



Islamabad POST

Friday, May 07, 2021

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My ambition is to double the trade between UK, Pakistan

Detailed News On Page-08

Pakistan, Belarus mull vocational training at minsk

Detailed News On Page-06



Iranian envoy issues message on Al Quds Day

Detailed News On Page-08



Sehr & Iftar Timings

CITY	SEHR	IFTAR
ISLAMABAD	03:38 am	06:57 pm
FAISALABAD	03:45 am	06:52 pm
LAHORE	03:40 am	06:48 pm
KARACHI	04:28 am	07:06 pm
SARGODHA	03:45 am	06:55 pm

FIQA JAFARIA

CITY	SEHR	IFTAR
ISLAMABAD	03:28 am	07:07 pm
FAISALABAD	03:35 am	07:02 pm
LAHORE	03:30 am	06:58 pm
KARACHI	04:18 am	07:16 pm
SARGODHA	03:35 am	07:05 pm

PM Khan rules out any NRO to Opposition

says opposition wanted an NRO to spare their corruption; no nation could prosper with 'an island of rich and a big sea of poor'

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Thursday said that the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) is demanding National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO) but those who had ruled the country for 30 years were not ready to face accountability. He pointed that the Opposition wanted an NRO from him to spare their corruption, however he said that such efforts would go in vain. "Those who ruled the country for 30 years are not ready to be made accountable," he added. Addressing the launching of Punjab peri-urban housing project for low-income groups in Raiwind, Imran Khan said the government was focusing on equitable distribution of resources to rich and poor by ensuring basic amenities of life for all. "The notion of 'elite capture' and the prevailing mindset that Pakistan belongs to a particular class only is regrettable," he added. Imran said no nation could prosper with 'an island of rich and a big sea of poor' and regretted that during

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— promises 'revolution' in agriculture sector

STAFF REPORT

LAHORE: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Thursday promised to bring about a "revolution" in Pakistan's agriculture sector. The prime minister, speaking at an event in Lahore, spoke about the various sectors of Pakistan, including agriculture and tourism, that had been ignored by previous governments. "First we were stabilising the economy but now, our entire focus is on agriculture," he said. "I am leading it myself and I will prove to you by bringing about a major revolution in agriculture," he added. PM Khan said Pakistan had never given much thought or importance to its agriculture sector. "We haven't given importance to agriculture over the past 50 years," he added.

LEAs to be deployed at tourist spots: NCOC

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: National Command Operation Centre (NCOC) has given an additional task to the law enforcement authorities (LEAs) to manage entry and exit points at tourist spots during Eid holidays. In special directives issued to the National Highway Authority (NHA) and Frontier Works Organization (FWO), the NCOC said that they should highlight banners at the toll plaza regarding the government's decision to ban visits to tourist places during Eid holidays.

Continued on Page 06

Partial lockdown in the Capital

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: The enforcement of partial lockdown in the federal capital would start on Friday evening to limit spread of coronavirus during Eid-ul-Fitr holidays. However, a week-long official lockdown would come into force from May 8 and would last till May 6, said Deputy Commissioner Islamabad Hamza Shafaqat on Thursday. In a video message shared with journalists, he said all kind of public transportation would remain temporarily suspended. Shopping malls, business centres, commercial activities, Parks, recreational spots, bus stands would be shut down, while the enforcement teams would remain in place to enforce the orders. He appealed the residents to complete their Eid chores before evening to avoid any inconvenience.



LAHORE: Ambassador of People's Republic of China Nong Rong in a meeting with PML President and Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly Shahbaz Sharif. – DNA



LAHORE: Prime Minister Imran Khan offering Dua after groundbreaking of "Peri-Urban Low Cost Housing Schemes". – DNA

Islamophobia: Pakistani FM thanks Indonesia for support

Foreign Minister Qureshi discusses combating Islamophobia and promoting inter-faith harmony with Indonesian counterpart

ASNAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi, in a telephone conversation with his Indonesian counterpart Ms. Retno Marsudi, discussed the importance of stronger cooperation amongst members of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to combat Islamophobia. The Foreign Minister stressed that Pakistan's efforts were aimed at creating awareness and building greater understanding for the promotion of inter-faith harmony and mutual respect. The Foreign Minister thanked Indonesia for supporting the unanimous adoption of Pakistan-sponsored resolution



at the 47th OIC Council of Foreign Ministers meeting in Niamey last November, which declared 15th March as an International Day to Combat Islamophobia. The Foreign Minister sought continued collaboration between the two sides in New York for the smooth adoption of a resolution by the UN General Assembly in that regard. The Foreign

Minister emphasized that disrespect towards revered Islamic personalities hurts the sensibilities of more than 1.5 billion Muslims around the world. The Foreign Minister noted that such actions are not covered under legitimate expressions of the right to freedom of opinion, which carries certain responsibilities under international

human rights law. The Foreign Minister highlighted that Muslims unequivocally condemn all acts of violence or incitement to violence on the basis of religion or belief, and these notions must be respected by all. The Foreign Minister called upon the OIC to work together for making the international community understand the deep-rooted love and devotion of all Muslims for the Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H.) and the Holy Quran. Qureshi underscored that a global dialogue amongst civilizations, under the ambit of the United Nations, was required to promote inter-faith harmony, tolerance and peaceful co-existence.

Continued on Page 06

PM Imran to visit Saudi Arabia today

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan will pay a three-day official visit to Saudi Arabia from May 7-9 on the invitation of Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman bin Abdulaziz. The PM will be accompanied by a high-level delegation, including FM Qureshi and other members of the cabinet, the Foreign Office said on Thursday. During the visit, the Prime Minister's consultations with the Saudi leadership will cover all areas of bilateral cooperation including economic, trade, investment, energy, job opportunities for Pakistani workforce, and welfare of Pakistani diaspora in the Kingdom.

All parties except PPP boycott NA-249 recount

The parties cited reason to be non-provision of Form 46 and counterfoil of ballot papers not being checked

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: All parties, except the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), and independent candidates seeking recounting in the NA-249 constituency boycotted the process on Wednesday over non-provision of Form 46 and counterfoil of ballot papers not being checked. In a letter addressed to the returning officer (RO), the parties maintained that, "For want of non-provision of Form 46 and denial to allow access to the counterfoil of

ballot paper, we cannot participate in [the] subject proceedings." The signatories to the letter included the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Mutahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), Pak Sarzameen Party (PSP), Pasban and others. The parties pointed out in the letter that, "...the first bag [of ballot papers] lying on [the] table was without a seal," adding that all parties were boycotting the recount "under this attitude". The aggrieved parties maintained that there was no

precedent of recounting being conducted without the empty ballots being counted, or Form 46 and counterfoil signatures or seals not being checked. According to PML-N's Miftah Ismail, "All ballot bags were unsealed when [they] reached [the] RO office." He also alleged that 167 forms did not have signatures of the presiding officers. According to PTI's Amjad Iqbal Afridi, the by-poll had been "planned". He said they were not being provided with Form 46, adding that the party will not let the PPP influence results.

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NTC to hold webinars on latest tech trends – Page 04

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G7 ends talks with criticism of China and Russia – Page 06

Taliban captures key Afghan dam as fighting rages – Page 07

UK funded initiative to enable SME's engage internationally – Page 08

Pak reaffirms support to Palestine: Zahid Hafeez

We believe that for just and lasting peace, it is imperative to have a two-state solution in accordance with the relevant UN and OIC resolutions

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office Spokesman Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri on Thursday reaffirmed Pakistan's support for the Palestinian cause noting that it is rooted in the country's principled stance on the people's right to self-determination and its support for human rights. He was speaking at a webinar hosted by Islamabad Policy Institute (IPI) on 'Dynamics of Muslim World & Future of Palestine: Time to Fight Back'. "We believe that for just

and lasting peace, it is imperative to have a two-state solution in accordance with the relevant United Nations and OIC resolutions with the pre-1967 borders, and Al-Quds Al-Sharif as the capital of a viable, independent and contiguous Palestinian State," he stated



while recapping Pakistan's Palestine Policy. Pakistan, he said, will continue to extend its full support to the Palestinian people in their struggle for the realization of their inalienable rights and for the establishment of an independent state. The spokesman noted that Pakistan's Palestine Policy is driven by the fact that it is one of the most important causes of the Muslim world which led to the creation of Organization of Islamic Cooperation; and the country's principled stance on

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Briefs

Surgeons
operate
children with
cleft lip and
palate

SHAHEEN HANIF

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Cleft Lip and Palate Association (ICLAPA) continued the process of providing medical services to the children with cleft lip and palate in spite of the ongoing wave of the corona virus.

An ICLAPA's team of surgeons conducted surgery upon a number of affected children in the recent weeks. According to the Association's senior member Mrs. Farhat Akhtar Rehman, the surgery took place at the Fuji Foundation Hospital and Heart International.

Some of the affected children are on the waiting list for receiving the medical aid. Mrs. Farhat said Chinese doctors who used to visit Pakistan for undertaking the surgery could not join the Pakistani doctors this time due to the epidemic.

The Association has been doing this noble task providing free medical services to affected children for the last many years with the support of some philanthropists.

The ICLAPA was a group of volunteers which relied on donors to bring hope and happiness in the lives of people, for whom it is financially difficult to get treated their children.

Nearly 10000 children with these deformities are born every year in Pakistan and alarmingly a large number of kids with these deformities are waiting to be operated upon.

The parents of the affected children have been asked to contact Mrs. Farhat on her residence telephone number 051-2851384/2251275 or cell number 0300-5192490 to get them registered.

Six die of
coronavirus
in Faisalabad

FAISALABAD: As many as six patients died of COVID-19 in the district, while 130 people tested positive during the last 24 hours.

A spokesperson for the Health department said on Thursday that 714 coronavirus tests were conducted in public and private sector labs during the period. He said that total active cases in Faisalabad were 2,221 while 16,308 patients had so far recovered from the disease.

He said that 334 beds were allocated at the Allied Hospital, 133 at the DHQ Hospital and 150 at Government General Hospital Gulam Muhammad Abad for COVID-19 patients.

At present, 252 patients were under treatment at the Allied Hospital, 93 at DHQ Hospital and 78 were admitted to General Hospital.

He further said that 1,342 confirmed patients were isolated at their homes in the district. — APP

Five shops
sealed
over SOPs
violation

DNA

FAISALABAD: The tehsil administration Jarranwala sealed five shops and imposed a fine of Rs 25,000 on various shopkeepers on overcharging on Thursday.

Assistant Commissioner Zain ul Abidin checked prices of essential items on various shops and took legal action against profiteers.

Meanwhile, AC Samundri Faisal Sultan sealed four food points over violating coronavirus SOPs.

7 vehicles impounded

The Regional Transport Authority (RTA) impounded seven vehicles and imposed Rs 25,000 fine on drivers over violations of coronavirus SOPs on Thursday.

The team, led by Secretary RTA Zamir Hussain, checked five transport stands in tehsil Jarranwala and called upon the transporters to implement the standard operating procedures (SOPs) strictly.

Renewable Energy schemes
help to combat climate change

Mr. Baqir said that the scheme could be beneficial for stakeholders ranging from corporations to individuals. He urged participants to benefit from FSRE, which would play a central role in mitigating climate change

SHUHJAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: As the Green Banking initiative of State Bank of Pakistan (SBP)'s Financing Scheme for Renewable Energy (FSRE) is combating climate change in the country, 521 projects under the scheme are producing approximately 850 Megawatts of electricity.

"Due to climate change, the adoption of prevention strategies is of paramount importance for Pakistan," said Governor SBP Dr Reza Baqir. He added that SBP has issued FSRE with a view of promoting renewable energy projects in the country.

Mr. Baqir was addressing a webinar jointly hosted by SBP and Unilever Pakistan to create awareness about the SBP's financing scheme, which has been used by Unilever to convert 30% of its factories to renewable energy.

"As of February 2021, financing of around Rs. 36 billion has been extended for 521 projects producing approximately 850 MW," he said.

Mr. Baqir said that the scheme could be beneficial for stakeholders ranging from corporations to individuals. He urged participants to benefit from FSRE, which would play a central role in mitigating climate change.



The SBP issued its FSRE in 2016, which was later revised in 2019, aiming to meet Pakistan's growing electricity demand through renewable energy and to promote clean energy projects as a part of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The scheme, which promotes the use of wind, solar and hydro to generate electricity, offers varied

financing options, ranging from Rs. 400 million to Rs. 6 billion, for a range of entities and persons.

This includes captive energy units, commercial projects as well as individual consumers who may share excess production with the national grid.

Chairman and CEO of Unilever Pakistan, Amir Paracha said that the SBP's Renewable Energy Financing scheme is an innovative solution that aims to encourage investments in clean energy in Pakistan.

As a part of this financing scheme, Unilever availed a loan of Rs. 833 million through a private bank to set up 8.85 MW of renewable energy production facilities

across four factories in Punjab.

This effort is in line with Unilever's global mission for carbon neutrality and sustainability in its manufacturing process.

Unilever has committed to remove carbon emissions from operations by 2030, as well as net zero emissions from their products by 2039, which will be 11 years ahead of the 2050 Paris Agreement.

The renewable energy solution was implemented by Reon Energy Limited, producing 13 million KW units of energy per year, resulting in annual savings of Rs. 182 million and a reduction in 5,075 tons of CO2 emissions.

Two arrested,
bikes
recovered

MEHBOOB AHIR

SARGODHA: The police arrested two members of a bike-lifters gang and recovered three bikes from their possession.

The police on Thursday said a team of Factory Area police station conducted raid and arrested Sherbaz and Hammad khan, and recovered three bikes.

The accused were involved in dozen of motorcycle lifting incidents while a case has been registered against them.

Dacoit gang busted

Police busted a three-member dacoit gang and recovered looted items from them on Thursday. A police team, headed by ASI of police post general bus stand, Gulam Abbas Shah, conducted a raid at a hideout of the criminals. Police arrested Talha alias Bilal of Chak No 203-RB, Tahir Abbas of Canal Colony and Zia-ul-Hasan of Mansoorabad.

Meeting
on security
situation in
Sargodha

MEHBOOB AHIR

SARGODHA: Regional Police Officer (RPO) Sargodha Ashfaq Khan Thursday chaired a video-link meeting on law and order, security situation and crime control. The meeting was attended by DPOs and SP Investigation of the four districts. The meeting reviewed the crime situation from January 1, 2021 to April 30, 2021. The RPO said that protection of citizen's property and lives and to uphold rule of law was primary responsibility of police force, adding that all officials especially deputed in field should perform their duties with zeal and passion.

960 bags of
sugar seized

DNA

FAISALABAD: Assistant Commissioner Tandlianwala Noman Ali, while taking grand action on storage of sugar, seized a truck loaded with bags of sugar while sealing two shops for hoardings the sugar.

Upon receiving information, the Assistant Commissioner checked the truck and found 720 bags of sugar weighing 50 kg which were being transported for storage were seized. Similarly, when the Assistant Commissioner inspected the godowns of the shops, 240 bags of sugar were stored there which were seized.

He said that the sugar seized from the hoarders would be sold at government rates in the general market.

He said that action would also be taken against the hoarders under the law.



ISLAMABAD: Chaudhry Fawad Hussain, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting presenting a cheque of Rs. 3 Million to President, District Bar Association Jehlum. — DNA

72849 citizens administered
dozes of corona vaccine

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: As many as 72849 citizens have been vaccinated first and second dose against corona so far in the district in which 57122 of first and 15727 of second dose while 21201 health care workers were also vaccinated so far. In this regard, 17 vaccination centers are functional in two shifts morning and night. Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ali visited the center at night and checked the arrangements. He said that to control the rush and facilitate the people 5 new

centers are also being established in the coming days. He checked the utility services in the center. Meanwhile it was informed that 1550 shopping malls/ restaurants, plaza sealed for non compliance of SoPs. Earlier Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ali went to Jail road, Allied mor and Sargodha road regarding checks COVID SOPs Enforcement. He carried out campaign to enforce COVID SOPs along with respective AC.

Sugar sold at
Rs.65 per kg

A sum of 996,303 kg of sugar has been sold at the rate of Rs 65 per kg in the Ramadan ba-

zaars of district. According to the details, on April 12 in the Ramadan bazaars 11,700 kg, 19,900 kg on April 13, 30,050 kg on April 14, 36,190 kg on April 15, 38,540 kg on April 16, 39,800 kg on April 17, 40,250 kg on April 18, 37,550 kg on April 19, 36,000 kg on April 20, 39,150 kg on April 21, 41,550 kg on April 22, 43,850 kg on April 23, 42,600 kg on April 24, 45,950 kg on April 25, 43,500 kg on April 26, 43,050 kg on April 27, 43,500 kg on April 28, 46,600 kg on April 29, 48,500 kg on April 30, 50,750 kg on May 1, 53,750 kg on May 2, 52,250 kg on May 3.

PM's promise
turning into
reality: CM

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Sardar Usman Buzdar has said that Imran Khan's promise to provide five million houses to low income strata of society is turning into reality. He said this while addressing the launching ceremony of PM's Affordable Housing Project at Raiwind on Thursday. He said the first phase of 35,000 apartments in Lahore had been started whereas foundation stone of the LDA City Housing project had been laid for constructing 4,000 apartments.

SHO FIEDMC police
station suspended

DNA

FAISALABAD: City Police Officer (CPO) Sohail Chaudhry has suspended Station House Officer (SHO) FIEDMC police station on charge of negligence and abuse of powers.

Police spokesman said on Thursday that two accused of a dacoity case namely Sagheer Masih and Salman managed to escape from police custody two days ago after which the SHO registered a case against three police officials including

head constable Tariq Javaid, constable Faiz Rasool and driver Faryad Hussain. However, receiving information, the CPO taking serious notice of the incident suspended SHO Sub Inspector Asfar Javaid and appointed SI Shahid Pannu as new SHO of FIEDMC police station.

The CPO also nominated SSP Operations as inquiry officer and directed him to probe into the matter and fix responsibility. Further action would be taken on inquiry report, spokesman added.

HEC grants
NOC to
UAD

DNA

DI KHAN: Higher Education Commission Pakistan granted NOC to the University of Agriculture Dera Ismail Khan (UAD) and has enlisted it in the recognized universities on its website. The move has been considered a major breakthrough for this newly established university as it will open the door of many opportunities for its students.

The University now has the right to avail any HEC program and different scholarships offered to public sector universities including Ehsas scholarship for its undergraduate students.

Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Masroor Elahi Babar (TI) termed it a huge success and result of collective efforts of the staff of the varsity.

He said that it is the turning point for university which will help in eradicating different administrative and financial problems of this institution. Registrar Fakhar Ud Din said that this decision is the outcome of sheer hard work and one-year continuous struggle that staff of the university has done on every level to make it run smoothly despite being faced with different problems.

He further said that Vice Chancellor has now put the University on track and soon it will be among the top academic institutions of the country.

کورونا کی تیسری لہر، انتہائی خطرناک

پڑوسی ملک کے حالات و واقعات، ہم سب کے لئے لمحہ فکریہ

ہسپتالوں میں سہولیات کی شدید کمی

بیڈز اور آکسیجن ختم

لاک ڈاؤن کی وجہ سے معیشت تباہ،

لوگ فاقہ کشی پر مجبور

پڑوسی ملک میں وبا کی تباہ کاریاں

جہاں اموات کی شرح خطرناک حد تک بڑھ رہی ہے

صرف

کورونا کے خلاف موثر ڈھال

ایس او پیز پر عمل درآمد نہ ہوانو مکمل لاک ڈاؤن کی طرف جان پڑے گا۔

ویدیسے مقابلہ احتیاط کے ساتھ احتیاط ہی اولین علاج ہے

نیشنل کمانڈ اینڈ آپریشن سنٹر حکومت پاکستان

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Briefs

Lok Virsa Museums to remain close

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Lok Virsa, National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage (NIFTH) Museums would remain closed from May 10 to May 16 in line with the directions of the National Command and Operations Center (NCOC).

According to NIFTH, "In line with the directions of NCOC, for slowing down the curve of COVID-19 pandemic during Eid-ul-Fitr holidays, both the Museums Heritage Museum and Pakistan Monument administered by Lok Virsa would remain closed during the time period.

Lok Virsa Museums would reopen after Eid-ul-Fitr and connecting weekly holidays on Monday, May 17 with COVID reduced timings of 10 am to 6 pm.

ICLAPA for medical services to children

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Cleft Lip and Palate Association (ICLAPA) continued the process of providing medical services to the children with cleft lip and palate in spite of the ongoing wave of the corona virus. An ICLAPA's team of surgeons conducted surgery upon a number of affected children in the recent weeks.

According to the association's senior member Farhat Akhtar Rehman on Thursday, the surgery took place at the Fauji Foundation Hospital and Heart International.

Some of the affected children are on the waiting list for receiving the medical aid, she said adding Chinese doctors who used to visit Pakistan for undertaking the surgery could not join the Pakistani doctors this time due to the epidemic.

The association has been doing this noble task providing free medical services to affected children for the last many years with the support of some philanthropists.

The ICLAPA is a group of volunteers which relies on donors to bring hope and happiness in the lives of people, for whom it is financially difficult to get treated their children.

Nearly 10,000 children with these deformities are born every year in Pakistan and alarmingly a large number of kids with these deformities are waiting to be operated upon. The parents of the affected children have been asked to contact Farhat on her residence telephone number 051-2851384/2251275 or cell number 0300-5192490 to get them registered.

1820 patients recover from Covid-19'

FAISAL MUNIR

ATTOK: As many as 1,820 coronavirus patients recovered from novel coronavirus (Covid-19) across the district so far, the district Health Department said. According to the data shared by the health department, as many as 2028 were tested positive of the virus so far after screening of as many as 36218 persons were carried out in the district in which 30821 were tested negative.

The district Specialized Healthcare and Medical Education Department sources said that at present there are 169 active patients are in the district in which 165 are under home isolation. Sources said that results of 117 persons are still awaited.

2 more vaccination centers to be established in Attock: Chief executive District health authority, Dr Jawad Ellahi has said that presently four vaccination centers are providing vacation facilities to the masses including Jand, Pindigheab, Attock city and Hasanabdal while two more COVID-19 vaccination centers would be established in Fatehjang and Hazro respectively.

Mari Petroleum Ramadan charity initiative lauded

Food packages are also being distributed among families with a number of edible items including flour, cooking oil, rice, tea, dates, spices, and other food items

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) on Thursday lauded the initiatives of Mari Petroleum Company Limited (MPCL) to provide food to the needy during the holy month of Ramadan.

The company has started a number of charity initiatives for the deserving members of the society executed throughout the year but the holy month of Ramadan is considered the most important for the purpose.

In this connection, MPCL held an Iftar dinner at Jaffar Chowk, Mehrabadi, Islamabad for five hundred people which was attended by Dr. Murtaza Mughal, Pakistan Economy Watch, as Chief Guest and Brig. (retd) Aslam Khan, Chairman Pakistan Economy Watch.

The guests expressed their pleasure at the immaculate execution of



the distribution process and said that this Mari Mobile Dastarkhwan has become a symbol of hope for the deserving people of Islamabad, who are being served quality food on a daily basis.

Usman Aslam, CRS Specialist of Mari Petroleum, one of the largest petroleum exploration and production companies in Pakistan, informed that five hundred people will daily get food during the holy month while three hundred will get breakfast and dinner on daily basis after Ramadan.

Founder and CEO of Comprehensive Disaster Response Service, Todd Shea, who is implementing partner of MPCL will supervise the whole distribution process to keep it as smooth as possible.

Food packages are also being distributed among families with a number of edible items including flour, cooking oil, rice, tea, dates, spices, and other food items, they said.

They added that MPCL's corporate social responsibility strategy is an integral part of a company's culture and reflects commitment to contribute towards the well-being of our workforce, local community, and society at large.

FAST diplomats briefed on Pakistan-United States ties

Aizaz Ahmad said that overall, bilateral ties have remained robust. Despite the frequent highs and lows in the relationship

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The Center for Strategic Perspective (CSP) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) held a virtual presentation by the Director General ISSI, Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry on Pakistan-US Relations for the First and Second Tour (FAST) diplomats at the US embassy in Pakistan on May 6, 2021.

Director CSP, Mr. Najam Rafique welcomed the diplomats and briefed them on ISSI and the work being done by the Institute.

Ambassador Chaudhry in his presentation said that overall, bilateral ties have remained robust. Despite the frequent highs and lows in the relationship, it has been very dynamics and has sustained the test of times.

He said that it is unfortunate that the US sees Pakistan from certain selective



lenses such as security, competition with China, Afghanistan and Pakistan's nuclear program.

Ambassador Chaudhry said that developments in four areas - US competition with China, Afghanistan, US support to India and bilateral relations with Pakistan - will have strategic implications for Pakistan-US relations.

He said that Pakistan wants to maintain a balanced relationship with both US and China, and Pakistan can act

as a bridge between the two countries. With regard to Afghanistan, he said that the US must not abandon Afghanistan as this could lead to civil war and a new flood of refugees. US must ensure a responsible disengagement from Afghanistan.

He expressed concerns over America's growing tilt towards India, and, which can harm the balance of power in the region. He said that US must respect Pakistan's sovereignty and must

not enable India to become a regional hegemon. With regard to bilateral relations, he said that there are many opportunities for the US to build upon, including investments in the industrial zones being set up in Pakistan under CPEC. He reiterated that Pakistan and US must resume a broad-based Strategic Dialogue.

The lecture was followed by a Q & A session. Around 15-18 US diplomats participated in the event.

CDA develops six parks in D-12

SHAHEEN HANIF

ISLAMABAD: Capital Development Authority (CDA) has completely developed six new parks in the sector D-12 of Islamabad, aimed at providing maximum recreational spots to the people of area.

CDA Director Environment (West) Akhtar Rasool confirmed media on Thursday that the development work of five small parks in multiple sub-sectors of D-12 and one big park in its Markaz had been completed.

He said 100 per cent civic work at the parks had been completed which included fencing, and installation of new swings, kerbstones, jogging tracks, benches, playing gadgets for kids and others. To a query, he said landscaping was another subject which would be started after the vacations of Eid-ul-Fitr. Tenders had already been floated for the purpose, he added.

Akhtar Rasool said all the nine designated parks in the sector D-12 were now fully developed as the development work on three

parks were carried out several months ago.

He said more parks were being developed in different sectors on direction of CDA Chairman Amer Ahmed Ali, who had been very keen in development and beautification of the city since taking the charge of civic agency.

Three parks were being developed in sector I-14, whereas one in sector I-16, he added. The sector D-12 of Federal Capital lies adjacent to Margallah Hills, far away from the city's hustle and bustle. The construction of green places and parks would further beautify the area.

Meanwhile, CDA has started work on the construction of six multi-story parking plazas in prominent shopping areas of Islamabad.

The Capital Development Authority (CDA) will start work on the construction of six multi-story parking plazas in the main shopping areas of the federal capital by end of the sixth month of the year. The consultant hired for the projects gave a presentation to the CDA chairman and board members.

3 SHOs suspended, 5 transferred

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Inspector General of Police (Operations) Afzaal Ahmed Kausar on Thursday suspended three station house officers (SHOs) of Islamabad police due to poor performance, following public complaints. According to a notification issued here, Inspector Rasheed Ahmed (PS Tarnol), Sub-Inspector Muhammad Iqbal Gujjar (PS I-9) and Sub-Inspector Noor Ullah (PS Ramna) were placed under suspension and closed to Rescue 15.

Meanwhile, in another notification Senior Superintendent of Police (Operations) Dr. Syed Mustafa Tanvir has transferred and posted five SHOs with immediate effect. Inspector Asjad Mehmood has been transferred to police station (PS) Tarnol, while Sub-Inspector Adeel Shaukat Ali was given the charge of PS Industrial Area. Similarly, Sub-Inspector Muhammad Asif Ali would perform their duties at PS Karachi Company, replacing Sub-Inspector Bilal Ahmed who was transferred and posted to Rescue 15.

Sub-Inspector Akhtar Zaman was deputed at Ramna Police station as acting station house officer. Meanwhile, Inspector General of Police Islamabad, Qazi Jameel-ur-Rehman has transferred DSP Malik Abid Ikram and DSP Muhammad Bashir and posted them as SDPO Korla and Margalla respectively.

20 ventilators delivered to HFH

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Federal Minister for Interior Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed has said that 20 state-of-the-art ventilators have been provided to the Holy Family Hospital (HFH) to deal with the rising number of corona patients. During a visit to HFH here Thursday to inspect the facilities being provided to the COVID patients, the Minister said that it is the utmost effort of the government to provide the best healthcare facilities to the people.

Sheikh said that the hospital has the capacity of 1000 beds and in case of any emergency like situation due to the rising number of cases, it would be transformed into Corona hospital. Rasheed said that brand new ventilators have been given by the NCOC to help in our fight against COVID-19 and informed media that Prime Minister Imran will inaugurate the Corona ward at the hospital soon.

Country's uplift linked with women participation

ISLAMABAD: Managing Director Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM) has said that country's prosperity and uplift was directly linked with women's participation and contribution in different spheres of life. Addressing the Cheque and Sewing Machine Distribution Ceremony among trainees of Women Empowerment Center (WEC) of PBM, he said that Pakistani women have really come forward and proved their worth in all walks of life.

Managing Director PBM distributed sewing machines and financial assistance cheques as a part of monthly stipends and certificates among the position holder trainees of PBM's Women Empowerment Center. While paying tribute to the working women, he said the financial empowerment of women would enable them to undertake their own business ventures aiming to help their families to extricate themselves from poverty trap.

While asserting PM Imran Khan's resolution for the empowerment and wellbeing of poor populace of the country, Malik Zaheer Abbas expressed his enthusiasm for the expansion of WECs in order to accommodate the maximum poor women. He told that PBM has been taking tangible measures for the promotion and protection of women rights by accommodating them in the fields of healthcare, education, rehabilitation and self-reliance with its network of 160 WECs throughout the country. - APP

Pakistan, Afghan women need to engage in future

Member of the Afghan government's peace negotiation team and former Minister for Women's Affairs Dr. Habiba Sarabi emphasized the need for engaging and involving women in the future of Afghanistan

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Members of the Afghan government's peace negotiation team Dr. Habiba Sarabi and Ms Fatima Gailani urged Pakistani women to stand up in solidarity with the women of Afghanistan in the crucial time of negotiation between the Taliban and the Government of Afghanistan. They were speaking at a webinar on the role of women in the Afghan peace process organized by the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) here on Thursday.

Member of the Afghan government's peace negotiation team and former Minister for Women's Affairs Dr. Habiba Sarabi emphasized the need for engaging and

involving women in the future of Afghanistan. She underscored the role played by the Constitution of Afghanistan in upholding women's rights. She especially referred to Article 22 of the Afghan Constitution that accords equal rights to men and women of Afghanistan. She expressed her concern over the target killings of the members of the civil society in Afghanistan and added that if there would be ceasefire in Afghanistan, such target killings would stop.

Dr. Sarabi dismissed the argument that she only represented the views of the urban women of Afghanistan. She was of the view that they were the voice of women from all over Afghanistan, including the areas under the control of the Tali-

ban. Dr. Sarabi urged the women of Pakistan to present a united front against extremism in solidarity with the women of Afghanistan.

Member of the Afghan government's peace negotiation team and President of the Afghan Red Crescent Society Ms Fatima Gailani said that in other countries peace was taken for granted but it was not the case in Afghanistan. She added that peace did not only mean the absence of war but access to health, education, livelihoods, and security for all segments of the society. She highlighted the importance of inclusion for peace in Afghanistan owing to the diverse character of the Afghan society and termed the inclusion of women a part of the process.

Ms. Gailani also emphasized the role of the Constitution of Afghanistan as the anchor for upholding their rights. She underscored that the Afghan Constitution was an Islamic Constitution safeguarding the rights of everyone in light of Islamic teachings. Ms. Gailani argued that the women were a reality of Afghanistan that could not be ignored. She urged further investment in education of women, which, she maintained, was the dream of all the women of Afghanistan. She urged the Government of Pakistan to include women in Pakistani delegations to Afghanistan to send a strong message of support to the women of Afghanistan.

Executive Director of the Afghan Women's Education Center

(AWEC) Ms Palwasha Hassan said that the inclusion of four women in the Afghan government's peace negotiation team was evidence of the importance of women in Afghanistan.

She added, though, that Taliban delegation did not have any women representatives in their delegation. Ms Hassan said that regional aspect of peacebuilding was as important as the regional dimension of the conflict. Therefore, she urged a strong networking among the people of regional countries believing in peace.

She added that any form of solidarity shown by Pakistani women with the women of Afghanistan would go a long way in their struggle for safeguarding their rights.



ISLAMABAD: A tailor is stitching women suits for the occasion of Eid ul Fitr. - DNA

Briefs

FPSC
announces
qualifying
candidates
of CSS 2020

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC) on Thursday announced the finally qualifying candidates of CSS Competitive Examination 2020. According to details some 364 candidates includes 226 male and 138 female qualified and passing percentage of finally qualified candidates was only 1.962 percent. A total of 221 candidates recommended by FPSC for appointment to the post in BS-17 under Federal Government in various Groups/Services. The 221 recommended candidates for appointment includes 142 male and 79 female. Some 18,553 candidates appeared in written examination. Of which 376 passed in written exams and finally 364 candidates qualified after Viva Voce.

247 beggars
and 53
handlers held

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Police on Thursday launched special crackdown against professional alm-seekers and their handlers with the purpose to curb this menace and nabbed 247 beggars and 53 handlers during last five days. Upon receiving information, police launched crackdown in various areas and succeeded to nab 247 beggars and 53 handlers. The nabbed persons had divided sectors, signals and main chowks for begging activities. They also used to send children at various signals and chowks of the city. The handlers used to get share from them and support them in case of any issue with them. Police registered cases against all the accused under Act relating to human smuggling and sections for involving children in begging activities. Additional SP Farhat Abbass Kazmi said that high-ups of Islamabad police are determined to curb this social evil and ensure strict action against those backing the professional beggars. He said this campaign would remain continue and strict action to be taken against beggars found around commercial centers, signals and other business areas. He said this campaign against the professional alm-seekers will be made more effective and strict action to be taken against those who force children and women to adopt the ugly business. SSP (Operations) Dr. Syed Mustafa Tanveer has also appealed the citizens to cooperate with police in curbing this menace and discourage professional alm-seekers.

AC directed to
ensure goods
on controlled
rates

RAWALPINDI: Member Provincial Assembly (MPA) Punjab Chaudary Amjad Mehmood on Thursday paid a surprise visit to Ramazan Bazaar set up in Morgah Union Council area and reviewed quality, prices and availability of essential items. The MPA interacted with the visitors and asked about the facilities being provided to them at the bazaar. Most of the people found to be unsatisfied over the arrangements and said that items being sold in the bazaar are of low quality and not in accordance with the government price list. Hearing the complaints, Ch Amjad directed the Assistant Commissioner Suddar Ghulam Abbas to ensure the availability of food items at controlled rates at the bazaar as the provision of maximum relief to the common man during the holy month of Ramazan is the top priority of the government. Meanwhile, Assistant Commissioner Cantt under on-going drive against violation of COVID-19 SOPs sealed 13 shops and one restaurant while three people were arrested with the help of the Police for not adhering to lockdown hours. — APP

NTC to hold webinars on
latest tech trends

The meeting participants underlined that the quality and standards of subject content need constant up-gradation with a special focus on curriculum

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: The National Technology Council (NTC) will hold a series of webinars on various facets of technology and the latest technological trends amidst the hardships stirred by COVID-19 and the resultant lockdowns. The first webinar of the series, entitled "Using Existing Technology to Develop COVID-19 Vaccine in Pakistan" will be held on May 19, 2021.

The webinars will cover topics such as COVID-19 vaccine development, improving solar panel technology to make it user-friendly and aesthetically appealing, automotive technology, and energy-efficient and green building technology, etc. In a virtual meeting, presided over by NTC Chairman Mr. Imtiaz Hussain Gilani, the Council reiterated its resolve to pursue NTC's agenda of quality assurance in the technical education through programme accreditation



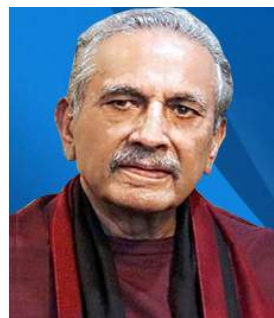
and registration of technologists during the prevailing critical time. It was decided to continue the NTC quality assurance programmes, including accreditation and registration of graduates, while following the COVID-19 protocols. The meeting participants underlined that the quality and standards of subject content need constant up-gradation with a special focus on curriculum. They prioritized 10 engineering technologies, in which the higher

education institutions are running four-year degree programmes, for curriculum development. Prof. Dr. Inayat Ullah Babar, Vice Chancellor, University of Engineering Technology, Taxila, and a member of the NTC's governing body, shall be the focal person for this initiative. It was further decided that the NTC will strengthen its social media handles to provide real-time information for public, technologists, and stakeholders.

Tarin's stance on harsh IMF
conditions commendable

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Former President of ICCI Shahid Rasheed Butt on Thursday said Finance Minister Shaukat Tarin is correcting the economic direction of the country which is going down very well with the masses and business community. The bold stance of the finance minister on harsh IMF conditions and decision to increase developmental spending while not increasing the power tariff and taxes has helped masses take a sigh of relief and hope about early economic



recovery, he said. The decisions of Tarin to abandon contraction policies and trigger growth will not only accelerate recovery but also provide jobs to the people, he added. Shahid Rasheed Butt said

that the finance minister has decided to increase the government's income and reduce debt through increased growth rate rather than burdening masses is the right choice. He noted that almost all the countries are encouraging economic growth but IMF is strangulating Pakistan's economy through harsh conditions, which is fanning poverty, but now the situation will improve. He called upon the IMF to change its priorities and let go of the outdated conditionality of sale of assets, deregulation of markets, and austerity in social ser-

vices and developmental spending which has added to the miseries of the masses in the borrowing countries. The business leader noted that some sectors of the economy are performing well despite pandemic but speedy recovery will need a package that should not be delayed. The results of sixteen by-polls since 2019 shows that the electorate is not very happy with the economic policies of the government and Shaukat Tarin is the best option to bring a positive change in the situation.

CDA urged to stop
lease extension

SHAHEEN HANIF

ISLAMABAD: Fatma Azim, Acting President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) has called upon the CDA to immediately withdraw the lease extension notices to local industries and implement the CDA Board decision made in August 2020 for rationalization of lease extension fee of industrial plots to settle this issue in an amicable manner. Fatma Azim said that CDA was imposing 1% lease extension charges of the current market price of industrial plots, which was very high and the ICCI had vigorously pursued this matter for revis-

ing these high charges. As a result of these efforts, CDA Board in its meeting held on 26th August 2020 had rationalized the lease extension fee for industrial plots @ Rs.100,000/per kanal instead of the 1% charges of the current market price and forwarded this decision to the National Coordination Committee on Housing, Construction & Development (NCCHD) for endorsement. However, instead of implementing the CDA Board decision, the civic body has started issuing notices to the local industrialists for lease extension of industrial plots @ 1% charges of the current market price or face sealing of plots, which was totally unjustified.

500 corps
to perform
duties on Yum
ul Quds

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad police on Thursday devised a security plan for Yum ul Quds and Juma-tul-Wida and decided to deploy 500 policemen including police commandos around Masjid and Imambargahs to avert any untoward incident. According to police, the contingents of Pakistan Rangers would also assist Islamabad police to ensure effective security while strict measures to be ensured outside all Masjid including Faisal Masjid, Imambargahs and exit and entry points of the city. The SSP (Operations) Dr. Syed Mustafa Tanveer has directed all Sub-Divisional Police Officers (SDPOs) and Station House Officers (SHOs) to improve the security plan and ensure checking of every person through metal detectors at Masjid and Imambargahs in their respective jurisdictions. — APP



ISLAMABAD: Sardar Yasir Ilyad Khan, President ICCI presenting notification of convener Education Sub-Committee to Nasir Chaudhry, former Executive Member ICCI, SVP TWA I&T Center G-8/1 and PTI coordinator. Abdul Rehman Khan Vice President ICCI and Babar Chaudhry former Executive Member ICCI are also present at the occasion. — DNA

RCCI urges for extended business
hour to lower Covid threat

SHUJAAT HAMZA

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) President Mohammad Nasir Mirza has said that lockdown policy should be formulated in collaboration with stakeholders. The proposed lockdown from May 8 to May 16 is not feasible. The business community

has been the hardest hit by the corona, he said in a statement. We have to make policy based on the ground realities. The working hours of banks and post offices should also be increased to provide convenience to customers and pensioners. We recommend that shop hours be made to 24 hours during Ramadan so that customers can shop comfortably.

Weekly off for Businesses should also be called off, he suggested. Exporters will face more difficulty and demurrage charges added as the port will be closed for eight days. Reduced working hours will increase the rush in the markets and banks. Former president and Group leader Sohail Altaf said that our Corona policy is not clear. It is based on trial and

error. Every year there is more business on Eid. He said that like the rest of the world, we also have to run business along with Covid-19. The risk of Corona cases has increased due to the increase in rush. Vaccination should be increased along with strict implementation of SOPs, masks and social distance. The traders mainly from SMEs are in deep trouble due to lock-down.

AAA Associates arranges
Iftari for deserving people

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: AAA Associates, Pakistan leading group of companies were arranging Iftari for 500 deserving people at Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) Rawalpindi. The Iftari arrangement was meant to serve that section of society which has been deprived of food in this holy month of Ramazan. AAA Associate, under its corporate social responsibility, carried

out this drive to feed poor in most respectable manner by inviting 500 people daily in RCCI to serve with Iftar. AAA Associate Managing Director Lt. Col (Retd) Shahzad Ali Kiani stated that "We believe in serving humanity in best possible manner by fulfilling their basic need of food and shelter". He further said that being an organization "we are collaborating on many projects with Local NGOs and government to end food insecurity in the country".

Qiyam-ul-
Lail at Faisal
Masjid on
tomorrow

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Dawah Academy of International Islamic University (IIU) shall commence Qiyam-ul-Lail (Me-hfil e Shabeena) at Faisal Mosque from the night of 25th of Ramadan. Faisal Masjid Islamic Centre (FMIC) of Dawah Academy will start Qiyam-ul-Lail in the night of 25th of Ramadan with the collaboration of Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony that will continue till 29th of the Holy Month. As per SOP's issued by the Government, regarding prevention of COVID-19, limited number of Moataikifeen and people are participating in Qiyam-ul-Lail. Approximately 35 Qurra will recite Quran during nights from Ramzan 25th to 29th. The Qurra from Dawah Academy Included Qari Dr. Muhammad Ilyas, Director General Dawah Academy, IIUI, Qari Muhammad Zia Ur Rehman, Incharge Faisal Masjid Islamic Center, Qari Muhammad Nauman, Qari Ihsanulha, Qari Atta Ur Rehman Abid and Qari Abdur Rehman Bari, Qari Ikhlak Madani.

COVID claims
3 lives with
135 new
infections

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: As many as 135 more COVID-19 positive cases were reported during the last 24 hours, raising the tally of confirmed cases to 24,508 in the district while three lost their battle of life against the deadly virus. The total infected cases included 22,625 from Rawalpindi and 1883 from other districts so far. District Health Authority informed Thursday that among the new cases, 24 reported from Rawal Town, 46 from Potohar town, 28 from Rawalpindi Cantt, 15 from Taxila, 7 from Gujar Khan, 6 Kahutta, 6 Islamabad, 2 from Chakwal and one from Attock. "Presently 174 confirmed patients were admitted to various city facilities, counting 30 in Holy Family Hospital, 31 in Benazir Bhutto Hospital, 77 in Institute of Urology, 27 in Fauji Foundation Hospital, 8 in Hearts International and one in Akhtar Rukhsana Memorial hospital," the health authority report said. District Health Authority informed that so far 22,154 patients were discharged after recovery and 3010 were quarantined including 1736 at home and 1274 in isolation.

Effective
plan in place
to eradicate
dengue

RAWALPINDI: Chief Executive Officer (CEO) District Health Authority Dr. Faiza Kanwal on Thursday said an effective micro plan has been devised to control the spread of dengue keeping in view the previous year's statistics. The CEO told APP, that surveillance is being carried out in those areas from where dengue patients were reported last year in the district. She informed that 4176 sites have been visited out of the total 7815 possible hotspots marked by the anti-dengue teams while 98,355 houses were inspected during outdoor surveillance from Feb 26 to 28 April and the required action was taken there. Dr. Faiza said that only two dengue positive cases have been reported in the district and the health department is on alert to eradicate the dengue besides tackling the prevailing wave of COVID-19. She added that Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to wipe out dengue virus are being implemented in letter and spirit. "Tangible efforts were in place to screen every nook and corner of the district so that dengue could not become an epidemic during this year," she said. Similarly, Dr. Faiza advised the residents to adopt precautionary measures and inform the department immediately if dengue larvae are found in their houses as the government alone cannot check the spread of dengue larvae. — APP

APSUP urges on starting of autumn semester 2021

Private sector universities are playing a pivotal role in providing quality education by taking many timely measures like redesigning educational models to avoid disrupting academic system during pandemic

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Though a letter addressed to Minister for Federal Education & Professional Training, Shafqat Mahmood, Chairman Association of Private Universities Association of Pakistan (APSUP), Prof. Dr. Chaudhary Abdul Rehman has urged on timely Commencement of Autumn Semester 2021. The letter mentions that Association of Private Sector Universities of Pakistan (APSUP) is an elected representative body of 85 private sector universities with 31 regional campuses having more than 40% students in higher education sector across Pakistan.

Like any other sectors, the third wave of COVID-19 has severely affected higher education sector as well. Private sector universities are playing a pivotal role in providing quality education by taking many timely measures like redesigning educational models to avoid disrupting academic system during pandemic. Since a prolonged closure of higher education institutes with uncertainty about reopening timeframe, the situation has gotten even more stressful with the Government's latest decision about delaying the commencement of Autumn Semester 2021. This decision will cause an irreparable loss to students in terms of disrupting their academic

journey and resulting in further stress and unrest among them. Further, at the outset of this development, the already troubled financial system of private sector universities is going to be collapsed which is hardly surviving on their own without any substantial relief from the Government during pandemic. By implementing the decision of delaying the commencement of Autumn Semester 2021, it will be impossible to meet recurring financial cost i.e. faculty & staff salaries and operational expenses because private HEIs depend solely on admissions for their financial sustainability. Chairman APSUP requested that the admission process for the autumn semester 2021 may not be

delayed and universities be given permission to open admissions for Autumn Semester 2021 as per their academic schedule. He proposed that best may be followed by the Government if it becomes difficult to conduct exams physically during June-July 2021, like the School-Assessed Grades, College-Assessed Grades system should be adopted so that students may not further suffer academically and mentally and get a fair opportunity for promotion on the basis of marks/grades secured in internal examinations. He hoped that this step would also be helpful in protecting the students from the deadly 3rd wave of COVID-19 and mental stress as well.

He assured that APSUP, being important stakeholder, would extend utmost cooperation to the current government in enhancing access, improving quality in higher education sector and contributing for socio-economic development of the country and look forward to your kind consideration of our proposal for the timely commencement of Autumn Semester 2021. The copied of the letter have also sent to Asad Umar Chief, National Command and Operations Centre Islamabad (NCOCC) and Dr. Ghulam Ali Mullah, Secretary/CEO IBCC Islamabad. Released by: Central Secretariat, Association of Private Sector Universities of Pakistan.

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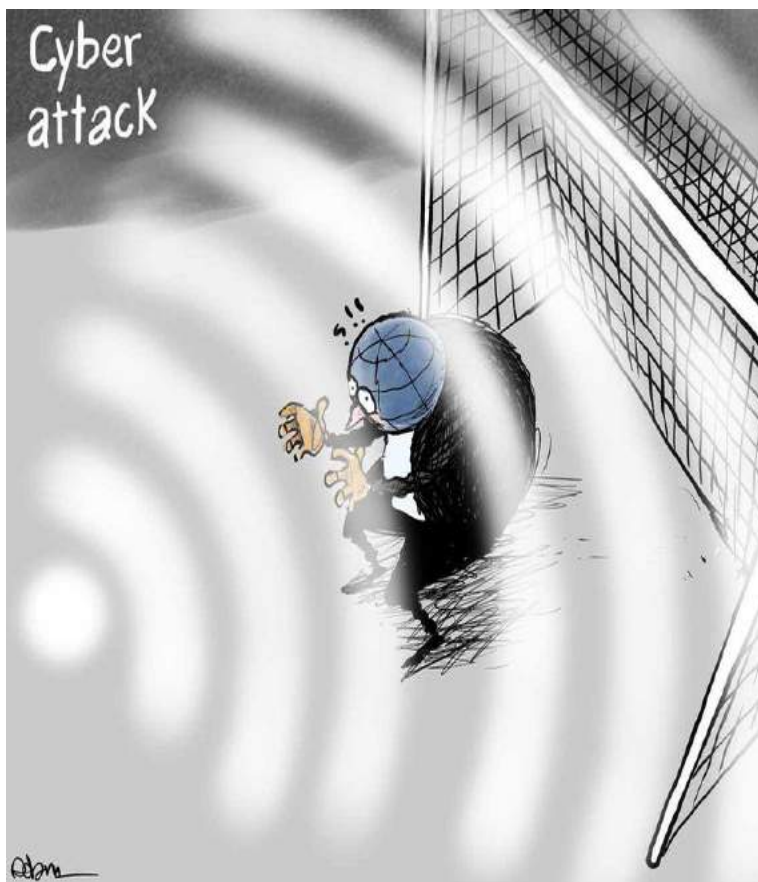
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Budget proposals

WHILE Prime Minister Imran Khan is sanguine about giving maximum relief to people in the upcoming budget, there is a need to consider new budget proposals keeping in mind the overall economic strategy that has been in a mess for the past three years. First, the public needs must take precedence over all other considerations. So far, there appears little evidence that the government has been serious in tackling the problems that common people in the country have been facing. The focus of the government has been more on facilitating real-estate, instead. Then there is the question of new development projects that must become prominent in the coming budget proposals. In national budgets, development outlays have been on a low priority for decades. When the PTI-led government assumed power in 2018, many people hoped that the new government would set its preferences right. With the Covid-19 pandemic still raging, there can be no excuse for not including health as a major concern in the new budget proposals. Over the years, the budget allocation for health has remained dismally low, resulting in highly inadequate health facilities for common citizens in the country. Any surge in a new pandemic is likely to put a tremendous strain on the existing health infrastructure. As the Covid-19 pandemic is likely to continue for at least another year or so, the upcoming budget proposals must take this into account. If the pandemic gets out of hand, as it has done in India, the government will not be able to use excuses for having not enough budget provisions. Ultimately we need to vaccinate all 225 million people in the country and for that we need not only an upgrade of all health facilities across the country but enough resources to buy and administer the vaccines as well. There are also some supplementary issues related to a broader economic framework, one of which is the handling of spiraling circular debts. Related to it is also the challenge of dealing with IPPs. Finally, to attract foreign investment in the capital market, the FBR has received some useful budget proposals from the Pakistan Stock Exchange Limited. One of them is aimed at encouraging non-resident to bring new investments to Pakistan. Since this was one of the promises of the PTI before elections, it should now make good on it. To attract new foreign investment in the capital market it is essential to provide a level-playing field to all such investors. As of today, the capital gains tax on equity securities is higher for non-residents than the capital gains tax in the debt market for non-resident companies with no permanent establishment in Pakistan. In the new budget, the government could align the rates of capital gains tax on disposal of equity securities of non-residents. In short, the budget proposals must be wide-ranging, incorporating public needs as well as corporate concerns so the economy can bounce back from the recent slump, and the people are not short-changed in the process either.

Fixing oxygen prices

THE Supreme Court (SC) of Pakistan, while hearing the coronavirus suo moto case, has asked the government to intervene in the market to fix the price of oxygen cylinders. The direction issued by the SC to the government is a timely reminder regarding the protection of the public from the hoarders and profiteers in these times of distress. According to news reports, the prices in Peshawar and surrounding areas went from 700 to 1200 amid the worsening public health situation in the province. The traders cite a dearth in oxygen supply for the price hike. However, this is partially true. The price hike is largely due to hoarding for increasing profit margins. The government must also ensure that while fixing the price of an oxygen cylinder, the sellers do not create an artificial shortage of oxygen. The possibility of such a situation is not unreal. It will be better if the government orders the concerned departments to set up plants for oxygen productions. The Balochistan government has already set up one such plant at Fatima Jinnah Chest and General Hospital Quetta. Other provincial governments must also establish such plants at the big hospitals. Such arrangements will help the hospitals in maintaining the supply and demand equilibrium stable, and patients will get an uninterrupted supply of the commodity at these institutes. Thankfully, the government's stringent policies are proving effective in curtailing the spread of the virus. Although still early days, the results of such measures are before our eyes. Thus, the government must continue them around Eid and ensure that the public does not violate safety measures. That would help in making a tangible change to the number of infections. Nevertheless, the decrease in cases does not mean that the supply for things needed to deal with the complications caused by corona will meet demand. It is the government's responsibility to shore up supply lines for equipment that the hospitals need and might need in the case of growing numbers. And at the same time, it also has to be ensured that we require such commodities in less quantity in fighting this third wave off.

Pandemic, education & need for greater investment

Asim Bashir Khan



Finally, for the most recent budget (fiscal year 2020-21), the trajectory seems to be a continuation of past trends rather than a result of the fall-out of an emergency situation. Except Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the non-development expenditures saw an increase in all the provinces and the federal government. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was also unparalleled in terms of its planned increase in the education development portfolio, which it enhanced by 46.2 per cent

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

A close examination points at the fact

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

cal year 2020-21), the trajectory seems to be a continuation of past trends rather than a result of the fall-out of an emergency situation. Except Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the non-development expenditures saw an increase in all the provinces and the federal government. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was also unparalleled in terms of its planned increase in the education development portfolio, which it enhanced by 46.2 per cent. This was followed by Sindh with a 7.7 per cent increase and the federal government with a 1.4 per cent increase. Balochistan and Punjab, on the other hand, budgeted cuts worth of 23.9 per cent and 16.3 per cent respectively.

As per the government's claim of achieving a V-shaped recovery, the cuts in the education development expenditure in Balochistan and Punjab and the meagre increase at the federal level demand an empathetic review during the current fiscal year and a substantial increase going forward. More importantly, structural issues such as incremental budgeting practices, inability to curtail non-development expenses and an absence of needs/targets-based budgeting need serious redressal to create the much-needed fiscal space for Pakistan's feeble education sector.

– **The writer is an economist and Public Financial Management expert. He is currently a PhD candidate at IBA.**

Adieu to a prescient Sailor

Muhammad Azam Khan

Gwadar port on Makran coast of the North Arabian Sea was first conceived by Admiral K R Niazi as a locale for future naval expansion. In his capacity as Commander Pakistan fleet between 1977 and 1978, Admiral K R Niazi often took his fleet of ships and submarines to Gwadar. The fleet anchored and stayed in the Gwadar Bay for days. He envisioned Gwadar to be the best choice for Pakistan and Pakistan Navy besides being an alternate to Karachi. With barely any port facilities, the scanty populated Gwadar town then represented a picture of mud mountains

VERY few individuals in the annals of Pakistani military history can be credited for leaving behind an illustrious legacy and a lasting impression on human minds. Late Admiral Karamat Rehman Niazi was one such personality. He was a gifted person by nature-animpressive blend of sagacity and foresight. Admiral Karamat Rehman Niazi, former Chief of the Naval Staff Pakistan Navy (22 March 1979-21 March 1983) stands amongst few who could convert such sterling remarkable mix of human qualities into physical form. His achievements far outshine his contemporaries. He was an iconic figure definitely far ahead of his times. The Admiral left for his eternal abode in the small hours of 21 of Ramadan, 1442 (April 4, 2021). He made an indelible imprint on minds of those who knew him; served with him or else were his subordinates in some capacity. His operational acumen, peerless professional judgement, paradigm shift in naval officers training were all monumental in shape and effect. Instead of spending millions on overseas advanced professional training courses of officers, he instituted these to be conducted locally. It provided tremendous impetus in expanding reservoir of specialist officers within the service, not to mention saving of millions in FE. To cut further drain on expenditures, the late Naval Chief established a special fund. The fund was used to hire local professional experts for different training centres within Pakistan Navy. This amount would have too gone to hire overseas training personnel. The name late Admiral Karamat Rehman Niazi is synonymous with a major navy wide exercise now regularly held in Pakistan Navy and code-named "Sea Spark". The exercise was first introduced in 1980-81 and conducted in the North Arabian Sea. Entire fleet including aviation wing of Pakistan Navy participated in the over two week long manoeuvres. The exercise has since become an integral endeavour undertaken by Pakistan Navy on annual basis or as decided. Admiral K R Niazi's clear-headedness, unconventional thinking and desire to navigate through uncharted waters to advance the cause of service, often left many dumbfounded. He did this through the entire length of his career and while holding important positions in the service. In his watch as Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Kara-

mat Rehman Niazi closely coordinated and where needed reinforced issues of national security as well. This was at the height of Afghan war in early 80s. He was main driving force to bring Pakistan Navy and Peoples Liberation Army (Navy) closer. It was again his foresight that enabled Pakistan Navy to expand its diplomatic network overseas. This materialised in drawing in ever new regional navies in sending their prospective trainees to Pakistan. Of particular significance was the deepening of the ties with Royal Saudi Naval Force. It ushered in a new era of officers and sailors training in various institutes of Pakistan navy. This was over and above the conduct of joint naval exercises and high-tech weapon firings like Harpoon missiles. In former Admiral, Pakistan Navy and indeed the country has lost a man of wisdom and vision. He was veteran of two wars, 1965 and 1971 and played central role in battles fought in the North Arabian Sea. As the founding member of submarine service, Admiral K R Niazi had the singular distinction of becoming the first commanding officer of submarine, Ghazi in June 1964. Gifted under the US Aid programme, PNS Ghazi was also the first submarine to enter service in Pakistan Navy. Pakistan also became the first country in the region to acquire and operate a submarine. Earlier in 1963 he received submarine operations training in the United States. It was Ghazi commanded by then Lt Commander Karamat Rehman Niazi that constantly patrolled between Bombay and Kutch coast and instilled fear in the hearts of the enemy during the war in 1965. The submarine effectively held the Indian navy at bay. Fear of submarine attack resulted in Indian navy's only aircraft carrier tied up inside Bombay harbour. Later, in 1971 war as Commander of submarines squadron, it was in his watch that PN submarine Hangor sank Indian Frigate, INS Khukri on the night of 8/9 December off Indian coast of Kathiawar (Gujarat). Gwadar port on Makran coast of the North Arabian Sea was first conceived by Admiral K R Niazi as a locale for future naval expansion. In his capacity as Commander Pakistan fleet between 1977 and 1978, Admiral K R Niazi often took his fleet of ships and submarines to Gwadar. The fleet anchored and stayed in the Gwadar Bay

for days. He envisioned Gwadar to be the best choice for Pakistan and Pakistan Navy besides being an alternate to Karachi. With barely any port facilities, the scanty populated Gwadar town then represented a picture of mud mountains and sand dunes, with gusty winds blowing all through the evenings. Officers and men on-board ships and submarines were led ashore on boats for survey and to be familiarized with the rugged terrain. Gwadar of today, bustling with activity underpins and holds future of CPEC. It reminds one and all who knew him of a sapling once planted by the late Admiral and now ripened as full grown tree. Born on April 30, 1930 in District Hoshiarpur in East Punjab, Admiral Karamat Rehman Niazi was the eighth Chief of Naval Staff of Pakistan. He joined Royal Pakistan Navy in November 1948. Following initial training at Britain's Royal Naval College, Dartmouth, the Admiral earned his commission in Executive Branch of Pakistan Navy in January 1951. It was beginning of a distinguished career. It was to span over four decades. The Admiral held numerous command and staff appointments. He was the first Commander of Submarine Squadron and later served as Director Submarines at Naval Headquarters as well. His career afloat saw him command submarine Ghazi besides front line destroyers and minesweepers. He also commanded a destroyer squadron. Upon elevation to flag rank, the Admiral served as Deputy Chief of Naval Staff (Operations), Commander Pakistan Fleet and Vice Chief of the Naval Staff. Admiral Karamat Rehman Niazi is now gone, but his spiritual presence will continue to guide and illuminate the paths of future generation PN officers and men. He was founder of submarine service and its valiant traditions in Pakistan navy. His unconventional thinking, leading cross country runs in Gwadar as commander of Pakistan Fleet, his vision and changing the way officers are trained in Pakistan besides winning over friendly navies for training and joint exercises are lasting imprints he left on the way Pakistan Navy conducts business, during peace, crisis and war. He will be remembered as a true son of soil, one who could produce local solutions to complex problems. May his soul rest in peace. Aameen.

Briefs

Asian Youth Girls Netball Championship postponed

ISLAMABAD: The Asian Netball Federation (ANF) has postponed the Asian Youth Girls Netball Championship which was scheduled to be held in Korea in August. "The Asian Netball Federation has postponed the Asian Youth Girls Netball Championship due to COVID-19 pandemic which has affected the whole world," MudassarArain, President Pakistan Netball Federation, told APP on Thursday. He said the championship which was to be played in Korea in August this year was to feature women players from Asian countries. "The new dates for the championship will be announced later after the coronavirus is under control around the globe," he said. — APP

PM Khan rules out any NRO...

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last 74 years only a particular elite ruled the country. He said the elite-centric policies inflicted huge damage upon the poor whose access to civic facilities including health, education and jobs greatly suffered. He said his vision was to make powerful answerable to law and strengthen the weaker segments of society. He said Islam's first socio-welfare State of Madinah was a model to be emulated where rule of law and justice prevailed regardless of the status of a person. He said the political elite in the past patronized illegal land grabbing that led to litigation and obstructed development work. Imran said the government had launched several affordable housing schemes for low-income groups, adding that construction industry was resulting in economic boom in the country. As construction sector was connected with 30 other industries, he said, the step would help resolve the problems of accommodation and unemployment. He mentioned that the recently cleared foreclosure law of banks greatly helped in materializing the low-cost housing schemes. He said ill-planning of infrastructure and encroachment in cities was leading to civic problems including poor sanitation, pollution and mushroom growth of slums. He said a plan to equip slums with basic amenities was on cards and vowed to give ownership rights to the slum-dwellers. The prime minister, who also virtually inaugurated the work at nine other sites including Chiniot, Dera Ghazi Khan, Chunian, Khanewal, Khushab, Mandi Bahaudin, Mianwali, Jalalpur Pirwalla and Sargodha, said the project would facilitate the common man. He lauded Frontier Works Organization and the government of Punjab for executing the work on low-cost housing in record time. Imran said Pakistan was blessed with areas having spectacular natural beauty, adding that proper tourism strategy could earn the country huge revenues.

LEAs to be deployed at tourist...

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The NCOC said that the provinces have also issued directives to restrict movement during holidays, besides also banning tourist spots and hotels in these areas. The LEAs have been given special responsibility at tourist spots. Earlier in the day, the Provincial Task Force on Covid-19 in KP decided to close all tourist spots in Pakistan's northern areas during the Eid holidays to stem the third wave of the coronavirus. A meeting of the Task Force reviewed the prevailing Covid-19 situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and took a number of decisions to prevent the spread of the virus. Briefing the media after the meeting, the KP chief minister's Special Assistant on Information Kamran Bangash said Covid-19 cases registered a sharp decline due to the government's "best strategy". "The positivity ratio of infections is 8 percent to 9pc," he said, adding the hardest-hit districts of the province are also reporting a drop in cases.

G7 ends talks with criticism of China and Russia

China's spectacular economic and military rise over the past 40 years is among the most significant geopolitical events of recent history, alongside the 1991 fall of the Soviet Union that ended the Cold War

FOREIGN DESK

LONDON: The Group of Seven has scolded China and Russia, casting the Kremlin as malicious and Beijing as a bully, but beyond words, there were few concrete steps aside from expressing support for Taiwan and Ukraine. Founded in 1975 as a forum for the most advanced economies to discuss crises such as the OPEC oil embargo, the G7 this week addressed what it perceives as the biggest current threats: China, Russia and the coronavirus pandemic. G7 foreign ministers, who met in London under tight coronavirus restrictions, said in a 12,400-word communique that Russia was trying to undermine democracies and threatening Ukraine while China was guilty of human rights abuses and of using its economic clout to bully others. There was, however, little concrete action mentioned in the communique that would unduly worry either Chinese President Xi Jin-

ping or his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin. The G7 said it would bolster collective efforts to stop China's "coercive economic policies" and to counter Russian disinformation — part of a move to present the West as a much broader alliance than just the core G7 countries. "I think [China is] more likely to need to, rather than react in anger, it is more likely going to need to take a look in the mirror and understand that it needs to take into account this growing body of opinion, that thinks these basic international rules have got to be adhered to," British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said. Russia denies it is meddling beyond its borders and says the West is gripped by anti-Russian hysteria. China says the West is a bully and that its leaders have a post-imperial mindset that makes them feel they can act like global policemen. China's spectacular economic and military rise over the past 40 years is among the most significant geopolitical events of recent history,

China condemns G7 joint statement

BEIJING: A Chinese spokesperson on Thursday said any attempt to meddle in China's internal affairs, undermine China's sovereignty, or tarnish China's image under various excuses is doomed to fail. It was in response to a recent statement by the foreign ministers of the Group of Seven (G7) concerning China. The joint statement was issued by the G7 foreign ministers' meeting Wednesday. It expressed concerns over Xinjiang, Tibet, Hong Kong, and situations in the East China Sea and the South China Sea. It also voiced support for Taiwan to participate in the World Health Assembly. In response, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said at a daily press briefing the G7 meeting made groundless accusations against China. They openly meddled in China's internal affairs and resorted to bloc politics that turned back the wheels of history, said Wang. "This constitutes a gross interference in China's national sovereignty and wanton destruction of the norms governing international relations, which goes against the trend of peace, development, and cooperation for win-win results," said Wang, adding China condemns such practice. — Agencies

ry, alongside the 1991 fall of the Soviet Union that ended the Cold War. This week's meeting sets the tone for the G7 leaders' meeting in Cornwall, southwest England, next month, at which US President Joe Biden makes his international debut. The

West, which is much bigger than China and Russia economically and militarily, has struggled to come up with an effective response to either China or Russia. "We will work collectively to foster global economic resilience in the face of arbitrary, coercive economic

policies and practices," the G7 ministers said on China. They said they supported Taiwan's participation in World Health Organization forums and the World Health Assembly — and expressed concerns about "any unilateral actions that could escalate tensions" in the Taiwan Strait. China regards Taiwan as its own territory and opposes any official Taiwanese representation on an international level. China's Foreign Ministry on Thursday condemned the joint statement by G7 foreign ministers, saying it was a gross interference in China's internal affairs. The G7 as a group should take concrete actions to boost the global economic recovery instead of disrupting it, spokesman Wang Wenbin told reporters in Beijing On Russia, the G7 was similarly supportive of Ukraine but offered little beyond words. "We are deeply concerned that the negative pattern of Russia's irresponsible and destabilising behaviour continues," G7 ministers said.

"This includes the large build-up of Russian military forces on Ukraine's borders and in illegally-annexed Crimea, its malign activities aimed at undermining other countries' democratic systems, its malicious cyber activity, and [its] use of disinformation." Foreign ministers from hosts Britain, plus the United States, France, Germany, Italy, Canada and Japan also called on Tehran to release foreign and dual nationals they said were being held arbitrarily in Iranian jails. They threatened the Myanmar military government which staged a coup in February with fresh sanctions, in a wide-ranging final communique covering the world's most pressing geopolitical issues, including climate change and post-pandemic recovery. On the coronavirus pandemic, the G7 pledged to work with the industry to expand the production of affordable COVID-19 vaccines, but stopped short of calling for a waiver of intellectual property rights of the leading pharmaceutical firms.

Chelsea outclass Real Madrid

WEB DESK

LONDON: Goals by Timo Werner and Mason Mount sent Chelsea into a Champions League final showdown with Manchester City as they outclassed Real Madrid to win 2-0 for a 3-1 aggregate triumph at Stamford Bridge on Wednesday. German striker Werner, who has endured a stuttering first season at Chelsea, put them in control when he nodded in one of the easiest goals of his career in the 28th minute after fellow German Kai Havertz had struck the bar. Thirteen-times European champions Real, who had come through each of their last three Champions League semi-final ties, had been second best for much last week's first leg which ended 1-1. Even with talisman Sergio Ramos back after missing the home leg they were outplayed by Thomas Tuchel's side again as the German continued his stunning impact in west London to become the first coach to reach back to back Champions League finals with different clubs. Chelsea should have killed the game as they created, and wasted, a sackload of chances in a dazzling second-half display.

Pakistan FM thanks..

From Page 01

It may be mentioned here that both Pakistan and Indonesia enjoy excellent relations. Both countries have diversified their trade and economic relations as well. Leaderships of both countries are well aware of the fact that people to people contacts are very essential in promoting and strengthening bilateral relationship that is why special focus has been laid in this regard. Indonesia offers huge business opportunities to Pakistani as well as businessmen from across the globe. The Indonesian embassy in Islamabad spearheaded by Ambassador Adam Tugio is rightly focusing on building linkages in the field of education; intelligentsia; think-tanks and media besides bringing closer business class of both countries. The embassy initiative to engage with youth of Pakistan and then put youths of both countries in contact with one another is yet another step that has won wide acclaim in Pakistan. The recently concluded online internship program jointly organized by the CGSS and the Indonesia embassy particularly drew huge interest.

Pakistan reaffirms support...

From Page 01

the people's right to self-determination. The issue, he further said, is also important from the human rights perspective. "We are deeply concerned at the continuing egregious human rights violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories," he said adding Pakistan had always emphasized the need for protection of fundamental rights of the people in the occupied territories, be it Palestine, Kashmir or elsewhere. IPI Executive Director Prof Sajad Bokhari said there is a natural and strong emotional attachment to the issue of Palestine, as well as a deep commitment to its just and peaceful settlement because of the centrality of the cause of Al-Quds Al-Sharif for Muslims. The year 2020, he observed, was a year of setbacks for the Palestinians.

He emphasized the need for publics of other countries to maintain pressure on their governments on Palestinian issue so that international solidarity for the cause could be maintained.

Prof Bokhari asked the Palestinians to initiate an internal dialogue among themselves to develop a new vision for their struggle that could energize their resistance while bringing together the different factions. He said that with US losing its credibility as an impartial mediator and in view of its declining dominance in global politics, the Palestinians should explore options with other influential countries. General Secretary Palestine Foundation Sabar Abu Maryam said Palestinians needed justice and not just peace, which can only be acquired through right to self-determination.



MANCHESTER: Real Madrid and Chelsea players vying during a semi-final match of Champions League. — DNA

Sumbul Shahid passes away due to Coronavirus



DNA

LAHORE: Sumbul Shahid was suffering from Covid-19 for a month. Pakistan's veteran actress Sumbul Shahid passed away due to Covid-19. According to her sister Bushra Ansari, the veteran actress, who tested positive one month prior, was undergoing treatment in a hospital in Lahore where she was placed on a

ventilator. Sisters Bushra and Asma Abbas had appealed to their fans to pray for their ill sister's recovery as her condition worsened. The star graced in many dramas like Malika-e-Aliya, Ishqaway and Takay Ki Ayegi Baraat. She was best known for her work in Golden Girls and was widely popular for her role in Dolly Ki Ayegi Baraat. Her last appearance was in the drama Nand with Shahroz Shahzari, Minal Khan, Ijaz Aslam and others stars. It is pertinent to mention that Sumbul's son Shiraz too passed away a year ago in a paragliding accident in Chitral. News of her passing took the industry by storm as fans and the fraternity have expressed their grief over the heart-breaking news.

Pakistan, Belarus mull over vocational training

DNA

MINSK: Today, Ambassador of Pakistan to Belarus Mr. Sajjad Haider Khan held a meeting with H.E. Mr. Igor Karpenko, Minister of Education of the Republic of Belarus. The meeting was also attended by Ms. Irina Shitkovskaya, Head of the International Cooperation Department of the Ministry. Appreciating the existing MOUs between the two countries covering educational collaboration, the two sides discussed whole range of topics including cooperation amongst the universities in both the countries for joint research and participation in educational programmes. Strengthening cooperation in vocational training also came under discussions. The honourable Minister showed readiness of Belarusian side to accept issuance of double degree programmes/diplomas. He also shared the possibility of provision of scholarships to Pakistani students as part of Ministry's

annual programme. The two sides also broadened the prospects of running short term (4-6 weeks duration) languages course at the NUML, Islamabad & at the Belarusian State University and Minsk State Linguistic University.



Colombians march in eighth day of protests

FOREIGN DESK

BOGOTA: Riot police fired tear gas at protesters in Bogota on Wednesday during an eighth day of nationwide anti-government demonstrations, after crowds attacked police stations in the capital overnight. The protests were originally called in opposition to a now-canceled tax reform plan, but demonstrators have broadened their demands to include government action to tackle poverty, police violence and inequalities in the health and education systems. Demonstrations and lawmaker opposition led to the tax reform's withdrawal and the resignation of the finance minister. International organizations have warned against police violence,

which is so far linked to just under half of 24 confirmed deaths, mainly of protesters. Many protesters are calling for the ESMAD riot police to be disbanded, but some said they did not blame individual officers. "They get orders from the state, which they have to follow," said student James Romero, 18, who joined a chanting crowd in Bogota's central Bolivar Plaza. Romero said he was struck several times in the back by a baton-wielding ESMAD officer while running from confrontations on Saturday. "I felt fear - so much fear." Minutes later, police fired tear gas to deter some demonstrators from attempting to enter Colombia's Congress. Earlier gatherings farther north were peaceful. Bogota psychologist Benjamin Paba Al-Faro, 53, said he

UN human rights chief sounds alarm

NEW YORK: The United Nations human rights chief on Thursday sounded an alarm over what she called the rising number of threats and attacks against independent human rights institutions in Latin America by local governments and others in positions of power. Michelle Bachelet said in a statement that over the last two years her office had received increasing complaints from independent activist groups in the region that have been harassed and threatened by governments, lawmakers and vigilante groups. Incidents include threats against groups in Bolivia, Chile and El Salvador as well as attacks against staff of a rights group in Haiti and pressure to remove the leaders of rights institutions in Mexico and Guatemala, the statement said. Bachelet also voiced concern over Argentina's failure to appoint a rights ombudsperson for over a decade. "The fact that we have received complaints from institutions in almost a dozen countries in the region is striking testimony to the expanding trend and magnitude of the problem," she said. Bachelet, who is also the former president of Chile, called on respective authorities to investigate the allegations. — Agencies

was demonstrating for better education and to ensure the continuity of the peace process with now-demobilized FARC rebels, adding: "This isn't about defeating just one law." Poverty, which rose to 42.5% of the population last year amid coronavirus lockdowns, has aggravated long-standing inequalities and reversed some recent development gains. The number of Colombians living in extreme poverty grew by 2.8 million people in 2020. The protests and associated road blockades - which have stymied shipments of top agricultural export coffee - could affect the economy, the central bank's technical director said on Wednesday. "They are temporary effects, but they could affect monetary policy depending on their duration and reach," Hernando Vargas

said during a presentation. President Ivan Duque has said the government will create space to listen to citizens and develop concrete proposals, similar to overtures offered to protesters following demonstrations in 2019. Many groups - including major unions - say he has failed to deliver. In a video on Wednesday, Duque repeated government allegations that drug trafficking mafias were behind vandalism and looting and said more than 550 arrests had been made. "There will be no truce with those who commit these crimes - all of society will take them to justice," Duque said. During a seventh night of protests on Tuesday, 30 civilians and 16 police officers were injured in Bogota, the mayor's office said in a statement.

Briefs

Palestinian teen killed during Israeli raid

FOREIGN DESK

JERUSALEM: Israeli troops have shot and killed a 16-year-old Palestinian boy during a raid on a village south of the occupied West Bank city of Nablus, Palestinian officials said. According to Defense for Children International Palestine (DCIP), Israeli forces situated in an olive tree grove at the entrance of the village of Odala shot Said Odeh twice in the back. An ambulance was prevented from accessing Odeh for 15 minutes, and he was pronounced dead upon arrival after he was transferred to Rafidia hospital in Nablus, it said. "Israeli forces routinely unlawfully kill Palestinian children with impunity, using intentional lethal force against Palestinian children when they pose no threat," said Ayed Abu Eqtaiash, Accountability Program director at DCIP. "Systemic impunity has fostered a context where Israeli forces know no bounds." A second Palestinian was shot in the back during the clashes on Wednesday and was being treated in hospital, the Palestinian health ministry said in a statement announcing the 16-year-old's death. The Israeli military said troops fired towards Palestinians hurling Molotov cocktails at them late on Wednesday near the Palestinian village of Beitza, south of Nablus. "The troops operated to stop the suspects by firing towards them," an Israeli military spokeswoman said, adding that the incident would be investigated.

Outrage in France over killing of policeman

AVIGNON: French politicians and police unions voiced their indignation Thursday over an officer's killing at a known drug-dealing site in the southern city of Avignon, which reignited a debate over President Emmanuel Macron's record on fighting crime. The 36-year-old officer and father of two was shot and killed Wednesday evening while investigating a gathering at the spot, interior minister Gerald Darmanin said. The shooter remains at large. The killing caused deep shock in Avignon, famed as the seat of Catholic popes in the 14th century and for hosting one of the world's biggest theatre festivals every July. Visiting the scene Wednesday evening, Darmanin hailed the dead officer, whose first name was given by La Provence newspaper as Eric, as a "soldier" who "died a hero" in a "war" against drug dealers. The attack took place in the centre of Avignon, on a cobbled street running alongside a canal. A team of plainclothes officers sent to investigate a suspected drug deal were carrying out identity checks on a group of people when one of them opened fire, a police source told media. — APP

Taliban captures key Afghan dam as fighting rages

KANDAHAR: The Taliban has captured Afghanistan's second-biggest dam after months of fierce fighting in its former bastion of Kandahar, the group and officials said, as the US forces have begun the withdrawal of its troops from the country after 20 years. The Dahla Dam, which provides irrigation to farmers via a network of canals as well as drinking water for the provincial capital, was now under Taliban control, local officials told AFP news agency on Thursday.

"We have seized the Dahla Dam in Arghandab," Taliban spokesman Qari Yousuf Ahmadi told AFP. Haji Gulbuddin, governor of an adjacent district, confirmed the dam "is now in the control of the Taliban". "Our security forces ... asked for reinforcements but they failed to get it," he said. The dam's capture comes after clashes erupted in neighbouring Helmand province this week, just days after the US military formally began withdrawing its remaining troops from Afghanistan.

Former Afghan TV host shot dead

KANDAHAR: Nemat Rawan, a former Afghan television journalist, was shot dead in southern Kandahar city on Thursday, officials said, becoming the fifth journalist to have been killed this year. Rawan hosted a popular talk show on the country's leading broadcaster, Tolo News, before joining the ministry of finance as a communications specialist last month. He was "assassinated by unknown gunmen", Kandahar city police spokesman Jamal Nasir Barekzai told AFP news agency. "Heartbreaking to hear that a friend and former colleague Nemat Rawan was shot dead in Kandahar city today," Lotfullah Najafizada, head of Tolo News, posted on Twitter. There was no claim of responsibility for the attack, but the Taliban have been blamed for a wave of assassinations targeting journalists in recent months. On Wednesday, a Taliban spokesman warned that media workers who carry out "biased reporting" would be "held responsible". Abdullah Abdullah, the head of the country's peace

Kandahar water department chief Tooryalay Mahboobi told AFP the Taliban recently warned Dahla employees not to go to work. Last month the armed fighters

blew up a bridge that connected the dam to adjacent districts, an AFP correspondent in Kandahar said. Dahla was built by the US nearly

council, on Thursday condemned the Taliban's threat against the media and "any attempts to silence Afghan journalists".

Members of Afghanistan's educated class — including journalists, activists and judges — have for months been the target of bombings and shootings, forcing many to go into hiding or leave the country. The killings have escalated since peace talks began last year between the Afghan government and the Taliban, sparking fears that rebels are eliminating perceived opponents as negotiations stall. At least 11 Afghan journalists were killed in 2020, with four more reportedly murdered this year, according to a recent toll from Amnesty International. In early March, three female media workers were gunned down in the eastern city of Jalalabad. Around 1,000 Afghan media workers have left their jobs in the past six months, an Afghan journalists' safety committee said recently. Afghanistan has long been ranked as one of the most dangerous countries in the world for journalists. — Agencies

\$350m to be used partly to expand the reservoir-style project. The surrounding district has seen intense fighting in the past six months, but officials announced in April that the area had been cleared.

Before retreating, the Taliban planted explosives across the area — including in residential complexes — officials said. In neighbouring Helmand, thousands of people have fled their homes in the face of a massive Taliban offensive against government forces.

US warplanes have been providing air support for the Afghan forces despite the pullout of foreign troops. The US was supposed to have pulled all forces out by May 1 under a deal struck with the Taliban last year, but Washington pushed back the date to September 11 — a move that angered the armed group.

The pullout of foreign forces comes even as efforts to hammer out a peace deal between the Afghan government and the Taliban have stalled. — Agencies

Russia clears single-dose Sputnik

WEB DESK

MOSCOW: Russia on Thursday approved a one-shot version of its Sputnik V coronavirus vaccine for use in the country.

A single shot of Sputnik Light is enough to trigger a strong immune response, the Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) said in a statement.

The efficiency of Sputnik Light "was 79.4% from the 28th day after receiving immunization," read the statement.

"The effectiveness rate of about 80% is higher than that of many vaccines that require two shots," the RDIF said.

The efficiency rate was calculated based on data from the first and second phases of trials held from December 5, 2020, until April 15, 2021, according to the RDIF.

The third phase of the clinical trial involving 7,000 people is taking place in Russia, the United Arab Emirates, Ghana, and some other countries, with the interim results expected in May.

UK, France send patrol boats to Jersey

FOREIGN DESK

LONDON: The United Kingdom and France have dispatched patrol boats to the British Channel island of Jersey amid an escalating row over post-Brexit fishing rights.

French trawler crews angry at restrictions placed on their access to UK fishing grounds after the latter's departure from the European Union sailed to Jersey in a flotilla in the early hours of Thursday to register their protest.

A website that tracks marine traffic showed around 25 French-registered vessels were located near Jersey's main port of St Helier shortly afterwards. Some of the flotilla entered the port's harbour during their protest.

The UK said it had sent two naval gunboats to "monitor the situation" in the waters surrounding the island in response.

France reacted in turn following the UK's move, dispatching two of its own maritime patrol boats to the area.

The French navy said the vessels had been deployed on the orders of the French civil authorities.

It did not give details of what they would be doing in the waters off Jersey, which sits 14 miles (23 kilometres) off the northern French coast and 85 miles (140 km) south of the UK mainland's shores. Ship-tracking website marine-traffic.com showed one of the two French vessels, Atheros, located approximately 20 km south-east of Jersey.

It was at least 20 km away from the two British naval vessels, the HMS Severn and HMS Tamar, which were on the south-western side of the island.

Al Jazeera's Natacha Butler, reporting from onboard a French fishing vessel at the scene, said disagreements between the UK and France over post-Brexit fishing rights that have been rumbling for weeks were now "escalating", with both sides "upping the rhetoric".

Azerbaijan, Japan ink deal on green energy zone

DNA

BAKU: Azerbaijan's Energy Ministry and Japan's TEPSCO company have signed an agreement related to the establishment of the "green energy" zone in the newly-liberated territories in line with the presidential order, the ministry's press service reported on April 6.

The agreement envisages the effective use of renewable energy potential such as wind, solar, hydro, geothermal, and bioenergy in the liberated territories. It considers the establishment of a "green energy" zone based on modern energy management approaches in order to realize the energy supply of the region.

The joint project will study international experience in this field, and a scenario of energy supply and demand depending on economic development and settlement

in the liberated areas. In addition, it will address issues such as network integration of renewable energy, energy efficiency, transport, urban development, waste management, smart networks, and green financing. The presidential order on measures to establish a "green energy" zone in the country's liberated territories was signed on May 3, 2021.

It should be noted that TEPSCO has participated in the implementation of a number of projects in Azerbaijan. These include consulting services in the project on the construction of "Shimal-1" and "Shimal-2" power plants, field analysis of the energy sector of Azerbaijan, and others.

TEPSCO, founded in 1960, has implemented projects in more than 90 countries of the world and has international experience in the field of "green energy".

ISLAMABAD: Vice President of The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Pakistan (ICAP), Ashfaq Tola calls on the Federal Minister for finance and revenue, Shaukat Tarin at the finance division to present proposals on Model Federal Budget 21-22. — DNA

Qatar orders arrest of finance minister amid probe

FOREIGN DESK

DOHA: Qatar's attorney general has ordered the arrest of Finance Minister Ali Shareef al-Emadi as part of an investigation into alleged misuse of public funds and abuse of power, according to state media.

Qatar News Agency (QNA) reported on Thursday that the decision had been taken after the review of documents and reports regarding crimes related to the public sector.

An "expanded" investigation was under way, it added.

"The attorney general has ordered the arrest of Minister of Finance Ali Sharif Al Emadi, and his questioning about matters raised in the reports regarding crimes pertaining to public office, such as damage to public funds, exploiting one's post, and abuse of power," QNA said. No other details were immediately available.



Al-Emadi, who oversaw the growth of Qatar National Bank, has served as finance minister since 2013. He sits on the board of Qatar's powerful \$300bn sovereign wealth fund, the Qatar Investment Authority. Al-Emadi steered Qatar's economic policies during the 2014-15 oil price crash that prompted the tiny nation — as well as other Gulf countries — to accelerate plans to diversify the economy. Qatar, a leading producer of liquefied natural gas, saw its economy shrink by 3.7 percent last year due to the coronavirus crisis and lower global energy demand.

MONITORING DESK

NEW DELHI: India has reported more than 400,000 coronavirus infections over the last 24 hours, while the number of dead from the virus rose to a record 3,980. The South Asian nation's tally has surged past 21 million cases, boosted by a record 412,262 new infections. The number of people who have died due to COVID-19 now totals 230,168, health ministry data showed on Thursday. Many experts suspect that with low levels of testing and poor record-keeping for cause of death — and crematoriums overwhelmed in many places — the real numbers could be significantly higher.

A massive wave of infections since April has pushed India's healthcare system to the brink, with people begging for oxygen cylinders

and hospital beds on social media and news channels. Bodies have been piling up at cremation grounds and in graveyards, with relatives waiting for hours to carry out the last rites.

Authorities are scrambling to add more beds, sending oxygen from one corner of the country to another and scaling up the manufacturing of the few drugs effective against COVID-19.

On Wednesday, the Indian government, facing calls for a strict lockdown to slow the surge in infections, was ordered by the Supreme Court to submit a plan to supply New Delhi's hospitals with oxygen within a day.

The court decided against immediately punishing officials for failing to end an erratic supply of oxygen to overstretched hospitals during the past two weeks.

"Ultimately putting officers in jail or hauling officers for

contempt will not bring oxygen. Please tell us steps to solve this," Justice Dhananjaya Yeshwant Chandrachud said.

The court delayed a contempt notice earlier issued to the government by the New Delhi High Court for defying its order to supply adequate oxygen to more than 40 New Delhi hospitals. The government officials found guilty could have faced six months in prison and a fine.

On Tuesday, the New Delhi High Court, which had summoned two home ministry officials for a hearing on Wednesday, said that those hospitals had instead reduced the number of beds available and had asked the patients to move out. The court is hearing petitions filed by several hospitals and nursing homes struggling with oxygen unreliable supplies.

"You can put your head in the sand like an ostrich, we

will not. We are not going to take no for an answer," Justices Vipin Sanghi and Rekha Palli said on Tuesday. Raghav Chaddha, a spokesman for the Aam Aadmi Party which governs New Delhi, said hospitals were getting only 40 percent of their 700 metric tonne daily needs through the federal government. The local government was arranging additional supplies and setting up new oxygen plants to help with the shortage, he said. Dileep Kumar, a student, said he was asked by hospital authorities to move his father to another hospital in Ghaziabad, a town on the outskirts of New Delhi, after the first hospital ran out of oxygen.

Rahul Gandhi, a leader of the opposition Congress party, said this week "a lockdown is now the only option because of a complete lack of strategy by the Indian government".

Namangan Flower festival looking forward to a May event

DNA

NAMANGAN: The greatest flower festival in Namangan region will be held on the last week of May. It lasts from May 24 to May 31 in the recreation park after named Z.M Bobur. Each year, our people celebrate Namangan Flowers Festival internationally rather than locally. Nurseries and garden designers have said they are relishing the unique opportunity to exhibit their work at a Namangan flowers festival. Namangan Territorial Department of the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Tourism Development is working closely with such supportive industries, organizations and wants to take this opportunity to thank everyone who is contributing to organize the Uzbekistan's most famous and traditional flower festival. There is such an appetite for gardens and nature at the moment

and we will all want to celebrate this at "Namangan flower festival". It is noted that the scope of the flower festival in Namangan has expanded in the last years and the number of participants,

guests and foreign tourists increased. Guests from South Korea, Russia, Turkey, Pakistan, Netherlands, and neighboring countries such as Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan are invited

to take part in the festival. Not only our local media representatives but also a number of foreign media representatives, including from Russia, China, Turkey, Iran, India and Central Asian countries will

cover this colorful event. We should mention that the Pakistan-Uzbekistan trade and cultural center is helping us in terms of publishing our articles and attracting tourists to the upcoming festival.

It is highly expected that this festival will help to promote tourism attractiveness of Namangan region and build a strong relationship between local and foreign tourists as a whole. It gives a great opportunity for Namangan region to show the whole world its tourism potential in this sphere.

In total, the event will be attended by more than 150 entrepreneur-florists, more than 100 companies and organizations will present flowers.

It should be noted that in its history, for the first time 10 million saplings are going to be planted in the upcoming Namangan Flower Festival. Year by year, the number of saplings and flowers planted is increasing considerably.

The Flower Parade will take place on the central streets of Namangan City. In this parade more than 150 local transports such as cars, fire trucks, combines, tractors, tracks and



ambulances decorated with a wide range of flowers and our national symbol flag, move through Namangan city to the Bobur recreation park.

It was noted that the Flower Festival is important not only in meeting the aesthetic needs of the population, but also in covering the city with goodness. This holi-

day is distinguished by its ethno-ecological aspects, as the other spring ceremonies.

"It has been a great event for everyone since it was held for the first time in 1961 and showed people a different range of plants so this year's Namangan Flower Festival will be rather nostalgic."



Briefs

Vaccine available in sufficient quantity: DG Health

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Director General Health Rana Safdar on Thursday has said that anti Covid vaccine is available in sufficient quantity in the country.

Briefing the media persons in Islamabad, he said the government is taking all possible steps to acquire more vaccine from all possible sources.

The DG Health said a mechanism has been developed to ensure that only quality vaccine is administered to the people. He said no compromise will be made on the quality of the vaccine.

Rana Safdar asked the people aged over forty years to get themselves registered for the vaccination. He said vaccination centers are open even after Ifitari from eight pm to twelve midnight.

Chief Executive Officer Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan Asim Rauf said the private sector is also being encouraged to import the vaccine. He said under a mechanism the private hospitals can also import vaccine for the vaccination of their employees.

Indian troops martyr three Kashmiris

DNA

SRINAGAR: In Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir, Indian troops in their fresh act of state terrorism martyred three Kashmiri youth in Shopian district in wee hours on Thursday.

The troops martyred the youth during a cordon and search operation in Imam Sahab area of the district. Indian troops and police personnel have sealed the entire area. The operation was going on till last reports came in.

The occupation authorities have suspended internet service in the district. The media persons are also not being allowed to enter the area, the eyewitness said.

Shafqat issues clarification on exams

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Education Minister Shafqat Mehmood on Thursday announced that board exams in Pakistan will commence after June 15, adding that priority will be given to intermediate and matriculation exams.

"Interprovincial Education Ministers Conference (IP-EMC) took place yesterday. It was decided that Board exams would begin after June 15. Intermediate and Matric exams would be given priority so that results can come in before university admissions," tweeted the minister.

Members of the IP-EMC rejected the suggestion to promote students of grades 9 and 11. They also gave their approval to hold the exams as scheduled in July.

The minister revealed that the government will give priority to exams for grades 12 and 10 followed by grades 11 and 9.

A day earlier, the minister had said intermediate examinations in the country would be held after June 15.

Mehmood had said the coronavirus situation was getting better in the country due to vaccinations and other steps taken by the government.

"I am very hopeful," he had said about holding examinations.

The minister had said only A-2 examinations were being held across the country, but several people were voicing their demands to be awarded school assessed grades.

"If examinations do not take place then no one will study – and that is why the (O/A-level) exams – that have been postponed – will be conducted in October and November," he had said.

UK funded initiative to enable SME's engage internationally

Dr Christian Turner says, "Monthly exports for goods and services (worth \$3.2 billion) are at an impressive record high - with UK remaining one of the biggest export markets for Pakistan"

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: A new initiative that will enable small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Pakistan to effectively engage in international markets was launched today.

This UK-funded initiative will help enhance Pakistan's trade diversification and integration into global value chains.

The International Trade Centre (ITC) will implement the Revenue mobilization, Investment and Trade Programme (ReMIT) programme. The GBP 5 million project will run from 2020-2024.

These efforts are part of a larger UK-supported ReMIT programme aimed at contributing to sustainable and inclusive economic development in the country.

Advisor to Prime Minister Commerce and Investment and Textile, Mr Abdul Razak Dawood said:

"The Government of Pakistan is pleased to collaborate with the International Trade Centre, Geneva on the ReMIT project in Pakistan,



which is a key part of our development partnership with United Kingdom, through the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, UK. It is very heartening to note that the aims and objectives of the project dovetail and align with the Strategic Trade Policy Framework of the Government through which we aim to revitalize Pakistan's economy in the challenging times of COVID-19. I

am pleased to note that the project international trade environment will be strengthened by enhancing exports, augmenting institutional capacities, and introducing trade facilitation reforms."

The British High Commissioner to Pakistan, Dr Christian Turner said:

"Monthly exports for goods and services (worth \$3.2 billion) are at an impressive record high - with UK re-

maining one of the biggest export markets for Pakistan. The new programme will enable trade reforms and create more opportunities for Pakistani businesses, especially the small and medium enterprises, to compete in international markets. This also aligns well with my ambition to double the trade between UK and Pakistan showing the best of #UKPakDosti."

The Executive Director of the International Trade Centre, Ms Pamela Coke-Hamilton said:

"ReMIT will focus on creating a conducive environment for small and medium-sized enterprises to engage in trade. It can help diversify the economy and capture additional export opportunities for the country post COVID-19. ITC is committed to strengthen-

ing Pakistan's approach to trade and stimulating international trade competitiveness. This will make it easier for Pakistani businesses to trade internationally and support job creation in export-oriented sectors."

Federal Secretary Commerce, Mr Muhammad Suleh Ahmad Faruqi said:

"This project is a comprehensive and far-reaching project involving major public and private stakeholders in business and international trade in Pakistan. Through the project's intervention areas spanning National Priority Sectors Export Strategy, building institutional capacity for trade policy formulation and addressing trade barriers, and finally through targeted trade facilitation oriented reforms, the project will go a long way towards contributing to increased trade and investment for the inclusive and sustainable economic development of Pakistan. I am pleased to know that ReMIT has a gender response framework which informs all project activities."

Tareen denies any secret meeting with PM

LAHORE: 'Estranged' PTI leader Jahangir Khan Tareen has refuted rumours of a secret meeting with Prime Minister Imran Khan.

Jahangir Tareen has rejected rumours doing rounds on social media that he had held a secret meeting with Prime Minister Imran Khan last month. He rejected these gossips saying there was no meat in them. A few days ago, while speaking to media after his appearance at a banking court in Lahore, Tareen said that his cronies held a meeting with PM Imran which went well.

He said the PM assured his colleagues that he would look into the matter himself and assured them that justice would be done. Tareen said his case was business-related that had nothing to do with FIA. – DNA



ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi being administered second dose of Covid-19 vaccine at vaccination centre. – DNA

Govt. committed for growth oriented budget 2021-22: Tarin

The underlying rationale is to take all stakeholders on board for evolving consensus and coming up with innovative ideas to overcome economic challenges

SHAHEEN HANIF

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Shaukat Tarin on Thursday reiterated the government's commitment to unveil a growth-oriented federal budget (2021-22).

Talking to Vice President of Institute of Chartered Accountants of Pakistan (ICAP) Ashfaq Tola, who called on him here, the finance minister welcomed the ICAP vice president and discussed the proposals by the Institute's team for the economic growth and devel-



opment of the country.

Special Assistant to PM Dr Waqar Masood Khan and Vice President Ali Latif were also present during the meeting, said a statement.

The finance minister lauded the professional insight of the ICAP members and their valuable contribution.

Tarin commended the efforts made by ICAP's Advisory Committee in working out the budget proposals. The underlying rationale is to take all stakeholders on board for evolving consensus and coming up with innovative ideas to overcome economic challenges, he added.

Ashfaq Tola briefed the minister about the sector-wise budget proposals prepared by the advisory committee of the ICAP for the first

time.

The model budget paper included recommendations for widening the tax net, increasing per capita income, managing the non-tax income, measures on domestic and foreign debt management and rationalizing the pension expenditure.

The vice president also appreciated the housing initiative of the federal government to boost economic activity and suggested ways to further extend the outreach.

He also felicitated the finance minister on assuming new responsibilities.

President for preparation of e-voting machine

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has asked the concerned stakeholders to prepare a prototype of Electronic Voting Machine for presentation to the Federal Cabinet and members of the National Assembly after Eid-ul-Fitr.

He underlined the need for expediting the I-Voting process for overseas Pakistanis enabling them to register and cast their votes through internet in a convenient manner.

He said that modern voting solutions such as I-Voting and Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) would increase accessibility, speed-up the processing of results on poll day

and ensure transparency in the General Elections.

The President gave these remarks while chairing a meeting of the sub-committee on Emerging Technologies on I-Voting, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, today. The meeting was attended by Minister for IT & Telecom (IT&T), Syed Amin-ul-Haque, Minister for Railways, Senator Muhammad Azam Khan Swati, Minister for Science and Technology, Senator Syed Shibli Faraz, Secretary IT&T, Mr Shoaib Ahmed Siddiqui, Acting Chairman NADRA, Brig (r) Khalif Latif, Director General (IT) Election Commission of Pakistan, Mr Khizer Aziz, and senior officials of the Government.

Karachi's positivity rate shoots up to 14 per cent

STAFF REPORT

KARACHI: Karachi's coronavirus infection rate shot up to 14.32% in the last 24 hours, prompting the Sindh government to tighten the already imposed restrictions in place to curb the spread of the virus.

In light of the increasing number of cases, Karachi's district administration sealed 64 shops, arrested seven persons, and warned 369, a statement from the chief minister's house said Thursday.

"People do not understand [gravity] of the situation," Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah said. The chief minister, on the advice of the experts and members of the task force, has decided that from Friday all shops, including grocery stores, would be closed after 6pm.

The decision came during a meeting chaired by CM Shah, with provincial minister and advisers Dr Azra Fazal Pechuho, Nasir Shah, Saeed Ghani, Murtaza Wahab, Qasim Siraj Soomro, Chief Secretary Mumtaz Shah, IG Sindh Mushtaq Maher, and other concerned officials in attendance. Restaurants will now not be able to offer takeaways after iftar, but they will be allowed to offer home delivery service.

PML-N wins Khushab by-polls

DNA

KHUSHAB: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) candidate Malik Moazzam Sher Kallu secured victory in the Punjab Assembly's PP-84 (Khushab) by-elections, according to unofficial results released by the ECP on Thursday.

According to the results, the PML-N candidate secured 73,081 votes whereas Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) candidate Ali Hussain came in second with 62,903 votes followed by independent candidate Amjad Raza with 8,340 votes. The recently 'proscribed' Tehreek-e-Labbalk Pakistan's (TLP) candidate Hafiz Muhammad Asghar Ali came in the fourth position securing 5,782 votes.

The unofficial results further showed that the voter turnout was 52.99 per cent whereas the correct number of votes cast was 152,297. About 2,792 votes were rejected.

PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif also congratulated the people and Kallu on his victory in PP-84. He said that the people [of the constituency] have rejected the flour and sugar thieves. "This is also an acknowledgement by the people of the service rendered by the PML-N during its tenure. And this vote is the vote for the development of Pakistan under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif!" Shehbaz said on Twitter. He further said that if Allah gives him a chance, he would serve Pakistan with more passion and vigour than before.

PML-N Vice President Maryam Nawaz also congratulated Kallu on his victory in the by-elections.

Banks dealing in Forex will open on Monday

KARACHI: The State Bank of Pakistan has decided to open authorized bank branches dealing in foreign exchange and trade activities on May 10 and 11 (Monday and Tuesday) to ensure availability of banking services during extended Eid holidays.

Central bank's Banking Policy and Regulations Department through a Circular Letter directed presidents and chief executives of all banks to open 50% of their total authorized branches dealing in foreign exchange and trade activities on May 10, 2021 (Monday) from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. (without break). The remaining 50% of such branches would open on May 11, 2021 (Tuesday) from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. (without break) as well. The decision had been taken in order to ensure the availability of banking services to trade and industry in particular and public in general during the extended holidays before the forthcoming Eid-ul-Fitr. – APP

Iranian envoy issues message on Al Quds Day

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan Ali Hosseini has issued a special message on the occasion of International AlQuds Day. The message reads as under:

"Glory be to Him Who made His servant to go on a night from the Sacred Mosque to the remote mosque of which We have blessed the precincts, so that We may show to him some of Our signs; surely He is the Hearing, the Seeing." (Holy Quran, Sura Al'Asra, 1)

Fighting for liberation of Palestine as Jihad In the way of God is an obligatory and desirable duty in Islam. (Ayatollah Khamenei)

On the last Friday of the holy month of Ramadan, Muslims and freedom-seekers of the world once again sent their hearts to the Holy Land of Palestine and respond positively on the call Imam Khomeini to liber-

ate the Holy Quds and liberate the oppressed people of Palestine from occupation and oppression of the cancerous and evil Zionist regime.

Today, 73 years after the illegal occupation of Palestinian land, the Judaization of Jerusalem and the growing efforts of the Zionist regime to expand illegal settlements and expel the Palestinians from this holy city continue. Now, the battle in Quds has become a battle of identity, a battle for right and legitimacy and the historical, political and cultural nature of this city.

The issue of Jerusalem and Palestine remains the most central issue in the Islamic world. The people of Gaza are in a difficult situation, and the Zionist regime has increased its crimes in the shadow of news blackout. Moreover, the Zionist regime's declaration of Jerusalem as its capital with the support of the United States as the prelude to the "deal of the century" along with the reloca-



tion of the US embassy to Jerusalem has been added to all the destructive and inhumane acts of the Zionist regime.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, as a

staunch supporter of the liberation of Holy Quds, has for several years proposed a comprehensive and democratic solution to the return of all Palestinian refugees by holding a referendum with the presence of the original Palestinian people, including Muslims, Christians and Jews in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and establishing an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital.

Resisting the conspiracies of the occupying regime in Jerusalem and its treacherous supporters, including the conspiracy to normalize relations with this bloodthirsty and child-killing regime, is more important today than ever. The signing of the so-called Ibrahim Agreement by several governments violating the rights of the Palestinians encourages the Zionist regime to continue its occupation and inhumane actions.

Therefore, I call on all writers and freedom-loving media in the world

to expose this plan and the crimes of the Zionist regime and to support the cause of the liberation of Holy Quds.

Quds Day is the day of unity and solidarity of the Islamic Ummah and their unanimous outcry for help to the oppressed and downtrodden of the world. The two great and freedom-loving nations of Iran and Pakistan have always smashed their clenched fists on the mouth of world's arrogant powers and its illegitimate child, the usurper regime of Israel, and their call for "Holy Quds belongs to us" has resonated in the ears of history.

Undoubtedly, with God's help, today we are closer to the liberation of Quds than in the past, and in the light of the awakening of Islamic nations, the congregational prayer of Muslims in Al-Aqsa Mosque is near, which is the divine promise and tradition that the oppressed will inherit the earth and it will sure come true.