNA

'Shahnawaz, Zahid should be given chance'

ISLAMABAD: Former pacer Shoaib Akhtar believes pacer Shahnawaz Dahani and leg-spinner Zahid Mehmood should be given a chance in the Pakistan team for the second Test against Zimbabwe in Harare, starting on May 7. The Rawalpindi Express feels that Pakistan should make two changes during the second Test. Pakistan won the first test by an innings and 116 runs, to take 1-0 lead in the two-match series. Akhtar, who holds the record for bowling the fastest delivery in world cricket, wants to see pacer Shahnawaz and leg-spinner Zahid in the Pakistan lineup. Akhtar, who took 178 wickets in 46 Tests, said that Dahani's inclusion would depend on whether Shaheen Afridi wants to rest or not. "Shahnawaz Dahani can be given a chance but you need to ask Shaheen Afridi if he wants to rest. What if Shaheen doesn't want to rest? There are already only few Test matches on offer and, if I was asked the same question, I would have played," he said. - APP

Prison escape: Iraqi police questioned

BAGHDAD: Iraqi police were questioned Sunday after 21 prisoners escaped jail, the latest breakout to highlight failings in the country's security system. Ten of the escaped prisoners, all convicted on drug and terrorism charges, had been recaptured by Sunday afternoon after a manhunt was launched at dawn. The interior minister immediately "ordered the confinement to the barracks of all officers and police" at Hilal district prison in Mouthanna province 300 kilometres (180 miles) south of the capital Baghdad, while an investigation into the escape was carried out. It was not immediately clear how the prisoners broke out, but in corruption-riddled Iraq, escapes are often achieved by paying off security forces. Other detainees get help from armed groups or tribes, often equipped with heavy arms. Transparency International ranks the country 21st from bottom in its Corruption Perceptions Index. In mid-March, men from a powerful pro-Iran armed group disguised as soldiers freed a drug trafficker under police escort while en route to court in Amara, another town in rural southern Iraq. - APP

Next budget to focus inflation...

From Page 01 control inflation, and development projects for the next fiscal year. The participants were told that the next budget should be development-oriented with full attention towards improvement of growth ratio. By expediting the development work, new projects would be launched to enhance economic activities, GDP growth and revenue collection besides begetting jobs. The meeting was told that the pandemic had impacted the economies globally; however the economic activity was going on in Pakistan owing to the government's prudent policies. It was told that despite COVID-19 situation, revenue collection had been recorded at almost double before the current lockdown comparing April last year. Moreover, the prime minister was also briefed about the comprehensive strategy devised to control the inflation.

Electronic voting is 'unreliable...'

From Page 01 economy, inflation and wretched economic condition of the people. The reaction came after Prime Minister Imran Khan had invited the opposition to sit with the government for consultation on holding transparent elections in order to strengthen the country's democracy. In a series of tweets, the PM said that despite a low turnout, all parties are crying foul and claiming rigging in the NA-249 by-election. The same happened in Daska as well as the recent Senate election. He added that in fact, apart from the 1970 election, claims of rigging in every election have raised doubts over the credibility of their results. He said that in 2013, there were 133 NA constituencies' disputes before the election tribunals. PTI asked for examination of just four constituencies' votes and rigging was established in all four of them. However, it took PTI one year and a 126-day sit-in to get a Judicial Commission which found over 40 faults in the conduct of elections. Yet, no substantive reforms were put in place, he added. The PM said that technology and use of Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) is the only answer to reclaiming the credibility of elections. He invited the opposition to sit with the government and select from the various EVM models available to restore election credibility. He further said that former US President Donald Trump's team did everything to dispute the result of 2020 presidential election; but not one irregularity was found due to the use of technology in the electoral process.

Sri Lanka smell victory against Bangladesh

Sri Lanka declared their second innings after lunch on 194 for nine and Bangladesh lost three wickets in the afternoon session finishing on 111 for three at tea

PALLEKELE: Sri Lanka were five wickets away from a series win against Bangladesh after the tourists were restricted to 177 for five at stumps on day four of the second Test at Pallekele on Sunday. Chasing a daunting 437 to win, Bangladesh batsmen were troubled by Sri Lanka spinners Praveen Jayawickrama and Ramesh Mendis who took the five wickets on a crumbling wicket. Sri Lanka set Bangladesh a formidable target of 437 by declaring their second innings on 194 for nine at the hill city of Pallekele. No team has reached such a large target in Test history. The greatest run chase in the history of Test cricket is the 418 made by the West Indies against Australia in 2003 in Antigua. The most successful run chase at Pallekele, a picturesque hill resort, is 382 by Pakistan in 2015. Should Bangladesh succeed in forcing a draw with 150 overs left in the game, Sri Lanka risk falling to their lowest world ranking. Bangladesh, who are down to their last recognised pair, need another 260 runs to win with one full day's play left. Sri Lanka declared their second innings after lunch on 194 for nine and Bangladesh lost three wickets in the afternoon session finishing on 111 for three at tea. Mendis claimed the big wicket of Tamim Iqbal when he was caught behind by Niroshan Dickwella for 24. Debutante Jayawickrama, who took six wickets in the first innings, accounted for Saif Hassan and Najmul Shanto. The delivery that dismissed Shanto pitched outside off stump, spun sharply, went through bat and pad and hit the top of leg-stump. After tea, Bangladesh lost captain Mominul Haque, who chopped a Mendis delivery onto his stumps to leave his side struggling at 134 for four. Earlier, Dimuth Karunaratne top scored with 66 runs as Sri Lanka declared on 194 for nine. The Sri Lankan captain finished the series with 428 runs in three innings, having scored a double hundred, a hundred and a half-century. Bangladesh's left-arm spinner Tajjul Islam bagged his eighth five-wicket haul, for 72. The first Test ended in a draw after a festival of runs, the two sides scoring 1,289 for the loss of just 17 wickets over the five days. - APP

Brussels police arrest 132 in crackdown on party

BRUSSELS: Belgian police arrested 132 people as they used tear gas and water cannon to break up a banned anti-lockdown party in a Brussels park on the weekend, an official report said Sunday. One partygoer was knocked out by a water cannon and 14 others were slightly injured - including one struck by a police horse - as riot police brutally dispersed the party on Saturday in scenes echoing a similar gathering in the park a month before.

UK sends 1,000 more ventilators to India

LONDON: The UK said Sunday it was sending an extra 1,000 oxygen ventilators to Covid-struck India, as a group of doctors staged their own intervention by offering long-distance telemedicine from Britain. Britain has already sent 495 oxygen concentrators and 200 ventilators to India as the country grapples with a devastating surge in coronavirus cases, and is shipping three larger production units, dubbed oxygen factories. "We're going to be sending out another package of 1,000 ventilators, very shortly," Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab told BBC television. - APP

Five of those arrested were taken into police custody, the police said. Three officers were hospitalised and a dozen slightly injured during clashes with the protesters. Between 1,000 to 2,000 mainly young people gathered for the party, which was organised online, to protest against restrictions imposed to fight the spread of Covid-19. Prime Minister Alexander de Croo had urged the crowds to stay away, and 600 riot police, numerous

water cannon and a mounted unit were deployed to the park before the festivities had even begun. The protesters' music all but drowned out police demands for mask-wearing and social distancing, and AFP reporters at the Bois de la Cambre park did not hear an order to disperse before the police moved in. As police cars and armoured trucks with water cannon rolled onto the grass close to the heart of the gathering, the merry-makers chanted: "Free-

dom, Freedom." Exactly a month previously on April 1, around 2,000 people had gathered in the Bois de la Cambre and several people were hurt, along with officers and horses, in clashes when the police intervened. Belgium is under its second national lockdown as a coronavirus prevention measure and bars and restaurants have been shut since late October. But a vaccination drive is picking up speed and outdoor dining and drinking is due to resume on May 8. - APP



NEW DELHI: A plane from Tashkent has landed in Delhi with humanitarian aid which consists of oxygen concentrators & sought after medicines. - DNA

Iranian FM apologizes for leaked comments

Zarif criticizes Soleimani's separate relations with Russia and for refusing to stop using the national carrier Iran Air for Syrian operations despite Zarif's objections. Iran Air has been sanctioned by the US

DNA

TEHRAN: Iran's foreign minister apologized Sunday for recorded comments that were leaked to the public last week, creating a firestorm in Iran less than two months before presidential elections. The recordings of Mohammad Javad Zarif included frank comments on powerful late Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani, who was killed by a US drone strike in 2020. The attack at the time brought the U.S. and Iran to the brink of war. Soleimani's funeral processions in Iran drew millions of people to the streets.



In the recordings, Zarif criticizes Soleimani's separate relations with Russia and for refusing to stop using the national carrier Iran Air for Syrian operations de-

Fire rips through Iran chemical factory

TEHRAN: A chemical factory near the central city of Qom caught fire Sunday, Iranian media reported, a blaze that injured at least two firefighters. Videos showed heavy black smoke rising from Movaledan chemical factory in the vicinity of Qom, one of Iran's prominent religious cities. The cause of the blaze was not immediately known. Twenty fire engines and 150 firefighters were dispatched to the site, the semi-official ISNA news agency quoted Qom fire department spokesman Hamid Karimi as saying. Karimi said the firefighters managed to stop the fire from reaching alcohol tanks, although there have been several explosions and two fire engines have caught fire. Two firefighters have also been injured, with one in critical condition, ISNA said. - DNA

spite Zarif's objections. Iran Air has been sanctioned by the U.S. Zarif said in an Instagram post Sunday he hoped Soleimani's family would forgive him. "I hope

that the great people of Iran and all the lovers of General (Soleimani) and especially the great family of Soleimani, will forgive me," he said. Zarif's leaked comments

were highly controversial in Iran, where officials mind their words amid a cut-throat political environment that includes the powerful Revolutionary Guard, ultimately overseen by the country's supreme leader. Besides the criticism of Soleimani, a top commander in the Guard, Zarif's leaked remarks included cutting references to the limits of his power in the theocracy. Zarif can be heard saying at various points in the seven-hour tape that it was not meant for release. "If I had known that a sentence of it would be made public, I certainly would not have mentioned it as before," he said in his Instagram post.

Briefs

Rally against Myanmar junta, calling for 'spring revolution'

YANGON: Thousands of anti-coup protesters marched in Myanmar Sunday, calling for a "spring revolution" with the country in its fourth month under a military regime.

Cities, rural areas, remote mountainous regions and even Myanmar's rebel-controlled border territories have been in uproar since the military ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi in a February 1 coup.

The junta has aimed to suppress dissent through a brutal crackdown that has seen mass arrests and an escalating death toll.

Demonstrations kicked off early in commercial hub Yangon as activists called for a show of force and a "spring revolution".

Youths gathered on a street corner before marching swiftly down the streets in a flash mob - dispersing soon after to avoid clashing with authorities.

"To get democracy is our course!" they chanted, waving a three-finger salute of resistance. "To bring down the military dictatorship is our course!"

Central Mandalay region saw hundreds take the streets led by monks in saffron-coloured robes, carrying the flag of Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy. In northern Shan state, youths carried a banner that read: "We cannot be ruled at all."

By 10 am, violence erupted in the state's Hsipaw township, when security forces cracked down on protesters there, killing at least one. "He was shot in the head and died immediately," said one protester, who said he rushed to hide his friend's body in case authorities tried to take it away. - APP

Gunman kills two at US casino

WASHINGTON: A gunman killed two people and seriously wounded another at a casino in the northern US state of Wisconsin on Saturday night before being shot dead by police, authorities said.

Police said they first received a call at 7:28 pm about a shooting at a restaurant at the Oneida Casino/Radisson Hotel and Conference Center complex near Green Bay, which is operated by the Oneida Nation.

"The suspect is deceased, the police have shot the suspect so there's no threat to the public," Lieutenant Kevin Pawlak of the Brown County Sheriff's office told reporters after midnight.

Pawlak said it appeared to be a "targeted event not a random shooting." The intended target was an employee who was not there at the time but the gunman decided to shoot some of their friends or acquaintances, he said. The FBI were at the scene assisting with the investigation. - APP

Police slam 'unacceptable' May Day violence

BERLIN: Nearly 100 police officers were injured and over 300 people arrested after May Day rallies in Berlin descended into "unacceptable" violence, police and local authorities said Sunday.

Around 30,000 people from across the political spectrum took part in several marches in the German capital on Saturday as part of the traditional Labour Day workers' rights demonstrations. Most of the demonstrations passed off peacefully, police said.

But the mood darkened in the evening after police pulled far-left "black bloc" protesters out of the crowd for not adhering to pandemic hygiene regulations such as social distancing.

Along with thousands of others, they had been marching in the "Revolutionary May Day" demonstration to protest against racism, capitalism and rising rents in the city.

Heavy scuffles ensued, with protesters throwing glass bottles and stones at police and setting dustbins and wooden pallets ablaze in the streets. - APP

China, Cyprus to enhance ties, promote China-EU cooperation

The two countries understand and support each other on issues concerning each other's core interests and major concerns, and are committed to maintaining mutual trust and friendship

FOREIGN DESK

BEIJING: Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Friday held a phone conversation with Cypriot Foreign Minister Nikos Christodoulides, with both sides vowing to enhance ties and work jointly to promote cooperation between China and the European Union (EU).

During the conversation, Christodoulides thanked China for helping Cyprus

fight the COVID-19 pandemic, noting that Cyprus is willing to work with China to ensure a successful celebration of the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries and further enhance bilateral relations.

Cyprus firmly adheres to the one-China principle and supports the EU in actively developing cooperation with China, said Christodoulides, stressing that Cyprus would continue to play a constructive

role in this regard.

Christodoulides also briefed Wang on the informal 5+1 meeting on the Cyprus issue held in Geneva, expressed appreciation for China's fair stance on this issue and hoped that China would continue to hold such a stance.

Wang said that China and Cyprus are good friends and partners of mutual respect and win-win cooperation.

The two countries understand and support each other on issues concern-

ing each other's core interests and major concerns, and are committed to maintaining mutual trust and friendship, safeguarding the basic norms governing international relations and maintaining the overall health and stability of China-EU relations, he said, adding that the two sides have also injected new impetus into mutually beneficial cooperation through the Belt and Road Initiative.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the estab-

lishment of diplomatic ties between China and Cyprus, Wang noted, saying that China is ready to hold various forms of celebration activities with Cyprus to further consolidate public support for China-Cyprus friendship.

China and the EU are comprehensive strategic partners, for whom cooperation is the right path while confrontation leads to lose-lose scenarios, Wang said.

It is hoped that Cyprus will continue to play a positive

role in pushing forward China-EU relations, Wang added.

On the Cyprus issue, Wang noted that the fact that the informal 5+1 meeting on the Cyprus issue was held on schedule is a positive signal, and China will continue to support all parties in pushing for a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the issue on the precondition of strictly abiding by relevant United Nations resolutions and fully respecting the will of the Cypriot people.



KABUL: Afghan NSA met NATO Senior Civilian Representative Ambassador Stefano Pontecorvo and discussed joint efforts to effect an orderly transition. "The sides discussed practical steps to deepen Afghan-NATO co-op in the next chapter of bilateral relations." - DNA

Pakistan needs to follow Chinese flood control model

BEIJING: Pakistan should replicate and implement China's Sponge City model to combat the recurring floods, said Khansa Gulshad, a second-year Pakistani PhD student in flood control and management at the Graduate School of China Institute of Water Resources and Hydropower Research (IWHR).

In an interview with China Economic Net (CEN), she said the model has the advantages of alleviating urban flooding and water resources shortage, two chronic ills in Pakistan. The CEN's report says the sponge city project, also known as green development interventions and green infrastructure in other countries, is a new urban construction model for flood management, strengthening ecological infrastructure and drainage systems. - DNA

'Economic package for Pak, Afghan introduce'

DNA

LAHORE: US Democratic leader Tahir Javed has said that US senators have introduced an economic package for Pakistan and Afghanistan, which will enable textile goods to be sent from Pakistan to the US without any duty.

Tahir Javed said Saturday that Democrat Senators Chris Van Hollen and Maria Cantwell and Republican Todd Young introduced the package, which will bring economic benefits for Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The economic package was introduced to promote stability in the region. It has been tabled before the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee. Under this package, reconstruction zones will be established in the Pak-Afghan border areas.

Tahir Javed further said that through this legislation, textile goods can be sent to the United States without paying any duty, adding that it would be of great benefit to Pakistan over the next 10 years if it gets approved.

He said that this one act could solve many problems of Pakistan, with the possibility of its exports to the United States increasing tenfold. He added that the relationship between Pakistan and the United States could gain a new dimension through this legislation.

Trade, industry need to follow SOPs

DNA

LAHORE: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry's ruling group BMP Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar has asked the traders to strictly follow the government's SOPs in markets for curbing the spread of deadly coronavirus and averting halt of the industrial wheel.

Moreover, there is also need to speed up vaccination process, especially for the industry workers in the country, for the smooth operation of trade and industry, he added.

"The businessmen themselves have to ensure a strict implementation of the standard operating procedures in markets and commercial areas in order to curb the spread of Covid-19 pandemic, he said and warned that the third wave of coronavirus had spread to dangerous levels and the situation demanded that the business community play a role in strict compliance with the SOPs in business areas to control further Covid-19 infections."

Mian Anjum Nisar stressed that a reduction in coronavirus cases would help the government to consider easing restrictions on businesses, as it would cause great losses to trade activities, render thousands of daily-wage workers and other workers jobless, making the lives more miserable, fuel a further increase in inflation besides badly impacting the economy.

US Bill to bring economic benefits

LAHORE: Pak-US Business Council Sunday said a bipartisan bill moved in the US Senate on Friday to establish duty free export zones along Pak-Afghan border, will promise economic benefits to both countries and boost US efforts to promote peace in the region.

Lauding the move in the US Senate, founder chairman Pak US Business Council and President SAARC chamber Iftikhar Ali Malik said the bill would establish Reconstruction Opportunity Zones (ROZs) in Pakistan and Afghanistan's border regions to allow certain products from these areas to enter the US duty free. He said bill would generate economic opportunities for the people of these war torn areas and lay the groundwork for a more stable region.

He said ROZs would export textiles and apparel goods to the United States without paying duties. He said the US goods trade deficit with Pakistan, a 56th largest trade partner is \$1.3 billion in 2019 while two way goods trade is \$6.6 billion in same period which speaks of sorry state of affairs. - APP

Palestine welcomes racial discrimination committee decision

The decision affirms that Israel's systematic discrimination and racism against people are generalized policy and practice

DNA

RAMALLAH: The State of Palestine welcomes the positive decision of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on the admissibility of its inter-State communication against Israel, the occupying Power, for its systematic violations of the provisions of the Convention as well as Israel's racist and discrimi-

natory policies against the Palestinian people.

The Committee's decision affirms that Israel's systematic discrimination and racism against the Palestinian people are generalized policy and practice that must be eliminated. It also confirms that Israel's so-called judicial system is complicit in these egregious violations, merely serving as a rubber stamp to Israel's regimes of apartheid and settlement

enterprise. Israel's discrimination and racism against the Palestinian people violate the basic tenets of international law and humanity as a whole.

Whereas the fight against racism and discrimination must be universal, the international community must assume its moral and legal obligations to end all forms of discrimination against the Palestinian people. Turning a blind eye to Isra-

el's pervasive violations is inexcusable.

Israel, the occupying Power, must also cooperate with the Committee and the putative Commission, and facilitate a transparent and effective reporting process into its violations of the Convention. Generations of Palestinians have endured the intolerable historical, physical, and human anguish of Israel's discrimination and racism.

Iqbal's poetry in Chinese language launched in Beijing

DNA

BEIJING: A booklet containing select verses of Allama Muhammad Iqbal in Chinese language was launched at Pakistan Embassy, Beijing, according to a report published by Gwadar Pro on Friday.

This event is part of festivities to mark the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China. Pakistani Ambassador to China, Moin Ul Haque

hailed Iqbal's philosophical depth, political acumen and artistic brilliance.

He said that Iqbal's message has a universal appeal and it transcends the narrow limitations of creed and nationality and that his contributions to philosophy and literature are a common heritage of the mankind.

Ambassador Moin expressed the hope that this book would popularize Iqbal in China and deepen cultural linkages between the two countries.

More int'l aid lands in India

NEW DELHI: International aid to alleviate India's dire oxygen shortage arrived in the South Asian nation on Sunday, as its coronavirus death toll climbed to a grim new record. The country of 1.3 billion reported 3,689 coronavirus deaths on Sunday - the highest single-day rise yet in the pandemic, with nearly 400,000 new cases of Covid-19 registered across India. Surges in Brazil and Canada have also highlighted the persistent threat of the pandemic, with the global death toll approaching 3.2m even as many nations ramp up vaccination drives. India expanded its vaccination program to all adults on Saturday, but many of its states are struggling with shortages despite an export freeze for shots produced domestically. - APP

Pakistan embassy Indonesia hosts iftar for Prof Dr. Said Aqil Siradj

DNA

JAKARTA: Prof Dr. Said Aqil Siradj, a leading Islamic Scholar and the Chairman of the Executive Council Of Nadhlatul Ulama (NU), visited Pakistan House for an Iftar and dinner hosted by H.E Ambassador Muhammad Hassan. The chairman was accompanied by the members of the executive council Nadhlatul Ulama, the largest Muslim Organization of Indonesia.

The two dignitaries discussed various issues being faced by Muslim Ummah and possible areas of cooperation between Pakistan and Indonesia.



Ambassador Zaheer holds khuli katheri

DNA

BRUSSELS: The Ambassador of Pakistan to Belgium, Luxembourg and the European Union, Zaheer A. Janjua, held the 4th monthly Khuli Katheri in virtual format with Pakistani diaspora in Belgium and Luxembourg. The Ambassador congratulated the community members on the occasion of Holy Ramadan and prayed for their prosperity and wellbeing.

Ambassador Janjua informed the participants that the Embassy would remain closely engaged with the community and continue to extend all possible services and assistance. In this regard, the Ambassador had assigned dedicated staff to facilitate the applicants with documentation and submission of forms.

Appreciating Pakistani diaspora, the Ambassador highlighted that remittances from Belgium had reached US \$ 176.9 million,

witnessing an unprecedented increase of 275% year on year basis. He also informed that a webinar on Riba Free Shariah Compliant Bank-

ing under Roshan Digital Account would be organized in collaboration with Meezan Bank. He encouraged the community to participate

in the event. During the interaction, the diaspora members conveyed their suggestions regarding visas, NICOPs and passports. The Ambassador welcomed the input of the community and assured implementation of their suggestions. The community members appreciated the Embassy's outreach efforts and provision of efficient consular services.

The virtual interaction was attended by diaspora members from different walks of life, including academia, business, social services and media. The Embassy of Pakistan, Brussels regularly reaches out to the Pakistani community, in line with the vision of Prime Minister Imran Khan to maintain close engagement with Pakistani diaspora and to provide seamless services delivery.



Briefs

PPP decides to appear before ECP

DNA

KARACHI: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has decided to appear before the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) with regard to a petition challenging NA-249 by-poll results. According to details, the PPP has established a legal team comprising of Farooq H. Naek, Latif Khosa, Qadir Khan Mandokhel and others that would lead the party's case before the election commission. Divulging details on the matter, the PPP candidate who won from NA-249, Qadir Khan Mandokhel said that he would be leaving for Islamabad from Karachi tomorrow to appear before the ECP. "The PPP will respond to every query raised by the ECP and will present evidence of transparency during polls if needed," he said. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has issued a stay order on NA-249 by-poll results on Saturday after Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) candidate Miftah Ismail challenged the results. Other than issuing a stay order, the ECP also set a hearing on the petition of Miftah Ismail for May 04. PPP's Abdul Qadir Mandokhel won the election by securing 16,150 votes, according to unofficial results. PML-N's Miftah Ismail was the runner-up with 15,473 votes. Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan's Mufti Nazeer Kamalvi clinched the third position with 11,125 votes, followed by Mustafa Kamal of the PSP who bagged 9,227 votes. PTI's candidate Amjad Afridi secured 8,922 votes while Hafiz Mursaleen of the MQM 7,511.

Over 4m people registered for vaccination

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Over four million people have registered themselves for coronavirus vaccination across Pakistan. According to details, overall 40,33,170 people have got them registered including 24,49,032 male and 15,84,140 female. Moreover, 25 transgender have also been registered for coronavirus vaccination. Most of the people got them registered for vaccination from Punjab, the largest province of the country. In Punjab 23,84,665 people have opted for vaccination. In Sindh 7,70,101 persons have got them registered for coronavirus vaccination, while in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 4,92,295 people have been in vaccination list. Minimum people have been registered in Balochistan province where only 39,847 opted for vaccination. In Islamabad's Capital Territory 1,47,409 people have got them registered for vaccine, while in Azad Kashmir 1,14,189 persons and in Gilgit-Baltistan 57,664 people have been registered. So far, 7,11,389 people have completed their two doses of vaccine including 4,40,990 male and 2,70,398 female.

Pak exports to Japan jump by 40% from Jan to March

Covid related limitations had brought a slight negative impact on trade between Pakistan and Japan towards the end of last year

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's exports to Japan have jumped by 40% in the first quarter (Jan - Mar) during the current year as compared with the last quarter of 2020 i.e. (Oct - Dec). According to trade figures released by Japan's Ministry of Finance, the increase is more than 47% when compared to the same period last year i.e. Jan - Mar 2020, Pakistan embassy in Japan said in a press release on Sunday. This trend highlights that Pakistan is coming out of the challenges to international trade posed by the current pandemic. Covid related limitations

had brought a slight negative impact on trade between Pakistan and Japan towards the end of last year; however, Pakistan's exports to Japan bounced back in high numbers. As compared to exports of US\$ 61.6 million in the last quarter of 2020, Pakistan has exported goods worth of US\$ 86.1 million to Japan from January to March 2021, whereas exports in the same quarter last year stood at US\$ 58.7 million. This multiplying trend observed in bilateral trade is mainly associated with focused efforts of the mission to diversify the export mix

of Pakistan for Japan. Pakistani Mission in Tokyo, through its Trade and Investment Wing, devised an export diversification strategy 'Option Pakistan' last year with a focused layout plan - reaching out to all major business chambers and trade associations in Japan, introducing a range of Pakistani exportable products. Ambassador Imtiaz Ahmad along Trade and Investment Consular Tahir Cheema held meetings with local government trade departments, regional JETROs and Chambers of Business in Osaka, Kobe, Kyoto, Nara, Sendai, Aomori and

other important business hubs. This high-level interaction with the Japanese business community resulted in raising the confidence of Japanese importers in Pakistani goods. Augmenting these efforts, the Mission through its Trade Consular Mr Cheema participated in almost all major trade fairs and exhibitions held in and around Tokyo since resumption of such events since September last year in a hybrid mode as international exporters are unable to enter Japan to display their goods for such promotional activities.

The strategy not only resulted in spreading information about Pakistan and its trade potential but also helped in providing Japanese companies with an attractive source of procurement for their businesses that are facing serious issues of depleting stocks due to travel restrictions. In the recent months, seafood products, petroleum, dry fruits, spices and minerals have contributed to Pakistan's rising exports to Japan; whereas, a considerable increase has been noticed in export of woven fabric, knitted garments, honey, sports goods, cutlery, socks, gloves, gems &

jewelry and dates. Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) is also partnering with the Mission to increase presence of Pakistani companies and products in the upcoming events to be held in Japan as the pandemic prolongs, adding to the challenges of manufacturers and exporters. This support will come in the form of enhanced subsidy by TDAP for priority sectors. In the coming months, TDAP, JETRO and Pakistan's Trade Mission at the Embassy will further strengthen plans to increase Pak-Japan trade. - Agencies

UK MP 'deeply concerned' over French Islamophobia

FOREIGN DESK

LONDON: A Muslim member of the UK parliament has written a letter to French President Emmanuel Macron, expressing concerns over his treatment of French Muslims and rising Islamophobia. "I write to you as a British Muslim Parliamentarian deeply concerned over the growing Islamophobia on display in France, which, in some instances, is being legally reinforced. Recent legislation passed by the French Senate to ban the hijab for girls under the age of 18 risks encouraging religious hatred against Muslims and the fostering of vile Islamophobia," wrote Afzal Khan, representative of Manchester, Gorton. "While banning the hijab for under-18s, there are a number of other provisions within the Bill which are deeply concerning to Muslim communities in France and beyond. This includes the prohibition of parents wearing visible religious symbols while accompanying children on school trips, the wearing of the 'burkini' (full-coverage swimsuits), and a ban on 'prayers on university premises and the display of foreign flags at weddings.'" he added. Khan, brought the attention to official definition of Islamophobia created by the APPG in 2018 and described the term as being "rooted in racism".

No chance of Eid crescent sighting on May 12

DNA

ISLAMABAD: According to astronomical considerations, there is absolutely no chance of the sighting of the Shawwal crescent on the evening of May 12. Astronomers forecast that Ramzan, the 9th month of the Islamic Calendar, would consist of 30 days in Pakistan and some other countries this year as the chances of Shawwal moon being sighted on that day were pretty slim. However, an official decision would be announced by Central Ruet-e-Hilal committee Chairman Moulana Syed Muhammad Abdul Khair Azad following the meeting of the committee being held on 29th of Ramadan (May 12) Wednesday.

Woman gives birth to quintuplet boys in Peshawar

LAKKI MARWAT: A Lakki Marwat woman gave birth to quintuplets at Lady Reading Hospital in Peshawar on Sunday. According to doctors, the mother and her five children were healthy. Lady Reading Hospital spokesman said the family belonged to Lakki Marwat and the woman had been brought into the Gynaecology Ward of the hospital. He said that she gave birth to five children and all are boys. The spokesmen further said the hospital's gynae unit is providing health facility 24 hours a day. - DNA



ISLAMABAD: PM Imran Khan visiting a stall in G 11 Markaz, during his surprise visit to the city, on Sunday. - DNA

Turkey stresses ceasefire between Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan

NEWS DESK

ANKARA - Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu expressed Ankara's support for a ceasefire deal between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan in separate phone calls to his counterparts in the two Central Asian nations. Following two days of border clashes, Çavuşoğlu told Sirojiddin Muhriddin and Ruslan Kazakbayev that Turkey would provide the support needed to peacefully settle the two countries' disputes, according to diplomatic sources. Çavuşoğlu also voiced his satisfaction with the truce inked between the two sides earlier on Saturday.



The violence that started on Wednesday between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan was centered on control over the local water distribution network, Kyrgyz media reported on Thursday. Surveillance equipment was installed by Tajik officials at the Golovnoi water distribution center, which Kyrgyzstan says is located in an area where sovereignty is yet to be defined, according to the Radio Free Europe news website.

Clashes broke out with the intervention of the border troops from the two countries, and soldiers were sent to the region with armored vehicles from both sides. Tensions on control of the water supply continued on Thursday, however, with residents throwing stones at each other. Nearly 40 people were killed - including a 13-year-old girl - and 134 wounded along the disputed segment of the Kyrgyz-Tajik border, according to the Kyrgyz Health Ministry. The Turkic Council on Friday also expressed concern over the escalation of tensions on the Kyrgyz-Tajik state border and called for the swift introduction of a cease-fire.

Talks on unity govt underway: Palestine

FOREIGN DESK

RAMALLAH - The Palestinian Authority (PA) is holding talks with factions to form a national unity government following the postponement of elections, Palestinian officials said on Saturday. PA spokesman Nabil Abu Rudeineh told the official Palestine Radio that the path after delaying the polls "is to hold talks with the factions, a national unity government, strengthen the

[role of] the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and to hold a meeting for the Central Council to set the policies and strategies". The Central Council is a body affiliated with the PLO's National Council that includes all Palestinian factions except Hamas and Islamic Jihad groups. "Talks will be with all factions [...], talks started yesterday and efforts are underway," Abu Rudeineh said, but without providing further details.

Pakistani beef gets opportunity to enter Chinese market

BEIJING: As China has a supply gap of beef and Pakistan has sufficient capacity, it was hoped that Pakistani beef will soon enter the Chinese market, says a report published by China Economic Net (CEN). According to the Pakistan Economic Survey 2019-20, more than 8 million rural households in Pakistan engage in livestock production which contributes to 35% to 40% of their total income. Over the years, animal husbandry has surpassed farm production and become the biggest contributor to val-

ue-added agriculture. Pakistan has 208 million food animals, with a milk output of over 60 million tons and an annual production of 20 billion eggs, Khurshid Ahmad, Animal Husbandry Commissioner, Ministry of National Food Security and Research, said. Compared with Pakistan, China is a large meat importer. In 2020, China's beef production reached 6.72 million tons, and the import volume reached 2.1183 million tons with an increase of 27.65%, setting the beef import record. China's annual output of beef and mut-

ton adds up to 10 million tons, said Li Jinghui, Deputy Secretary General of China Animal Agriculture Association and President of White-feathered Broiler Alliance, adding that "China's per capita output is a few kilograms, which fails to meet domestic needs. That's why there are millions of tons of imports." The report says, China is a major meat importer while animal husbandry plays an important role in the economy of Pakistan, yet annual meat trade between the two countries is very small. - APP

Afghanistan reels from economic fallout as foreign troops leave

DNA

BAGRAM: Amin Agha worked as a manual laborer for eight years at Bagram Airfield, the U.S. military's largest base in Afghanistan. But as the United States begins its final troop withdrawal from the country, Agha is among hundreds of Afghans who have recently lost their jobs at the facility, the Radio Free Afghanistan reported. The American military has employed tens of thousands of Afghan civilians and contributed significantly to the local economy since the

U.S.-led invasion in 2001. The sharp reduction of foreign forces since the peak of the war in 2011 has inflicted an economic shock on Afghanistan, severely affecting businesses, people's jobs, and their incomes. Thousands more Afghans will be affected when the last foreign troops depart by September 11. Observers warn that a fall in international aid following the pullout will compound the already ominous economic conditions in Afghanistan, where poverty and unemployment are soaring. "People are in trouble," says

Agha, a 33-year-old construction worker who lives with his family of eight in a village near Bagram Airfield. "Some people who have lost their jobs can't even afford to feed their families anymore." Even as Afghans confront a bleak economic future, many are also bracing for an intensification of the decades-long war after the withdrawal. Many expect the pullout to further undercut the weak Kabul government and encourage the Taliban to seek war instead of peace. The international military presence has been a key

source of employment for Afghans for nearly 20 years, attracting cooks, cleaners, manual laborers, mechanics, translators, and security guards. Afghan businesses were contracted to supply equipment, fuel, fruits, vegetables, and bottled water. Transport companies ferried supplies to and from bases. Construction companies were employed to build bases, including constructing watchtowers and other facilities. In 2011, when NATO had 130,000 soldiers and around 800 military bases in Afghanistan, the U.S.

government and various agencies dispersed some \$5 billion directly to Afghan companies as prime contractors, according to the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), a U.S. government watchdog. The foreign military presence even altered the country's demographics, with an unpublished United Nations report in 2014 estimating that 11.5 million Afghans - around 40 percent of the population - lived within a five-kilometer radius of at least one military base or facility.

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Head Office
3rd Floor, Yasin Plaza, 74-West, Blue Area, Islamabad.
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Karachi
Room No. 14 & 15, 3rd Floor, Kankashan Mall,
Main Tariq Road, 17/2 Block-2, P.E.C.H.S.,
Karachi. Tel: (+92 21) 34531747
Fax: (+92 21) 34531747
E-mail: karachi@freelinemovers.com

Lahore
F-4, Gulberg Centre,
Main Boulevard, Lahore.
Tel: (+92 42) 3535888, 35311085.
Fax: (+92 42) 35711420
E-mail: lahore@freelinemovers.com

Peshawar
Office No. C-8, 2nd Floor, Ziaher Plaza,
Lafal Abad, Ring Road, Peshawar.
Tel: (+92 91) 2582778
Fax: (+92 91) 2582988
E-mail: peshawar@freelinemovers.com

Kabul
House # 4, Street # 4,
Charahi Anwar Road, Shahr-e-Naw,
Kabul - Afghanistan.
Tel: +93 799211773, 93 797995 808, 93 77968 208.
E-mail: kabul@freelinemovers.com