



Daily Islamabad POST

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Israel must be held accountable for war crimes in Jerusalem

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Briefs

PTI govt stand by overseas Pakistanis

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hussain Wednesday said Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government would always stand by overseas Pakistanis, especially the labour class. In a tweet, he said he was surprised at the letter written by some 'former Babus' to the prime minister. Fawad said the attitudes needed to be changed. The treatment given to ordinary people by our bureaucracy was absolutely not enviable, he said adding this was a common complaint and Pakistan embassies were not exempt from it. The minister acknowledged that embassies, like any other department, had very good officers but stories could be written about how Pakistanis were treated in the past.

Bilawal slams PM's policies

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Wednesday said that by making false allegations of money laundering and corruption, Prime Minister Imran Khan has brought the country to the brink of being blacklisted. In a statement issued on Wednesday, he lambasted the PTI government's poor economic planning and said that it was a matter of shame that Pakistan along with the backward countries like Cambodia, Ghana and Zimbabwe could not get out of the grey list of Financial Action Task Force (FATF). Bilawal said that the PPP had devised an effective strategy to get out of the grey list.

Holiday Notice

Offices of Daily Islamabad POST shall remain closed for three days i.e Thursday, Friday and Saturday on account of Eid-ul-Fitr. Islamabad POST wishes its readers Eid Mubarak..

- Editor

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PM, Erdogan slam Israeli aggression

The leaders also agreed that the two Foreign Ministers would be working closely together to raise the Palestinian issue at international level



STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan received a telephone call from President of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The two leaders exchanged views on Israel's heinous attack during Ramazan on the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the worshippers inside as well as on Gaza violating all norms of humanity and international law. They vowed to work together especially at the United Nations in jointly mobilizing the international community to help stop these attacks.

The leaders also agreed that the two

Foreign Ministers would be working closely together to raise the Palestinian issue at international level. The regional security situation also came under discussion between the two leaders. Appreciating Turkey's role, the Prime Minister stressed the importance of a responsible withdrawal and added that Pakistan would continue to extend all possible support to the efforts for a political solution for durable peace and stability in Afghanistan. Both leaders discussed further strengthening of bilateral relations and agreed that the momentum of high-level exchanges between Pakistan and Turkey would continue. The two leaders also exchanged greetings on Eid-ul-Fitr. Earlier, Prime Minister Imran Khan expressed solidarity with the oppressed Palestinians facing Israeli oppression and tyranny. In a post on social-networking website Twitter, the premier said Pakistan stands with the Palestine.

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ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaiser receiving Ambassador of China Nong Rong. - DNA

Eid to be celebrated today

ISLAMABAD: Ruet-e-Hilal Committee announced on Wednesday that the Shaban crescent has been sighted. First of Shaban and Eid ul Fitr will be celebrated throughout the country today (Thursday). The committee announced that it has received credible moon sighting reports from various areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and other localities. - DNA

Army Chief for greater US-Pakistan cooperation



STAFF REPORT

MULTAN: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi on Wednesday said that Pakistan is concerned about the recent violence in Palestine, adding that Muslims countries needed to unite in order to raise awareness about the issue. Speaking to the media in Multan about Prime Minister Imran Khan's recent visit to Saudi Arabia, he said: "The premier met with the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation's secretary general and contended that there was a need to unite the Muslim Ummah on the issue using this platform.

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OIC condemns Israeli actions in Palestine

Pakistan urges Muslim countries to show unity

NEWS DESK

NEW YORK: The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), at a meeting in New York, has unanimously endorsed Pakistan's proposal for issuing a joint statement deplored the Israeli actions against Palestinians. The meeting also approved a proposal from the ambassadors of Turkey and Saudi Arabia for mobilising international support to convene a special session of the

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ISLAMABAD: Hamad Obaid Alzaabi, the UAE Ambassador to Pakistan, gives Eid clothing to hundreds of orphan children in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan as part of the humanitarian efforts to provide charitable support and Eid clothing to orphans on the occasion of Eid Al Fitr. - DNA

Pak-China vow to further expand ties

NA Speaker says that Pakistan is proud of its lasting friendship with China

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Pertaining to the expansion of Pak-China relations, Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Nong Rong, on Wednesday said that Beijing wants to further expand cooperation with Pakistan. He said this during his meeting with National Assembly Speaker Asad Qaiser that Pakistan is of key importance in our foreign policy.

Speaking on the occasion, NA Speaker Asad Qaiser said that Pakistan is proud of its lasting friendship with China and the unique friendly relations between Pakistan and China are an example to the world. He said the relations between

the two friendly countries are based on mutual respect, trust, interests and strategic partnership. Referring to CPEC, Asad Qaiser said that the initiative of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and One Belt One Road (OBOR) are projects of development and prosperity of the entire region and the parliament will continue to play its role in making such projects as sign of mutual success and prosperity.

Australian envoy extends greetings on Eid

'Unity and compassion are the spirit of Eid and are essential to getting through this pandemic'

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa, has said that Pakistan has sincerely supported the peace process in Afghanistan and hoped that Pakistan-US cooperation would continue in the future as well. He said this during his meeting with Mrs Angela Aggerle, US Charge d'Affaires to Pakistan.

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During the meeting, matters of mutual interest, overall regional security situation, bilateral cooperation in various fields, fight against COVID-19 and recent developments in Afghan Peace Process were discussed. COAS said that Pakistan has sincerely supported the peace process and a prosperous, stable and peaceful Afghanistan is in the best interest of region in general and Pakistan in particular.

The US dignitary acknowledged and appreciated Pakistan's continuous efforts and support for peace and stability in the region and pledged to further enhance bilateral relations between both countries.

Unity and compassion are the spirit of Eid and are essential to getting through this pandemic together, to recovering faster and to building a better future for everyone.

This Eid, let's unite in our efforts to keep all of our loved ones and communities safe. On behalf of Australia - let me wish you a happy Eid celebration.

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Observing SOPs is key to contain COVID-19

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has expressed the confidence that people in Pakistan can manage to overcome COVID-19 pandemic by following standard operating procedures to contain its further spread. In a series of tweets, the President said these SOPs include wearing of masks, social distancing and hand washing. He said statistics show that we have not overcome COVID yet, but it seems we can manage it.

The President said we have done well and Pakistan is on the mend. He further said that he watches COVID statistics of Pakistan very closely and what is happening in region.

Covid-19 cases continue to drop

ZUBAIR AHMED

ISLAMABAD: The national tally on Wednesday of total active COVID-19 cases recorded 76,536 with 2,869 more people tested positive for the deadly virus and 5,200 people recovered from the disease during the last 24 hours. One hundred

and four corona patients have died during past 24 hours, 89 of whom were under treatment in hospital

and 15 out of the hospital in their respective quarantines or homes, according to the latest update issued by the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC).

During the past 24 hours, most of the deaths have occurred in the Punjab followed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Out of the total 104 deaths occurred in the last 24 hours 49 of them had died who were under treatment on ventilators. The National Covid positivity ratio during past 24 hours was recorded 7.42 percent.

Israel must be held accountable for war crimes

PNC indicates that the Israeli occupation air force bombed civilian targets in Gaza

FOREIGN DESK

RAMALLAH: Palestine National Council (PNC) said that Israel's military aggression against Palestinian civilians in Gaza Strip and the rest of the occupied West Bank cities, including the occupied city of Jerusalem, is a war crime for which Israel must be pursued and held accountable.

International humanitarian law provided general and special protection for civilians and civil objects, which is clearly evident in both the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and Additional Protocols I and II to the Ge-

56 killed as Israeli air strikes intensify

WEB DESK

GAZA: Israeli airstrikes have now killed 56 people including 14 children in Gaza, according to the enclave's health authority, as the first soldier has been killed in another day of escalating violence. Sergeant Omer Tabib "was killed as a result of an anti-tank missile fire" fired by Hamas on Wednesday morning, the Israeli military said. The 21 year old is the first Israeli soldier to die in the current fighting. The announcement of Tabib's death came shortly after Hamas confirmed that its Gaza City commander, Bassem Issa, was killed in an Israeli airstrike on Wednesday. Meanwhile, the Israeli prime minister has declared an emergency in the town of Lod, following what police called "wide-scale riots" by supporters of the Palestinians.

neva Conventions of 1977 and The Hague Convention relating to the Protection of Cultural Objects in the Event of Armed Conflict of 1954, PNC continued, this law prohibits all forms of assault against these objects and civilians.

He added that at these times, Israel is deliberately destroying public and private property in Gaza Strip, in flagrant violation of Article 47 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which stipulates that the destruction and usurpation of property in a manner not justified by military necessities, and on a large scale is considered

a serious violation, and therefore a war crime, PNC added, Article 53 of the Fourth Geneva Convention prohibits the occupying power from destroying any movable or immovable private property.

PNC called on the United Nations to bind Israel, the occupying power, to the rules and provisions of these agreements, which are binding on states and their armed forces, and include the right of victims of human rights violations to redress, including justice and reparation.

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Briefs

coronavirus claims 24 more lives in KPK

PESHAWAR: Coronavirus claimed 24 more lives in the last 24 hours in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the death toll in the province from coronavirus reached to 2668, an official of the health department said here on Wednesday.

Talking to media during daily briefing, he said that 413 more people infected with coronavirus in 24 hours and the number of active cases in the province has dropped to 9,018 while the total number of coronavirus in the province has reached 125,392.

However, he said, it was very encouraging that another 1037 people recovered from Corona in 24 hours in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the number of patients recovering from Corona in the province has reached 112,706.

He said the health department across the province has conducted 6,602 diagnostic tests in one day in the province and the total number of so far tests conducted has reached 1671731.

In the last 24 hours, 171 new cases were reported in Peshawar, 43 in Mardan,

28 in Swat and 25 in Haripur, the health department said. — APP

9 arrested for selling fresh currency notes

ATHAR SUFI

KARACHI: Police have arrested nine people for selling fresh currency notes ahead of Eid ul Fitr in Karachi's Kharadar neighbourhood in a crackdown against the illegal currency market. According to a report, fresh notes were sold in Kharadar area of the city with sellers seeking extra money to provide the notes, usually used as Eidi on the festive occasion.

This year, the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has announced not to issue new currency notes ahead of Eid ul Fitr over concerns that it could lead to a virus spread due to transmission through notes and congregation at banks for getting the money. The State Bank had also not issued fresh currency notes last year when the country was reeling under the first wave of Covid-19 infections. The police carried out a raid in the neighbourhood and arrested nine people selling the fresh notes.

SSP Sarfaraz Nawaz said that those arrested were found illegally selling currency notes. "Action will be taken against some of the cops seen in the video," he said.

Another doctor martyred

DNA

PESHAWAR: Another doctor was martyred from coronavirus here on Wednesday as the number of doctors martyred has increased to 67.

According to Provincial Doctors Association official, Dr. Fazal Rahim, Senior Pathologist, District Headquarters Hospital, Timergara, Dir, Lower was martyred from Corona.

Dr Fazal Rahim has been hospitalized for the past two weeks, Provincial Doctors Association officials informed.

He said, the number of doctors martyred due to corona in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has risen to 67.

Funeral prayer of Dr. Fazal Rahim was offered at Kaladag at 10:00 AM in Temergarh, Dir Lower and was buried at his native village. His funeral was attended by the officials of the Provincial Doctors Association, Department of Health Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Deputy Commissioner Dir Lower, other officials of the District Administration, his friends, relatives and a large number of people from different walks of life, elders of the areas attended.

Martyred doctors and other health workers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are still deprived of the martyrs' package approved from April last year, the official of the Provincial Doctors Association said.

FWMC devises cleanliness plan for Eid-ul-Fitr holidays

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Faisalabad Waste Management Company (FWMC) has devised a comprehensive cleanliness plan for holidays of Eidul Fitr.

Chief Executive Officer FWMC Kashif Raza Awan said on Wednesday that leaves of FWMC officials and officers have been cancelled and they have been directed to start implementation of cleanliness plan from moon night.

He said that entire waste would be removed from all roads, bazaars and streets of the city on moon night and the field staff will remain active for prompt cleanliness of the city during Eid holidays. General Manager Operation Colonel (Retired) Ammad Iqbal Gill will supervise the implementation of cleanliness plan and the entire machinery and staff will remain on high alert to resolve public complaints during Eid holidays. He said that sanitary staff

of the company will also ensure special cleanliness around Eid congregations, major mosques of the city and graveyards on Eid day. Waste containers have been placed in the city and the people have been requested to drop their waste material in these containers so that it could be removed easily. In this connection, help line of FWMC 1139 will also remain active round the clock and the people can contact it at any time in case of emergency, he added.

People requested to follow SOPs on Eid
The district administration appealed the general public to follow anti-corona SOPs voluntarily during Eidul Fitr to contain the spread of corona pandemic.

In a statement issued here on Wednesday, he said that the faithful should avoid gatherings and arrange Eid prayers at open spaces in parks or grounds.

He said that preventive measures were imperative to defeat corona and in this

connection, the government issued SOPs to protect the precious lives of the people from this deadly disease. He said that the fears of corona spread were acute, adding the citizens should not show any negligence and carelessness in this regard. They should avoid shaking hands and hugging each other during Eid festivities, rather they should use face masks and adopt social distance to save their own lives and lives of their dear ones. He said that and said that if there is a large crowd of

worshippers in any place, the Ulema should offer Eid prayers more than one time. It is better to hold Eid prayers in open spaces as per Corona SOPs and if there is not open space for Eid prayers, then windows and doors of the mosques should be kept open fully, he added.

He said that district adminstration started a massive public awareness campaign in addition to displaying banners on conspicuous places for implementation on corona SOPs.

Shopkeepers fined of Rs. 284,000 in Karachi

KARACHI: On the direction of Commissioner Karachi Naveed Ahmed Sheikh, the deputy commissioners has imposed the fines of Rs. Rs. 284,000 on 87 shopkeepers in metropolitan city for violating fixed prices of essential foods commodities.

Action was taken against them in different districts of the city for violating the government rate, said the statement released here on Wednesday.

Action was taken against 28 profiteers in South District, 28 in Central, 19 in Malir, 6 in Korangi and 10 in Keamari.

Meanwhile, a fine of Rs 69,000 was imposed on 16 milk sellers violating the government rate. A fine of Rs 15,000 was imposed on 14 fruit sellers, Rs 13,000 on 10 vegetable vendors, Rs 73,000 on 12 grocers, Rs 25,000 on five bakery vendors and Rs 7,500 on 6 flour vendors. — APP



FAISALABAD: Children stand on Israeli flag during the protest at Hyder Chowk. — DNA Photo by Jan Ali Laghari

DC reviews auction process in vegetable, fruit market

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Muhammad Ali visited fruit and vegetable market Ghulam Muhammad Abad on Sunday afternoon and reviewed the process of auction.

AC Sadar Umar Maqbool and EADA Usman were also present on the occasion.

Deputy Commissioner went to different sheds and stalls and checked the availability of vegetables and fruits.

He directed the market committee staff for issuance of price lists and godowns for assessing the availability of the auctions

to discourage the unfair increase of prices of wholesale.

He also inquired about the terms and conditions of the auctions and said that unjustified price hike would not be tolerated. He also interacted with the commission agents and shopkeepers and said that the district administration was very serious to control the prices of the essential items. He directed the staff of market committee for issuance of price lists immediately after the auctions.

DC also asked the ACs to inspect the cold stores and godowns for assessing the availability of different

items and said that special measures should be taken for the supply in case of shortage of any item.

Meanwhile, Deputy Commissioner also visited Ramzan bazaar of Kaleem Shaheed Colony and took a detail round of the bazar. He was informed that 188,693 bags of flour were sold in Ramzan bazaars during the last 27 days at a subsidies rate of Rs.375 and 1,177,513 kg sugar was sold yet. He also checked the availability of fruits and vegetables in the bazaar.

DC holds online Kachehri

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Muhammad Ali held an Online Facebook

Kachehri and responded directly to complaints of the citizens.

The DC received more than 3000 comments in the online Facebook Kachehri which continued for an hour. The DC issued on-spot orders and redressed about half of the complaints while he referred some complaints to their concerned office for their immediate redressal within 2 days.

During Kachehri, the citizens highlighted various issues regarding encroachments, street lights, parking, road patchwork and the DC assured them that their issues would be resolved on priority basis.

Sarena Isa writes another letter to former-AG seeking apology

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: Supreme Court Justice Qazi Faiz Isa's spouse Sarena Isa has wrote another letter to former Attorney General (AG) Mansoor Ali Khan to apologise for levelling false allegations against her on social media.

After sending the second letter, a tussle between Sarena and Mansoor got more heat on social media as the latter had already denied receiving her first letter too.

Denying getting any letter from Mrs Sarena Isa on social media other day, Mansoor said that he would decide after reading

it whether it would be replied to or not. Anyhow, he was determined that he did not say anything above the parameters of the law.

In the second letter, Mrs Sarena Isa reminded the former AG that the time of 48 hours to apologise to her had been ended so now she had a right to reply to his baseless allegations against her. Mrs Sarena Isa alleged former Attorney General for disobeying the orders of the SC and tried to hide behind the government and some untrue people to secure his skin.

She also reiterated that in the May 12 tragedy, Mansoor was sided with the then President General Pervez Musharraf.

Govt increasing vaccination centres

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Sardar Usman Budzar has said that the number of corona vaccination centres was being increased in the city and other parts of the province to accommodate more and more citizens every day.

In a statement on Wednesday, he said that as compared with other provinces, more people were being vaccinated every day in Punjab and the target would be timely achieved due to the increased number of vaccination centres, he added.

The chief minister appealed to people to wear face-masks and follow corona SOPs during Eid-ul-Fitr prayer. The health department was playing a commendable job and the Punjab government was also striving to save lives of people, he added.

Eleven die of coronavirus in Faisalabad

FAISALABAD: Eleven patients died of COVID-19 while 88 people tested positive during the last 24 hours in Faisalabad.

A spokesperson for the Health department said on Wednesday that 693 corona tests were conducted in public and private sector labs during the period. He said that total active cases in Faisalabad were 1,886 while 17,273 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 Ghulam Muhammad Abad for COVID-19 patients. At present, 215 patients were under treatment at the Allied Hospital, 92 at DHQ Hospital and 60 were admitted to General Hospital. He further said that 1,072 confirmed patients were isolated at their homes in the district. — APP

DC-SSP Operation checks corona SOPs

PESHAWAR: Deputy Commissioner Peshawar Capt. Khalid Mahmood and SSP Operations Yasir Afzadi have visited different areas of Peshawar Cantt and checked the lockdown and implementation of corona SOPs issued by the provincial government.

They were accompanied by other police officers and district administration officials on the occasion.

Talking to media, SSP Operations Yasir Afzadi highlighted the steps being taken for an effective lockdown and ensuring people should follow corona SOPs.

Deputy Commissioner Peshawar Capt. (retd) Khalid Mahmood has expressed satisfaction over the steps taken by Peshawar Police regarding lockdowns and SOPs.

He informed that the Police, alongside Pakistan Army and officials of the district administration have also carried out operations in inner city, Hayatabad and Cantt areas, adding, so far action has been taken against 7,000 shopkeepers for lockdown violations.

SSP Operations Yasir Afzadi said that the lockdown is being monitored by drone cameras as well. — APP

SOPs checked at airport

FAISALABAD: Assistant Commissioner (AC) Sadar Umar Maqbool checked implementation of anti-corona SOPs at Faisalabad International Airport and got tested 121 air passengers for coronaviruses.

A spokesman of local administration said on Wednesday that AC Sadar along with his team reached Faisalabad International Airport at 3 a.m. and checked implementation of corona SOPs. The team also conducted rapid corona test for 121 air passengers travelled from Dubai to Faisalabad through flight FZ-343-DXB. However, tests of all passengers were negative.

Therefore, they were allowed to go home, he added. — DNA

Nurses always play valuable services: CM

STAFF REPORT

adding, "Nursing is the backbone of the health system." Chief Minister KP Mahmood Khan said that Nursing is another name for selfless service to humanity and in the current situation of Corona, the nursing community is rendering valuable services. He said Nurses like doctors and other medical staff are doing selfless service to save the lives of Corona patients. The Chief Minister KP said that the provincial government values the services and sacrifices of nurses. "On this day, I salute the nurses for their passion for service," Chief Minister Mahmood Khan said.

LAHORE: A lady buys face mask from a hawker on Wednesday. — DNA Photo by Sindhu

Governor Sawar condemns Israeli terrorism

LAHORE: Punjab Governor Chaudhry Muhammad Sarwar has said that the silence and indifference of the United Nations and international bodies on Israeli aggression and violation of international laws is criminal and condemnable.

He urged them to take prompt action immediately.

In a statement issued here on Wednesday, he said the Islamic countries should not only condemn Israeli terrorism but also take prompt action to halt Israeli crimes.

He said: "It breaks my heart to see innocent Palestinians suffering at the hands of Israeli forces."

Governor Sarwar said the killing of more than 48 Palestinians was the worst Israeli terrorism, he asserted.

The world could no longer be indifferent to the violence and human rights abuses committed by Israel and Israel must be held accountable for its crimes, he added.

Days of heavy bombardment on

the Gaza Strip intensified on Wednesday, with Israeli fighter jets bombing sites belonging to Palestinian armed groups, as well as police buildings and apartment blocks.

Since the offensive began late on Monday, Gaza's health ministry says at least 53 people have been killed, including 14 children. More than 300 others have been wounded.

The Israeli army said about 1,500

rockets have been fired from Gaza towards various locations in Israel, killing at least six Israelis.

The escalation is the most intense since the seven-week 2014 Israeli war on Gaza. Here's what led to the most recent flare-up in violence.

Anger has been growing over the forced expulsion of Palestinian families from the occupied East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah, who have been facing multiple court cases filed against them by several pro-settlement organisations since 1972.

These organisations claim that land the families live on was originally under Jewish ownership, but Palestinians see this as an extension of an official Israeli policy to displace as many Palestinians from Jerusalem in order to retain a majority Jewish identity in the city.

The United Nations has warned the planned expulsions could amount to "war crimes". Protests and scuffles between Palestinians, Israeli settlers and Israeli police have steadily increased since the end of April. The court in October 2020 ruled that four Palestinian families should vacate their homes, and gave May 2 as the date for their forcible eviction. However, the court date has since been postponed twice.

Recently, there have been confrontations as Palestinians gathered for iftar meals – the breaking of Ramadan fasts – at the homes of those being evicted. The families have since appealed to Israel's Supreme Court. On Thursday night, at least 30 people were wounded and 15 arrested.

On Friday, tens of thousands of Muslim worshippers filled the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound – Islam's third holiest site – to pray on the final Friday of Ramadan, with many staying on to protest against the expulsions. — APP



Briefs**Eid security plan for Attock finalized**

MUNIR FAISAL

ATTOCK: The local administration and the local police on Wednesday finalized security arrangements for Attock during Eid ul Fitr. As many as 907 police personals would be deployed to guard mosques, Imambaras and eidgahs. District Police Officer Khalid Hamdani while talking to newsmen said the security personnel include 662 volunteers, seven DSPs, 14 SHOs, 124 SIs and ASIs, 762 constables and 22 sections of elite force would be deployed to provide security to faithful on eid day.

He said during Eid prayers police would guard 382 worship places including 350 mosques, 20 Imambaras and 13 open places.

He said that a control room has also been established for the purpose. Responding to a question, the DPO said the security plan had been chalked out in collaboration with the district administration and other law enforcement agencies. He said all police officials had been directed to remain on high alert to avert any untoward incident during Eid days.

9 gamblers held during raid

RAWALPINDI: Police have arrested nine gamblers and recovered money Rs 65000 at stake, mobile phones from their possession, informed police spokesman here on Wednesday.

During course of action, Taxila police held gamblers those were identified as Bilal, Hameed, Danish, Firduous, Nazir, Yasir, Waheed, Furqan and Sajid. Police have registered separate cases against all of them under gambling act and started investigation.

SP Pothohar commended police team said that gambling is the root cause of other crimes, adding that strict action should be taken against such anti social elements. - APP

Romanian couple mugged in Rawalpindi

DNA

RAWALPINDI: A Romanian couple, on a world tour, was robbed of its valuables in Rawalpindi. According to reports, the tourists were deprived of some important documents and goods, including a laptop, cameras, mobile phones and passports, the moment they reached north Punjab city. A spokesman for police told media that New Town Police would probe the incident following the registration of an FIR.

See Also: KP govt bans foreigners from visiting tourist spots in province. He further said senior police officers were also looking at the incident from various angles. The spokesman informed that technical and forensic evidence had been collected from the crime scene. He expressed the hope that police would soon arrest the thieves.

Covid-19 keep upward trend in Attock

MUNIR FAISAL

ATTOCK: Despite the fact that the third wave of Covid-19 getting thin at national level, the situation in Attock district keeps an upward trend as one more patient succumbed to virus while five more tested positive during last 24 hours raising the tally to 2085. According to health authorities, a patient identified as Hassan Din who was admitted at district headquarters hospital succumbed to virus on Wednesday.

District focal person for Covid-19 Dr Kashif Hussain has informed among newly positive patients all belongs to Attock city.

Registration for citizens aged 30, above from May 16

"Starting Sunday the 16th of May, registration will be open to all 30 years and older citizens." On Tuesday, Asad Umar said citizens aged 40 years and above can walk into any vaccination centre from today to get a Covid-19 jab

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) on Wednesday allowed citizens aged 40 and above to sign up for Covid-19 vaccination from Sunday (May 16). Taking to Twitter, Planning and Development Minister Asad Umar, who heads the NCOC, said, "As vaccine supply continues to improve and vaccination capacity gets enhanced in all Federating units, we continue to expand the categories of those who are eligible to get vaccinated."

"Starting Sunday the 16th of May, registration will be open to all 30 years and older citizens." On Tuesday, Asad Umar said citizens aged 40 years and above can walk into

any vaccination centre from today to get a Covid-19 jab. "Starting tomorrow the 12th of May all 40 plus who have registered will be able to walk into any vaccination center of their choice and get vaccinated," he wrote on Twitter. The NCOC chief said all vaccination centres will remain closed on the first two days of Eidul Fitr. Earlier in the day, the process of walk-in coronavirus vaccination for the

citizens of age 40 and above was also begun from today. The people who had registered themselves were given facility to walk into any vaccination center of their choice and get vaccinated.

On the other hand, Pakistan has reported 104 deaths in the last 24 hours by novel coronavirus as the number of positive cases has surged to 867,446. The nationwide tally of fatalities has jumped to 19,210.

According to the latest figures issued by the National Command and Operation Center (NCOC), 2,869 persons tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 24 hours. Punjab remains the worst-hit province in terms of deaths and cases followed by Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. 322,117 coronavirus cases have been confirmed in Punjab, 294,251 in Sindh, 125,392 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 78,560 in Islamabad, 23,655 in Balochistan, 18,056 in Azad Kashmir and 5,407 in Gilgit-Baltistan. Pakistan has so far conducted 12,310,875 coronavirus tests and 38,616 in the last 24 hours. 771,692 patients have recovered in the country whereas 4,707 patients are in critical condition. The COVID Positivity Ratio was recorded at 7.42 percent.



CTP issues traffic plan for Eid ul Fitr

DNA

RAWALPINDI: City Traffic Police Rawalpindi on Wednesday issued Eid-ul-Fitr Plan to maintain traffic flow and to ensure government Standard Operating Procedure SOPs during lockdown.

Chief Traffic Officer Rawalpindi Rai Mazhar Iqbal said that during lockdown and Eid-ul-Fitr, 623 traffic police personnel including 07 DSPs, 30 inspectors, 436 traffic wardens and 160 traffic assistants would perform their duties.

CTO said that tourists

places will be shut down to implement government orders to contain corona virus, he added. To prevent the entry of tourists on all the inbound and outbound routes of Murree, 13 special pickets have been set up with additional personnel of the traffic police where the traffic police along with the traffic police will also be present 24 hours. Special pickets have been set up at various places in Rawalpindi city to check one wheeling or car skating on Chand Raat and Eid holidays. Special squads have also been formed which will be

take action against violations. He warned that the violators would be sent to jail. He informed that traffic police would be deployed outside mosques, imambargahs, rush points, major highways, major cemeteries and other places where Eid prayers would be offered. He said that strict legal action would be taken against vehicles and motorcycles with tinted glasses, unregistered number plates and without number plates for security reasons. Strict action would be taken against who were found negligent in performing their duties, he added.

Police conducts search operation

RAWALPINDI: Police have conducted search operation in Gharibabad area of Airport Police Station and its surroundings, informed police spokesman here on Wednesday. Dolphin force, Elite force, Ladies Police and other law enforcement agencies participated in the search operation. Police have searched 116 houses, questioned 39 tenants and 270 suspects were investigated.

SP Pothohar said that the search operation was aimed at rooting out criminals and to ensure the implementation of National Action Plan. - APP

Hazara police kicks off Eid security plan

ABBOTTABAD: Hazara police on Wednesday chalked out an elaborated security plan to restrict people from breaching lockdown and Coronavirus SOPs during the holidays of Eid-ul-Fitr and deputed 6000 policemen in 8 districts of the region. Following the directives of the provincial government and NCOC guidelines Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Hazara, Mirvais Niaz deputed 6000 Eid to enforce security and lockdown programme. Policemen including Canine Unite and Bomb Disposal Squad, Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) and Special Branch would make ensure the security of mosques, important buildings, CPEC, construction projects and

others while the force would strictly enforce Coronavirus SOPs, lockdown and stop the violation and entry of tourists from all over the country in Hazara region. The plan devised following the directions from DIG Hazara, 6000 policemen including operational staff, traffic wardens, Elite Force and ladies forces would be deployed while 100 check posts have been established on all entry and exit points of Abbottabad, Mansehra, and Haripur. The special deployment was also made at the mosques where Eid-ul-Fitr prayer would be offered, CPEC security, construction projects in the region, jails and other important places of the division. - APP

Exports to EU increase by \$1.1 bn in last 10 months

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to Prime Minister on Commerce and Investment , Abdul Razak Dawood on Wednesday said that Pakistan exports to European Union (EU) countries increased by \$ 1.1 billion during last 10 months of current Fiscal Year 2020-21. The increased by 17.4 percent to \$ 7,474 billion as compared to \$6,367 billion in July to April 2020, the Adviser said this on his twitter account here.

The Adviser said that some of the major markets showing this increase are Poland 23 percent, Sweden 21 percent, Netherlands 21 percent, Germany 19 percent, France 14 percent, Belgium 12 percent, Italy 4 percent and Spain 2 percent.

He said EU is a very important market for us and we greatly appreciate the tireless efforts of our exporters for making this possible under very difficult conditions.

"We also commend the efforts of Minister of Commerce , trade and investment Officers in EU major market destinations including Warsaw, Stockholm, The Hague, Paris, Rome and Madrid and urge them to provide even greater facilitation to our exporters and Investors," he said.



RAWALPINDI: A deserted view of main Pirwadhai Bus Terminal due to lockdown as precautionary measure taken by authorities during Eid holidays to minimize the spread of COVID-19 pandemic in the country. - APP

Israeli barbarism enough to wake up deaf world

ISLAMABAD: Kashmir Committee Chairman Shehryar Khan Afridi on Wednesday said Israeli barbarism [against Palestinian] was enough to wake up deaf and dead world.

"Heart wrenching scenes coming out from #Gaza as 31 reported martyred including 10 kids."

"Humanity is under attack. Israel chose Holy Month of Ramadan to attack Palestinian," he tweeted.

Meanwhile, Palestinian envoy to Pakistan Ahmed Ameen expressed his gratitude to the Chairman Kashmir Committee for showing deep feeling and support for [Palestinian] people.

"Many thanks Pakistan for its permanent standing all the time with Palestinian people and its standing against injustice," he tweeted while replying to Afridi's tweet. - APP

First truck reach Pak under TIR Convention

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to Prime Minister on Commerce and Industry Abdul Razak Dawood on Wednesday said that a new milestone has been achieved with the first-ever truck from Uzbekistan reaching Pakistan under the TIR Convention. This was the result of collaboration between the transport companies of the two sides, said on his twitter account, he said adding this follows the successful shipment of first-ever cargo from Pakistan to Uzbekistan earlier this month. - DNA

Cases of 'Black Fungus' emerge in Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Mucormycosis also called 'Black Fungus' has been detected among several Covid-19 patients across Pakistan. They relayed four patients have thus far died due to the dangerous fungal infection. Several healthcare facilities have reported cases of Black Fungus, the sources said. According to infectious diseases experts, Mucormycosis is a fungal infection caused by a group of moulds called mucormycetes, found in soil and in decaying vegetation. The infection affects the sinuses, brain, lungs, skin and kidneys, and symptoms depends on where in the body the fungi is growing. Most commonly, patients present with a blocked nose and sinus pain, but they often also get. People can lose their sight if the eye socket becomes infected, and the infection can spread to the brain, causing seizures, coma and comprehension difficulties.

With patients who get the infection on their skin, mucormycosis can look like blisters or ulcers, and the skin may turn black.

People of Sindh left at mercy of mafias, profiteers

Farrukh Habib said mutton was being sold at Rs1,400 per kg in different parts of Sindh including Karachi though its official rate was Rs750 per kg

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Farrukh Habib Wednesday said despite being in power in Sindh since last 13 years, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) could not improve the socioeconomic condition of the province. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's only qualification to become the party chairman was a 'Parchi', he said in a statement.

Farrukh said there was no government in Sindh as people of the province including Karachi, Larkana, Sukkur and Hyderabad were left at the mercy of

mafias and profiteers.

He said the Sindh rulers were in slumbers and people were in the throes of inflation even during the month of Ramazan.

He proposed the Sindh government to spare sometime from the protocol of Bilawal and his family, and visit the vegetable, fruit and general markets of the province to see how the innocent people of Sindh were being fleeced.

He said it was a matter of concern that the prices of essential commodities in Sindh were 85% higher than the normal market prices. He said according to Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, live chicken was still available in Sindh at Rs385 per kilogram though its

official rate was Rs138. He said a 20 kg bag of flour was barely available in Sindh at Rs1,300 whereas fresh milk was sold at Rs130 per litter across Sindh. Although the Sindh

High Court had fixed the price of fresh milk at Rs94 per litter, the Sindh government had failed to implement it, he lamented. Farrukh Habib said mutton was being sold at Rs1,400 per kg in different parts of Sindh including Karachi though its official rate was Rs750 per kg. He reminded that after the 18th amendment, was responsibility of the provinces to control prices. He said most of the assistance had been distributed in Sindh under Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's flagship programme 'Ehsas'. He said in the past, new records of corruption had been set in Benazir Income Support Programme. He recalled that about the develop-

opment programmes of Larkana, the worthy apex court judge had remarked that "even a witch leaves seven houses". He said cronies of Bilawal had consumed Rs14 billion of wheat and the matter was closed by the claim that rates had eaten it. Farrukh Habib said Omni Group's corruption and Ayan Ali's money laundering had become his special identities. There are positions and good wages are being paid. He said that the people of Sindh should be told for what sin they were being punished for give up their personal interests, corruption and looting and focus on eradicating the poverty of the poor man of Sindh.

COVID-19 claims 3 more lives

IBRAR KHAN

RAWALPINDI: As many as 55 more COVID-19 positive cases were reported during the last 24 hours, raising the tally of confirmed cases to 25,041 in the district while three lost their battle of life against the deadly virus. The total infected cases included 23,128 from Rawalpindi and 1913 from other districts. District Health Authority informed Wednesday that among the new cases, 12 reported from Rawalpindi, 18 from Potohar town, 11 from Rawalpindi Cantt, 3 Taxila 2 Murree, 4 Gujranwala, 2 Islamabad and one each from Kahuta, Kalra, Syedan, and Kotli Sattian. "Presently 117 confirmed patients were admitted to various city facilities, counting 26 in Holy Medical Hospital, 22 in Benazir Bhutto Hospital, 6 in Faiz Foundation Hospital, 6 in Hearts International and one in Akhtar Rukhsana Memorial hospital," the health authority report said. District Health Authority informed that so far 22,918 patients were discharged after recovery and 2507 were quarantined including 1423 at home and 1084 in isolation.

3 booked for molesting boy

MUNIR FAISAL

ATTOCK: The Hazro Police booked three persons for allegedly molesting 12 years old boy in village Marria on Wednesday. The victim's father said that his son was going home from his tailoring shop when three persons of the same village named Hassan Iqbal, Rajab Shah and Aqeel Ayub took him to Hassan house where they sexually assaulting him. Later they allow him to go with dire consequences that if he revealed the incident. However, after reaching home the boy revealed his ordeal to his father who took him to police station. After medical examination which has confirmed the assault, police registered a case against the nominated accused and launched hunt to arrest them.

Key member of bike-lifter gang held

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Aabpara Police on Wednesday arrested a key member of bike-lifter gang and recovered five stolen motorcycles worth hundreds of thousands of rupees from him, a police spokesman said. According to him SSP Operations Mustafa Tanvir had assigned special task to zonal SPs to ensure arrest of those suspects involved in motor-bike lifting incidents, besides recovery of stolen items. Following SSP orders, SP (City-Zone) Omer Khan constituted a team under supervision of DSP Raja Tahir Hussain including SHO Aabpara police station Saleem Raza, Sub-Inspector Gul Khan and others. The team apprehended the accused red-handed identified as Usama bin Akhtar, resident of G-7/4 Islamabad and recovered five stolen motor-bikes from him.

During the preliminary investigation, he confessed to lift motorcycles from various areas in the city.

RSA releases 187,500 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 187,500 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 204,800 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in the Indus River at Tarbela Dam was 1408.94 feet, which was 24.94 feet higher than its dead level 1386 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 70,300 and 65,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1111.90 feet, which was 71.90 feet higher than its dead level of 1040 feet whereas the inflow and outflow of water was recorded as 62,000 and 50,000 cusecs respectively. - APP

Briefs**Eid prayer at 7.30 a.m. in Faisal Mosque**

ISLAMABAD: The Eid-ul-Fitr prayer would be offered at 7.30 a.m. in Faisal Mosque, said Dawah Academy of International Islamic University Islamabad. Prof Dr Muhammad Tahir Hakeem from the Faculty of Shariah and Law will deliver Khutaba-e-Eid-ul-Fitr, said a press release on Wednesday. All necessary measures have been taken by the management of Faisal Mosque to strictly follow standard operating procedures issued by the government to prevent Covid-19's third surge. — APP

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Police have searched 116 houses, questioned 39 tenants and 270 suspects were investigated.

SP Pothohar said that the search operation was aimed at rooting out criminals and to ensure the implementation of National Action Plan. — APP

Shopkeepers held amid lockdown

RAWALPINDI: As many as 12 shopkeepers were reportedly arrested in the jurisdictions of New Town police station of Rawalpindi here on Sunday for violation of preventive measures against coronavirus and directives of Punjab government to keep control on COVID-19 pandemic, informed police spokesman. Regional Police Officer Imran Ahmar paid a visit to review the situation while conducted raids in the area of Commercial Market in the limits of New Town police station and held 12 shopkeepers for opening their businesses and registered cases against them while shops were also sealed on the violation.

RPO Imran Ahmar said that police is committed to ensure implementation on directives of Punjab government against Coronavirus lockdown. — APP

COVID-19 claims 3 lives with 55 new infections

RAWALPINDI: As many as 55 more COVID-19 positive cases were reported during the last 24 hours, raising the tally of confirmed cases to 25,041 in the district while three lost their battle of life against the deadly virus. The total infected cases included 23,128 from Rawalpindi and 1913 from other districts. District Health Authority informed Wednesday that among the new cases, 12 reported from Rawal Town, 18 from Potohar town, 11 from Rawalpindi Cantt. — APP

Zulfiqar said seeing footage of Israeli airstrikes kill men, women and children in Gaza, I send my solidarity, my love and my prayers to the Palestinian people

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Vice President and former FPCCI Regional Chairman, Fehmida Jamali said Israeli violations in Jerusalem, and the government's tolerance of Jewish extremists hostile to Palestinians and Arabs, is what led to the ignition of the situation in this dangerous way. In a statement issued here on Wednesday, she said Israeli government must finally understand that it will not be able to suppress the Palestinian people's legitimate rights and demands by using in-

discriminate and disproportionate power. President, Pakistan Businesses Forum Sahibzada Usman Zulfiqar declared total rejection and condemnation of these oppressive Israeli practices. Zulfiqar said seeing footage of Israeli airstrikes kill men, women and children in Gaza, I send my solidarity, my love and my prayers to the Palestinian people Chairman Businessmen Panel (Federal), Riaz Khattak said the actions have caused concern in the Muslim world as the site is one of the most religious in Islam. We strongly condemn the attacks carried out by the



occupation forces at Al-Aqsa mosque transgressing the safety and security of the worshippers, the statement said.

Vice President, Pakistan Businesses Forum Ahmad Jawad said the indiscriminate use of force by Israeli forces against defenceless Palestinians, causing death and injuries, defies all humanitarian norms and human rights laws. Pakistan calls upon the international community to put an end to the blatant use of force and flagrant violation of human rights of the Palestinian people.

He called on the international community to act immediately to stop the violence, saying continuing "Israeli provocations" were an affront to Muslims on the eve of the Eid holiday at the end of the holy month of Ramadan. Days of heavy bombardment on the Gaza Strip intensified on Wednesday, with Israeli fighter jets bombing sites belonging to the most recent flare-up in violence.

Anger has been growing over the forced expulsion

of Palestinian families from the occupied East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah, who have been facing multiple court cases filed against them by several pro-settler organisations since 1972. These organisations claim that land the families live on was originally under Jewish ownership, but Palestinians see this as an extension of an official Israeli policy to displace as many Palestinians from Jerusalem in order to retain a majority Jewish identity in the city. The United Nations has warned the planned expulsions could amount to "war crimes".



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Palestine Ahmed Rabei in a meeting with Pakistan Civil Society office bearers Nadim Khan, Zafar Bakhtawari, Afzal Butt, Shakeel Anjum, Ch Yasin and Kashif Ch. They expressed their solidarity with Palestinian brothers. — DNA

CTP issued traffic plan for Eid ul Fitr

RAWALPINDI: City Traffic Police Rawalpindi on Wednesday issued Eid-ul-Fitr Plan to maintain traffic flow and to ensure government Standard Operating Procedure SOPs during lockdown. Chief Traffic Officer Rawalpindi Rai Mazhar Iqbal said that during lockdown and Eid-ul-Fitr, 623 traffic police personnel including 07 DSPs, 30 inspectors, 436 traffic wardens and 160 traffic assistants would perform their duties. CTO said that tourists places will be shut down to implement government orders to contain corona virus, he added.

prevent the entry of tourists on all the inbound and outbound routes of Muree, 13 special pickets have been set up with additional personnel of the traffic police where the district police along with the traffic police will also be present 24 hours.

Special pickets have been set up at various places in Rawalpindi city to check one wheeling or car skating on Chand Raat and Eid holidays.

Special squads have also been formed which will be take action against violations. — APP

People of twin cities following SOPs to contain spread of virus

ISLAMABAD: The residents of twin cities showed responsible behavior by following Covid-19 SOPs to save themselves and their loved ones during the Eid ul Fitr holidays. According to a survey conducted by APP on Wednesday, it was observed that the markets were closed and only those people were in the markets who needed some essentials including grocery or medicine in an emergency. "We were abiding by the SOPs as per requirements against the COVID-19 for the safety during the Eid ul Fitr holidays", said a resident of Sector G/7 Muhammad Bilal while talking to APP.

He said on one side the government is fulfilling its responsibility by applying effective measures for the safety of citizens against the threat of COVID-19 while on the other side its responsibility of citizens to follow the SOPs set by the government for containing the Coronavirus. Similarly, another resident of Sector G-11 Zainab bibi appreciated the government lockdown policy for the protection of citizens during the Eid holidays. She also mentioned that at this stage negligence of people in the shape of mass gathering at markets, especially on chand raat was a great risk for every citizen.

She urged the people of twin cities to follow SOPs set against the COVID-19 at every cost otherwise the result would be the loss of lives. An official of the district administration also confirmed that people were adhering to the SOPs set by the National Command and Operation Centre and good result in Islamabad and Rawalpindi against COVID-19. "We are thankful to business community, who stands against the COVID-19 by closing the shops during the Eid Holidays which were to much important for saving the people from threat of COVID-19 virus," he said.

It is pertinent to mention here that according to the National Command and Operation Center the Pakistan reported the lowest number of COVID number of cases since March 16. — APP

Exporters should not be subjected to indirect tax

Shahid Rasheed Butt said that there is no rationale in collecting money that is refunded and showing it as revenue amounts to deceiving oneself

ISLAMABAD: Former President ICCI Shahid Rasheed Butt on Wednesday said the export sector should not be subjected to indirect taxation so that they can pay full attention to boosting exports.

Refund system is wasting time and resources of the exporters which is hindering them from competing with rival countries like India and Bangladesh in the international market, he said. The countries that developed their economies and

reduced poverty facilitated exports and improved their image but here a faulty refund system has been introduced which has become a problem for investors.

He noted that the refund system remained out of order for five months during 2019 resulting in closure of 20 percent small export companies while others have to cut staff and production in order to survive.

Big export companies avoided closure by securing bank loans while the exports picked up after the computer system was fixed but the issue of delayed refunds was not resolved. He noted that application for a refund by exporters are blocked if any of the vendors have not paid sales tax while it takes months even if everything is according to the requirement of the FBR. — APP

In this regard, illegally constructed rooms in H-9

CDA's anti-encroachment operation continues during lockdown**DNA**

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Agency (CDA) administration is also conducting operations against encroachments and illegal constructions in Lockdown. According to the details, following the instructions of the Chairman CDA, the CDA administration has also continued the operation against encroachments and illegal constructions in Lockdown in Islamabad.

In this regard, illegally constructed rooms in H-9 have been demolished, a factory for making blocks and a hotel in Taramari Chowk have been demolished and more than ten kanals of land have been handed over.

In addition, a newly constructed house in G-7 katchi abadi has also been demolished.

The CDA administration has warned that re-occupation of valuable government lands should be avoided, and in case of violation, repossession should be relinquished as well as legal action would be taken.

SHO suspended for illegal confinement**DNA**

ATTOCK: SHO Jand police station has been suspended for keeping two persons under illegal confinement and demanding Rs 2 lac as bribe.

Taking action on the orders of the Additional District Judge, DPO Attock Khalid Hamdan has ordered an inquiry against the suspended SHO Ahmed Khan Niazi.

It is worth mentioning here that Bibi Noor Fatima of Jand had informed the court that her husband Syed Shah Raza and her grand son Syed Salman Shah had been kept in illegal confinement by SHO Jand and was now demanding Rs 2 lac as bribe to release them.

The learned judge took action and summoned the SHO, who denied the allegations and stated that he had kept no one under illegal confinement but latter both person were recovered from the police station.

Female teachers faces denial of due right

ISLAMABAD: Special Communications Organization (SCO), the leading telecommunication company in Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJ&K) and Gilgit Baltistan (GB), announced the launch of its latest offer on the occasion of Eid-Ul-Fitr. The new offer includes 2000 minutes of local voice calls, 2000 MB Data and 2000 SMS in just Rs 10 per day.

SCO is enthusiastic about celebrating Eid with customers and their families through its unmatched offer. The organization spares no efforts to provide customers with a fast and simple way to enjoy a superior telecommunications experience during special occasions through appealing and flexible packages that meet their needs. — APP

The required ACRs were provided but no revised notification was issued.

Later on, the teachers filed representations with the Federal Directorate of Education (FDE) and requested many times for the issuing of revised HTS notification.

Instead of revising the notification of 2014, and granting them the benefit of HTS from 2013 FDE issued a new notification and the teachers were astonished to see that they had once again been granted HTS with effect from March, 2021 instead of 2013.

It seems illogical that they have been granted HTS of the same grade twice.

The exercise to revise the notification seems to be muddled in confusion over eligibility date.

Meanwhile, Mansoor Abbas and Zarqa got regular promotion as Associate Professor (BPS-19) in 2019 and missed the HTS of BPS-19. Later on, they got HTS of BPS-20 in 2020.

Ruqaya, Rizwana, Shahida got regular promotion as Associate Professor (BPS-19) in March 2021 and they did not get the HTS of both BPS-19 and BPS-20. — APP

DC Attock, AC Fatehjang made OSDs**MUNIR FAISAL**

ATTOCK: Deputy Commissioner Attock Ali Anan Qamar and Assistant Commissioner Fatehjang Azeem Shoukat Awan on Tuesday were officers on special duty (OSDs) and ordered to report to Services and General Administration Department Lahore.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Revenue Attock Shehryar Arif Khan was given the additional charge of DC Attock.

The two officers were reportedly made OSDs in connection with an inquiry regarding the Rawalpindi Ring Road Project where alterations were carried out without approval only benefit some influential property dealers and land lords. — APP

Pak climber Sirbaz Khan summits Mount Everest

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani mountaineer, Sirbaz Khan achieved yet another milestone when on Wednesday he scaled Mount Everest (8848m), the tallest peak in the world. Earlier, on Tuesday Shehroze Kashif (19) became the youngest Pakistani to summit Everest and hoist the country's flag there. "Today at 6:05 am, Sirbaz Khan successfully climbed Mount Everest," Secretary Alpine Club of Pakistan, Karrar Haideri told APP while sharing a photo of Sirbaz standing atop the Everest with Pakistan flag in his hands. "This is his seventh feat to climb above 8000m mountains. In the last 26 days, he has summited two 8000m peaks," he added. According to Secretary ACP, Sirbaz is on the mission to become the first Pakistani to climb



world's all 14 above 8000m peaks.

"It is wonderful that our mountaineers are making history, exhibiting great strength and courage," he reckoned.

Last month, Sirbaz along with Muhammad Abdul Joshi, another Pakistan mountaineer climbed the 8,091-metre Annapurna peak in Nepal, becoming the first Pakistan duo to achieve thefeat.

"He [Sirbaz] has achieved half of his target now. Hopefully, we will soon see him climbing the rest of the highest peaks too," Haideri added.

The 32-year-old Sirbaz, who hails from Aliabad, Hunza, began his climbing career in 2016. Prior to Mount Everest and Annapurna, he has ascended K2, Nanga Parbat, Broad Peak, Lhotse, and Manaslu. — APP

Violence escalating

AS expected, tensions between Israel and Palestine are bubbling over once again in the aftermath of the raid of mosque Al-Aqsa. Allegedly, militant groups fired rockets into Israel which prompted it to embark upon a campaign of destructive air strikes in Gaza. One can only imagine the kind of devastation this will cause in addition to the damage already done by Israel's genocidal policies towards the Palestinians. Being a witness to the dire consequences of a disputed territory conflict—i.e. Kashmir—Pakistan must elicit further support against the barbaric approach being taken by the Israeli government.

After witnessing the death of hundreds of innocent people and children, Hamas issued an ultimatum to Israel's forces that demanded them to withdraw from the area. Only after the time elapsed were the rockets fired in protest against the recent unprovoked act of aggression. The Palestinian population has been fighting, suffering and sacrificing for their rights for decades but no progress has been made to secure their interests. Instead, subjugation continues. It is about time that the international community exerts an overwhelming amount of pressure onto the Israeli forces to back down and denounce their violent ways. Eviction judgements, unwarranted hostilities and sheer hatred must be brought to an end. Too many people have laid down their lives over the course of years and we are nowhere near achieving a peaceful resolution on the matter. Global actors must follow in the steps of the members of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) that have condemned Israel's brutal display of force. But more than condemnation, actively looking to halt Israel's genocidal designs must also be worked upon. Pakistan has always promised its support, whatever kind needed, to the people of Palestine and it will continue to do so. Our authorities have always strived to secure the rights of the people of Kashmir and the same promise is made to all those—particularly the Palestinians—living in oppressive conditions. The focus now should be on inspiring collective action against this injustice.

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A world beyond rote learning

MUHAMMAD OMAR IFTIKHAR

OUR educational system compels students to memorize text line-by-line and reproduce it as replies to the questions asked during an examination. This method of study has been observed and followed for decades. Instead of broadening the students' mental horizon, the education system or the methods of pedagogy are retraining the students to explore their minds.

Rote learning, therefore, is an easy way out from the challenge of securing grades or at least passing the examinations. At the university level, students are asked to share concepts and principles and rote learning is reduced. However, students in the primary classes and especially in the eleventh and twelfth standard seem to have no other option but to rote learn. This practice explains a lot about our age-old educational system.

The textbook boards of provinces seem to be revising the same content but not adding value to it. Instead of adding content that has been there for ages, the concerned authorities should add content that resonates with the changing times. One can pursue the higher authorities to empower faculty to teach about life, society, and science in a way never taught before. Students must learn the society they live in and not rote learn the dates of events that happened centuries ago.

The learning they receive must enable them to step into the future and not keep pondering over history. While a holistic learning approach is necessary that blends the past with the future, the idea is to equip the students to become thinkers, leaders, readers, and doers.

The syllabus must be changed or if this too much to ask for, the teaching methodology and the paper pattern must be altered. Students need to express themselves to earn grades and not earn them based on reproducing the same information present in textbooks.

Make NAB self accountability effective!

Attiya Munawar



There is no doubt that justice-based accountability leads to the strength of any democratic country and its institutions. A Justice-based accountability system not only brings qualified and reputable people to the forefront of politics, but also encourages people to enter the public service sector, but most of our accountability institutions and accountability processes have been used for their own purposes

NAB is the foremost institution of accountability in Pakistan, there are good and bad people in every institution, qualified people bring good name to the institution, while incompetent people bring disrepute to the whole institution, but despite all this, institutions are expected to perform well. The general reputation of the NAB is that of a good institution, its chairman Javed Iqbal is a retired Supreme Court adjudicator who speaks of impartial accountability and strives for it. While the NAB makes huge recoveries from corrupt people, it also treats the victims. Propaganda against the NAB is also carried out by those who come under strict accountability, which does not affect the performance and commitment of the NAB but when the NAB is questioned by the Supreme Court and it is said that the officers sitting in the NAB are committing big frauds, then the role and performance of the NAB begin to be questioned.

There is no doubt that justice-based accountability leads to the strength of any democratic country and its institutions. A Justice-based accountability system not only brings qualified and reputable people to the forefront of politics, but also encourages people to enter the public service sector, but most of our accountability institutions and accountability processes have been used for their own purposes. While the justice institutions have been dancing to the tune of the administration and giving decisions as they see fit, the people who run the accountability body have also been found to be involved in immoral activities. In the light of this

situation, the esteemed courts have to remark that NAB officers are committing big frauds and the chairman NAB has remained silent.

Whenever the performance of the NAB is questioned, the Chairman NAB has never remained silent, always defending the institution to the fullest, and where the performance is clear, any shortcomings in the institution are also rectified. However, if the esteemed court has pointed out the involvement of NAB officers in major frauds, then it is a matter of concern for the NAB, as the role of its people should be most transparent in the country.

If its own people are found involved in corruption and irregularities, then the accountability process will become meaningless. If the perpetrators of dereliction of duty are identified by the esteemed judiciary or complaints are received from the general public, then the Chairman NAB should take immediate departmental action against such people instead of remaining silent.

Concerning the NAB, there is already a general perception among the people that the NAB does not prosecute the accused even after making cases against corrupt elements, keeping the accused in custody for years, and conducting investigations, the accused cannot be convicted by the courts. The reason for this is also considered to be corruption in the institution. Despite the decision of Chairman NAB to rid the corrupt elements of the institution, two NAB officers were sacked three years ago after being found guilty of taking bribes. The accused have filed a petition in the High Court against their dismissal on

which the court had directed the NAB to complete the inquiry within three months, but the NAB officers, sympathizing with their petty brothers, did not feel the need to complete the inquiry against these corrupt officers for three years. In this context, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court seems to be right in saying that the scam was deliberate so that the case would be spoiled and the culprits could be saved from punishment.

Undoubtedly, like other institutions, there are some black sheep in NAB who are deliberately part of the irregularities. Such people involved in irregularities in the institution do not deserve any concessions. Such people also cause mistrust between the two institutions. Following the remarks of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, it has become imperative for the Chairman to devise a new strategy to root out corruption from the NAB.

Instead of monitoring the performance of the NAB, steps should be taken to rectify the culture of the NAB and reorganize the institution, so that the looted wealth can be recovered, corrupt elements can be held accountable and corruption can be discouraged, and the institution of NAB is made more effective in its self-accountability process.

At the same time, attention must be paid to bring the cases under investigation to a logical conclusion, so that negative perceptions about the national institution are eliminated and accountability is possible without discrimination.

The NAB should be expected to take immediate steps to maintain its confidence in the Supreme Court and the people.

US-NATO troops' drawdown to provoke re-Talibanization

Munir Ahmed



The chosen policy is to bait re-talibanisation in order to roll back 20 years' worth of human sacrifice, capital and investment. And, then, who will take the lead in belling the Taliban cat? The US has washed its hands of the entire Afghan quagmire, including reconstruction and rehabilitation, despite experts warning of geopolitical chaos

THE unilateral decision to drawdown US and NATO troops from Afghanistan was not entirely anticipated by other parties and stakeholders to the decades-old conflict. Even more disconcerting is that this process began on May 1 when the US vacated Kandahar Airfield (KAF), the primary target of Taliban attacks since 2001; sparking clashes between Afghan forces and the Taliban that left 100 militants dead. That the military base was the first to be 'handed over' to the Afghan government was perhaps an exercise to test both Kabul and the Taliban. It appears that the latter lost this round.

Since then, however, there has been no let-up in violence. Last week alone saw the targeted killing of well-known television journalist Newat Rawan, just a day after the Taliban warned the Afghan media against "biased reporting". This was followed by fresh carnage over the weekend when bombs were planted outside a girls' school in a Kabul suburb that is largely populated by the Shia Hazara community, leaving 68 dead and 165 injured.

The Taliban denied involvement in the attack. The Hazara had also been routinely attacked by ISIS. Elsewhere, a bus was bombed in the country's southern Zabul province. Pakistan also suffered a spillover effect when four soldiers were killed and six wounded in Balochistan while fencing part of the border with Afghanistan. Thus, in the space of a single week all ene-

mies of peace have been let out of the bag. This should come as no surprise since the US and NATO were unable to defeat militants despite spending two decades on the Afghan battlefield. International forces only managed to dismantle some of their own strategic assets, including Bin Laden. The troop pullout is therefore viewed as an American plan to intentionally dent the region. This is reinforced by President Biden stressing that the region should take remedial responsibility for the conflicts in its backyard, including Afghanistan. All this despite the fact that the US and NATO created this regional discord for their own vested interests.

Afghanistan has been caught in the cross-hairs for four decades. This war without end has consumed an enormous chunk of the world's resources. Untold lives have been lost and billions of dollars' worth of infrastructure have been damaged or destroyed. In addition, prolonged military offensives have gifted the world the worst ever global economic crunch and massive migration; thereby negatively impacting global poverty indexes. The biggest beneficiaries remain weapon manufacturers and their patrons while the Muslim world has suffered the most.

This looks set to continue. Indeed, the carefully crafted fallout of the US exit from Afghanistan will be the loosening of the militant noose across the region with a view to undermining regional security, the peaceful infrastructural growth of BRI

(Belt and Road Initiative), as well as bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

The ever-expanding US-India strategic alliance against China, Iran and Russia is resulting in the development and strengthening of Cold War strategies. It remains unclear as to whether this would be sufficient to curtail the economic growth of China. Yet, seemingly, the chosen policy is to bait re-talibanisation in order to roll back 20 years' worth of human sacrifice, capital and investment. And, then, who will take the lead in belling the Taliban cat? The US has washed its hands of the entire Afghan quagmire, including reconstruction and rehabilitation, despite experts warning of geopolitical chaos.

Certainly, economically weak Pakistan has more to lose in the event of increased militancy, particularly, along its border areas with Afghanistan. It is most unfortunate, both for this country and the whole region, that the US could not even secure the Doha peace talks and effectively lost the game to the Taliban – despite all facilitation and support from abandoned ally Pakistan. History has shown that the US can neither win wars on the battlefield nor at the negotiating table. It is time that the US learned this lesson.

— The writer is a freelance journalist and broadcaster, Director Devcom-Pakistan, a policy advocacy and outreach think tank in Islamabad. He can be reached at devcom.pakistan@gmail.com and tweets @EmmayeSyed

Briefs

Japan to vaccinate Olympic athletes

TOKYO: Japan plans to vaccinate its Olympic athletes before the Tokyo Games, domestic media reported Wednesday, a move that would place them ahead of the general population as the government faces pressure over a slow rollout.

There was no immediate comment from Olympic organisers or Japan's Olympic Committee on the reports in the Nikkei and Yomiuri Shimbun dailies, which did not name their sources.

The newspapers said around 2,500 people including athletes and coaches would be included, with Japanese sports federations in charge of administering the jabs. Japan's government had previously denied it was considering a plan to vaccinate athletes ahead of the general population.

Earlier this month, US drug giant Pfizer and its German partner BioNTech announced a deal with the International Olympic Committee to provide vaccines for competitors and staff at the Tokyo Games.

They said initial doses for participating delegations would begin at the end of May, without specifying which teams would be involved. Japan has so far only approved the Pfizer jab and the government has faced pressure over the comparatively slow rollout of its inoculation campaign as Tokyo and other areas battle new virus emergencies. For now, only medical workers and the elderly are eligible for jabs, with no timeline yet set for the general population to receive them. — APP

OIC envoys slam Israeli actions in Palestine

From Page 01
General Assembly on the situation. The OIC envoys set up a core group of member states as well to highlight this issue at the UN. Pakistan is a key member of this core group.

In a separate statement on Tuesday, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said he was "gravely concerned" at escalating violence in the occupied Palestinian territory while the UN rights office, OHCHR, appealed for "a redoubling of efforts to restore calm", after air strikes and days of clashes between protesters and Israeli police. The ambassadors of OIC member states held this urgent meeting at the United Nations to show their angst at the Israeli aggression and unequivocally condemned the recent use of "brutal" force by the Israeli forces against Palestinians in East Jerusalem.

Pakistan urges Muslim...

From Page 01
"We can raise our voices individually [but] the issue will be noted when all 57 OIC members voice their support. A lone Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Malaysia and Indonesia can't do anything," he said.

Qureshi also said he had received a call from his Turkish counterpart who explained to him the proposals – keeping in mind the situation at Al Aqsa – that would be discussed and presented in the latter's meeting with the Saudi foreign minister. The proposals included calling an emergency ministerial session of the OIC on the Al Aqsa situation to raise a voice against the use of force by Israeli security forces and to call an emergency session of the UN General Assembly, he said. During press conference, the foreign minister also provided details on the prime minister's recent visit to Saudi Arabia. "A direction for the future was set," he said.

He said that Pakistan always had good political and strategic relations with the kingdom in the past but termed it an "ad-hoc arrangement". However, now a new agreement has been reached and an institutional arrangement and mechanism has been decided which PM Imran and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman have signed, he said. "We call this the Saudi-Pakistan Supreme Coordination Council."

Azerbaijan holds Khari Bulbul music festival at Shusha

The "Kharibulbul" music festival, being held this year for the first time after a long break, is dedicated to the memory of our martyrs. We are indebted to our heroic soldiers. We are indebted to the people of Azerbaijan

DNA

SHUSA: The Khari Bulbul music festival has started in Shusha, the cultural capital of Azerbaijan. Music groups are performing the compositions at the festival, which has been organized on the Jidir plain. The festival is being held for the first time since the liberation of Shusha from the Armenian occupation. The festival includes the performance by music groups of different nations living in Azerbaijan, a program of folk and classical music. Kharibulbul music festival used to be held in Shusha every year before the city's occupation by Armenian forces in 1992.

The festival has been resumed after Shusha's liberation on November 8, 2020. President Ilham Aliyev and First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva have attended the opening

of Khari Bulbul festival being held in Shusha today, Azertag reported on November 12. The president and the first lady arrived in Shusha on November 12. Their daughters Leyla and Arzu Aliyeva also attended the festival. The visit is on the occasion of traditional Kharibulbul music festival to be held in Shusha that has been declared Azerbaijan's cultural capital. The head of state made an opening speech at the festival. Dear friends, it is a significant day in the history of our country today. After a long break, the "Kharibulbul" festival is being held in the Jidir Duzu plain in Shusha, a city sacred to each of us.

I heartily congratulate you and all the people of Azerbaijan on this occasion. We have been looking forward to this day for 30 years. We have lived with a longing for the Motherland for 30 years. We

had to reconcile with this injustice for 30 years, but we did not put up with it. We were always saying that we would never come to terms with this situation and that we would liberate our native lands from the occupiers at any cost, and we did exactly that. The "Kharibulbul" music festival, being held this year for the first time after a long break, is dedicated to the memory of our martyrs. We are indebted to our heroic soldiers. We are indebted to the people of Azerbaijan. Our people united and showed solidarity, or people united like a fist, and this victory was won by the people of Azerbaijan. This is a victory for all of us. I would request that we commemorate our heroic martyrs of the Patriotic War with a minute of silence. May Allah rest the souls of all our martyrs in peace!

We have restored this remarkable

tradition, and "Kharibulbul" festival will now be held in Shusha every year. This year's festival covers representatives of the peoples living in Azerbaijan. Representatives of different nations living in our country will perform in this festival. I gave this recommendation to the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, the organizer of the festival, because all the peoples living in Azerbaijan have contributed a great deal to the Patriotic War. The Patriotic War has once again shown that all peoples in Azerbaijan live in friendship, brotherhood and solidarity, and this 44-day war showed again that there is national unity and national solidarity in our country. It is no coincidence that the first festival will feature representatives of the peoples living in Azerbaijan. So we are sending another message to the whole world from here, from Shusha, from our

ancient land. Countries should develop in this way, in multi-religious, multi-ethnic countries and societies. There is development, there is unity, there is national solidarity, there is peace here. We follow what is happening in different parts of the world, and I can say that we could foresee the present-day situation a few years ago. Therefore, we promoted multiculturalism, promoted the coexistence of different peoples both domestically and internationally, including through numerous events held in our country. We were saying that this was possible. We were saying in the example of Azerbaijan that it was possible, we were showing that, we shared our experience, we shared our views, and I think that our efforts have paid off because the world has a clearer picture of this issue now.



ISLAMABAD: Shahroze Kashif youngest Pakistani to summit Mt Everest waving Pakistani flag on the top of world's highest peak. — DNA

IPC minister greets Pak mountaineer

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Inter Provincial Coordination (IPC) Dr Fehmida Mirza, Secretary Mohsin Mushraq and Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) Director General (DG) Col (retd) Asif Zaman have congratulated mountaineers Sirbaz Khan and Sheruze Kashif for sumitting Mount Everest (8848m), the tallest peak in the world. In their messages, issued

here on Wednesday they said that it was wonderful to see the two mountaineers reaching atop the world and hoisting Pakistan's flag there. The 32-year-old Sirbaz, who last month called on the minister before departing for Nepal scaled Everest on early Wednesday, becoming the second Pakistani in two days to achieve the feat. Earlier, on Tuesday

Shehzroze Kashif (19) became the youngest Pakistani to ascend the peak. Sirbaz, who is on the mission to become the first Pakistani to climb the world's all 14 above 8000m peaks shot to stardom when last month, he along with Muhammad Abdul Joshi, another Pakistani mountaineer climbed Nepal's 8,091-metre Annapurna peak. The duo became

the first Pakistani to do so. All in all, ascending Everest is Sirbaz's seventh accomplishment of climbing 8000m above peaks. "It is heartening to note that our mountaineers are exhibiting great courage and spirit to shine in the world of mountaineering. They are a role model for their peers. I hope the aspiring climbers will draw inspiration from them," Fehmida said. — APP

French MPs back Macron's Covid 'pass' after changes

PARIS: France's parliament on Wednesday backed President Emmanuel Macron's plan to introduce a Covid "health pass", after deputies pushed back against the move arguing it was discriminatory for those not yet vaccinated. Macron wants the pass to help speed up the lifting of coronavirus restrictions as his Covid vaccination programme gathers pace. It will be used to travel outside France for people showing proof of coronavirus vaccination, a recent negative test or recovery from a Covid-19 infection. Opposition parties have criticised the bill for posing a discrimination risk, not least because millions of people have yet to be inoculated.

Even some deputies usually loyal to Macron balked at what they said was a lack of details on how the pass would be used, saying the government was basically asking for a blank cheque. They pressed for a firm number on how many passholders would be allowed at large gatherings, but the government insisted on a need to remain flexible. The disagreement led to an initial defeat of the bill by 108 votes to 103 in the lower-house National Assembly, with a high number of abstentions. But in the early hours of Wednesday it passed 208 to 85. "There was no dialogue and no listening" to concerns, said Philippe Latombe, a member of the centrist Modem party that usually backs the government. But in the end, the bill was modified so that a transition period during which the government can still impose restrictions was shortened, from June 2 to the end of September, rather the end of October. The health pass, which will take a digital or paper form, is to let people attend sporting events and other large gatherings, but would not be used to enter restaurants, cinemas or stores. — APP

Higher doses may make bacteria 'fitter': study

PARIS: Using higher doses of antibiotics in a bid to tackle the growing problem of drug resistance may end up strengthening certain bacteria, according to research released on Wednesday that highlights a previously unthought-of risk.

Antimicrobial resistance has been labelled by the United Nations as "one of the greatest threats we face as a global community" and is predicted to cause 10 million deaths annually by 2050. Previous research has shown that inflicting higher antibiotic doses on bacteria can slow its ability to develop resistance, yet little attention has been paid to how those higher doses impact the overall health of microbes. A team of Britain- and Europe-based researchers looked at how populations of E. coli reacted to varying concentrations of three common antibiotics. — APP

Myanmar beauty queen takes up arms against junta

YANGON: A former Myanmar beauty queen has joined ethnic rebels to take up arms against the country's military junta, posting photos of herself with an assault rifle. Myanmar has been in chaos and its economy paralysed since the military seized power on February 1, ousting civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi. Htar Htet Htet represented Myanmar in the first Miss Grand International beauty pageant in Thailand in 2013, competing against 60 contenders in swimsuit and national costume rounds. Fast forward eight years and glitz and glamour is a far cry from the jungle of Myanmar's border regions controlled by ethnic armed groups. The 32-year-old gymnastics instructor posted a picture to her Facebook page this week dressed in black combat fatigues and carrying an assault rifle.

"The time has come to fight back," she wrote on Facebook. "Whether you hold a weapon, pen, keyboard or donate money to the pro-democracy movement, everyone must do their bit for the revolution to succeed." Tuesday marked 100 days since the putsch but the deadly violence did not deter crowds in Yangon taking to the streets demanding a return to democracy. "I will fight back as much as I can. I am ready and prepared to give up everything. I am even ready to pay with my life," Htar Htet Htet wrote from an unknown border territory.

This year's Miss Grand Myanmar contestant Han Lay has also been an outspoken critic of the military junta. The coup ended the country's decade-long experiment with democracy after half a century of military rule. More than 780 civilians have died as security forces moved to quash mass protests with a brutal crackdown. They have shot demonstrators in the streets, arrested people in night raids, locked up journalists and ordered internet outages. Thousands of people from urban parts of Myanmar have fled to border regions, including many with links to Suu Kyi's political party and others facing arrest for their involvement in the protest movement and labour strikes. — APP



Hamas chief holds talks with Lebanon, Iran

Hamas also said that Haniyeh updated Ghalibaf during a phone conversation on "political and on-field developments" that began with the Israeli court decision to displace Palestinians from Sheikh Jarrah followed by the Israeli storming of Al-Aqsa Mosque.

DNA

GAZA: Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh spoke by phone Tuesday with Lebanese President Michel Aoun and the head of the Iranian Shura Council, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, on developments in the occupied Palestinian territories. Haniyeh and Aoun discussed the latest developments across Palestine, including "plans of the occupation to displace citizens in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood, attacks on Islamic and Christian holy sites, and the crimes committed against our people in the Gaza Strip, including the killing of chil-

dren," said a statement by Hamas. Haniyeh hailed "the Lebanese stance towards Palestine, Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa [Mosque]," the statement added. Hamas also said that Haniyeh updated Ghalibaf during a phone conversation on "political and on-field developments" that began with the Israeli court decision to displace Palestinians from Sheikh Jarrah followed by the Israeli storming of Al-Aqsa Mosque. It stated that the leader of Hamas also briefed Ghalibaf on his movement's attempts to defend Al-Aqsa Mosque as well as the recent Zionist attacks against Palestinians in the besieged Gaza Strip and the

heinous crimes" committed by Israel against the people of Gaza, the statement said. According to the statement, Haniyeh also stressed the need for

the complete annulment" of the decision to evict Palestinians in Sheikh Jarrah from their homes and "to stop the policy of Judaization, [illegal] settlements, demolishing homes and the storming of Al-Aqsa." Ghalibaf expressed "his full solidarity with the Palestinian people," the statement noted, adding he condemned the Israeli attacks on Al-Aqsa Mosque and Palestinians. He also promised to "send messages to all parliaments about what is happening in Jerusalem now, and the dangerous field developments against the Palestinian people." As of Tuesday, at least 28 Palesti-

nians have been killed, including children, and scores injured in Israeli attacks in the Gaza Strip. The Israeli army claimed that it has targeted 130 positions in Gaza, killing 15 members of the Hamas group in strikes. The army said late Monday that it launched the Guardian of the Walls military operation to respond to what it said was rocket fire from the Gaza Strip. Tensions moved from East Jerusalem to Gaza after Palestinian resistance groups in Gaza vowed to retaliate for Israeli assaults on Al-Aqsa Mosque and Jerusalem's Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood if the attacks are not halted.

US halts consular services in Russia

MOSCOW: The US embassy in Moscow from Wednesday suspended most consular services to its nationals and stopped issuing visas due to a drastic reduction of its staff following tit-for-tat sanctions. In a statement posted earlier on its website, the embassy said it would from May 12 stop offering routine services to US citizens including passport renewals "for the foreseeable future" and only process new visa applications in "life-or-death emergencies".

Russia earlier this year banned US diplomatic missions from employing non-Americans, forcing the embassy to reduce its "consular workforce by 75 percent". Russia-US relations have been in tatters with Washington accusing the Kremlin of interference in US elections, a massive cyber attack and other hostile activity. Joe Biden has increased pressure on Moscow since becoming US president, and comments he made likening Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin to a killer were met with fierce criticism in Moscow. Washington in April announced a new round of sanctions including the expulsion of 10 diplomats and a restriction on US banks trading in Russian government debt. Moscow responded by expelling 10 US diplomats, banning top US officials from entering the country and prohibiting the US embassy from employing foreign nationals. — APP

Israel must be held...

From Page 01
International criminal law defines individual criminal responsibility for certain violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, such as war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, which applies to the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people since its occupation of Palestine, PNC said.

PNC rejected the double standard policy pursued by international institutions and major countries claiming their keenness to uphold the provisions and principles of international law, when it comes to the aggression of the occupying perpetrator, Israel, on the victims under its occupation.

Those countries and the UN Security Council should review their policy towards the crimes and aggression of the Israeli occupation.

PM Imran, Erdogan slam Israeli aggression

The prime minister also shared the hashtags of 'We Stand with Gaza' and 'We Stand with Palestine'. "I am Prime Minister of Pakistan and We Stand With Gaza, We Stand With Palestine," he tweeted, joining the millions of Twitter users who posted the similar messages of support for the Palestine under attack by Israel.

The Prime Minister also shared a post of famous linguist Noam Chomsky on the plight of Palestinians that stated, "You take my water, burn my olive trees, destroy my house, take my job, steal my land, imprison my father, kill my mother, bombard my country, starve us all, humiliate us all but I am to blame: I shot a rocket back."

Prime Minister Imran Khan, a day ago, in a telephonic interaction with citizens had strongly condemned the air strikes by Israel in Gaza that resulted in deaths and injuries of several innocent Palestinians including children. He termed it a reprehensible action during the holy month of Ramazan following the increased restrictions on the fundamental freedoms of Palestinians and the attacks at Al-Aqsa Mosque.

German FA in turmoil

BERLIN: The German Football Association (DFB) was in turmoil on Wednesday after its embattled president Fritz Keller said he would step down after comparing his own deputy to a notorious Nazi-era judge. "President Fritz Keller has made a personal decision...that he is ready in principle to resign," the DFB said in a statement late Tuesday. — APP

Briefs

US approves its biggest offshore wind farm yet

WASHINGTON: The US announced on Tuesday that it had granted final approval for its biggest wind power project yet, which will be located off the coast of the eastern state of Massachusetts.

The "Vineyard Wind" project calls for up to 84 wind turbines to be built 12 nautical miles off Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket, two islands off the Massachusetts coast.

The administration of President Joe Biden has set a goal of generating 30 gigawatts of energy from offshore wind by 2030.

The 800-megawatt Vineyard Wind project would provide enough power for 400,000 homes and businesses, the Interior Department said in a statement.

"A clean energy future is within our grasp in the United States," Interior Secretary Deb Haaland said. "The approval of this project is an important step toward advancing the administration's goals to create good-paying union jobs while combatting climate change and powering our nation."

The United States currently relies very little on wind power, with only small wind farms located off the coasts of Virginia and Rhode Island. — APP

Two killed in Sudan rally over 2019 protests

KHARTOUM: Two people were killed and dozens wounded as Sudanese security forces dispersed a rally demanding justice for protesters killed during anti-government demonstrations two years ago, the army said Wednesday.

Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok said he was "shocked" by the killings, calling it a "crime to use live bullets against peaceful protesters".

Hundreds gathered on Tuesday evening outside the army headquarters in the capital Khartoum, at the site where thousands gathered in 2019 initially demanding the ouster of president Omar al-Bashir and urging a transfer to civilian rule.

The demonstration on Tuesday started shortly before iftar, the evening meal which breaks the fast during the holy month of Ramadan.

It marked two years since the bloody dispersal of the mass encampment outside the army headquarters.

"As they (the protesters) left the site, unfortunate events occurred resulting in the killing of two people and the wounding of others," the armed forces said in a statement, adding that an investigation had been launched.

The army said they were "fully prepared to bring to justice, whoever is proven to be involved". In the protests on Tuesday, young demonstrators were seen carrying banners and photos of the people killed during the crackdown on the 2019 sit-in, according to an AFP correspondent.

"Retribution for the martyrs," many chanted as they waved Sudanese flags.

"We will continue calling for justice," said protester Samar Hassan. — APP

China targets Muslim women in Push to suppress births

Across much of China, the authorities are encouraging women to have more children, as they try to stave off a demographic crisis from a declining birthrate. But in the Xinjiang region, China is forcing them to have fewer

FOREIGN DESK

XINJIANG :

In most of China, women are being urged to have more babies to shore up a falling birthrate. But in Xinjiang, they are being forced to have fewer. When China's government ordered women in her mostly Muslim community in the region of Xinjiang to be fitted with contraceptive devices, Qelbinur Sedik pleaded for an exemption. She was nearly 50 years old, she told officials. She had obeyed the government's birth limits and had only one child. It was no use. The workers threatened to take her to the police if she continued resisting, she said. She gave in and went to a government clinic where a doctor, using a metal speculum, inserted an intrauterine device to prevent pregnancy. She wept through the procedure.

"I felt like I was no longer a normal woman," Ms. Sedik said, choking up as she described the 2017 ordeal. "Like I was missing something." Across much of China, the authorities are encouraging women to have more children, as they try to stave off a demographic crisis from a declining birthrate. But in the Xinjiang region, China is forcing them to have fewer, tightening its grip on Muslim ethnic minorities and trying to orchestrate a demographic shift that will diminish their population growth.

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Communist Party determined to eliminate any perceived challenge to its rule, in this case, ethnic separatism. Over the past few years, the party, under its top leader, Xi Jinping, has moved aggressively to subdue Uyghurs and other Central Asian minorities in Xinjiang, putting hundreds of thousands into internment camps and prisons. The authorities have placed the region under tight surveillance, sent residents to work in factories and placed children in boarding schools.

While the authorities have

said the birth control pro-

cedures are voluntary, in-

terviews with more than a dozen Uyghurs, Kazakhs and other Muslim women and men from Xinjiang, as well as a review of official statistics, government notices and reports in the state-run media, depict a coercive effort by the Chinese Communist Party to control

the community's reproductive rights. The authorities pressured women to use IUDs or get sterilized. As they recuperated at home, government officials were sent to live with them to watch for signs of discontent; one woman described having to endure her minder's groping.

If they had too many children or refused contraceptive procedures, they faced steep fines or worse, deten-

tion in an internment camp. In the camps, the women were at risk of even more abuse. Some former detainees say they were made to take drugs that stopped their menstrual cycles. One woman said she had been raped in a camp. To rights advocates and Western officials, the government's re-

pression in Xinjiang is tantamount to crimes against humanity and genocide, in large part because of the ef-

orts to stem the population

growth of Muslim minori-

ties. The Trump administra-

tion in January was the first

government to declare the

crackdown a genocide, with

reproductive oppression as

a leading reason; the Biden

administration affirmed the

label in March.

Ms. Sedik's experience, re-

ported in The Guardian and

elsewhere, helped form the

basis for the decision by the

United States government.

"It was one of the most

detailed and compelling

first-person accounts we

had," said Kelley E. Currie, a former United States

ambassador who was in-

volved in the government's

discussions. "I helped to

put a face on the horrifying

statistics we were seeing."

Beijing has accused its criti-

cals of pushing an anti-China

agenda. The recent deci-

sions in the region's birthrates,

the government has said,

were the result of the au-

thorities' fully enforcing

longstanding birth restrictions.

The sterilizations and

(New York Times)



DAMASCUS: Iranian foreign minister Javad Zarif on his visit to Syria met with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and discussed regional issues.

Pak, China sign agreement on waste recovery

DNA

ISLAMABAD: An agreement on a renovation project of a waste heat recovery power plant was signed between China Sinoma Energy Conservation Limited (Sinoma EC) and Lucky Cement, according to a report published by the Gwadar Pro on Wednesday.

Under the agreement, the generating capacity of the two power stations utilising waste heat is expected to increase by about 4MW after the transformation.

The agreement came into effect after a contract entered between the two sides on a 7500t/d supporting power station project with waste heat of cement in late March this year.

Sinoma EC, a patent-holding company specialised in energy-saving and emission-reduction, started cooperation

with Lucky Cement in 2008. Since then, it has undertaken several projects, including the Pez Lines AB and CD waste heat recovery power plant with a generating capacity of 10 MW respectively, the 15 MW Karachi Line EFG power plant with waste heat, Karachi Line H waste heat boiler extension, etc.

Waste thermal energy is one of the largest sources of inexpensive and clean energy available. Waste heat power generation, or Waste Heat to Power (WHP), is the process of recovering waste heat and using it to generate power with no combustion and no emissions.

In cement plants, heat generated through rotary kiln preheater (PH) and AQC exhaust hot gases are used to generate steam in steam generator (Boiler) which is further used to generate electricity/power through steam turbo generator (STG).

BOGOTÁ: At least 42 people have been killed in near-daily protests against the government of Colombian President Iván Duque since April 28, the country's human rights ombudsman said Tuesday. All but one – a member of the armed forces – were civilians, the ombudsman's office said.

The updated toll made these the bloodiest demonstrations since Colombia signed a peace agreement with the FARC guerrilla group in 2016 to end decades of civil war.

It is lower than the 47 deaths reported by NGOs, who claim at least 39 were the direct result of "police violence".

The defense ministry has reported 849 police officers injured in clashes – 12 by gunfire – and has not updated the number of civilians wounded since May 3, when it stood at 306.

Student leader Jennifer Pedraza on Tuesday accused Duque's government of being "complacent about the excessive use of public force," and

joined a call for fresh protests on Wednesday. The tax reform bill has since been withdrawn, but the protests have continued despite a forceful response criticized by the international community. Two protesters who sustained critical injuries during clashes have died in hospital, their families and

idemic.

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Briefs

Sindh govt for holding Eid prayers at open places

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Sindh Minister for Information Syed Nasir Hussain Shah on Wednesday said that the Eid prayers should be held at open places and with complete adherence to SOPs to avoid COVID spread on the festive occasion.

"Eid prayers should be held at open places and more and more open places should be utilized for the purpose," he said while briefing media on decisions taken during a meeting of the COVID task force.

The minister said that he had visited parts of the city to review implementation on COVID SOPs. "There should be no hugging or handshake during Eid greeting and the public should greet each other while keeping a safe distance," Nasir Shah said.

He further shared that the government has allowed restaurants to operate take-away services while adopting SOPs. "Strict action will be taken in case of violation," he warned.

He said that they respect the business community and sympathize with them over the ongoing COVID-related curbs, however, they had to take strict decisions in order to safeguard public interests. Further commenting on the NAP letter seeking details of officers' appointment in urban Sindh, Nasir Shah said that the letter was unconstitutional and the government has rejected it.

PEMRA to regulate Youtubers, web channels

BUREAU REPORT

ISLAMABAD: In a bid to rein in YouTubers and web TV channels, Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) has prepared recommendations for including these channels in the broadcast media category.

According to a private television channel report, PEMRA has already sent the working paper bearing these recommendations to its members for their approval. PEMRA has recommended making possession of licences mandatory for YouTubers and web TV channels' owners.

The Authority has further recommended making it compulsory for the owners of these channels to pay a registration fee as well as other taxes.

Similarly, it has been suggested that these channels be run under the PEMRA laws of 2015. Similarly, it has also been recommended to make these channels comply with a code of conduct just like mainstream TV channels. Furthermore, it has been suggested that initially these channels would be put in the broadcast media category followed by the making of special laws to deal with them. The members would either approve or reject these recommendations after deliberations at its next meeting.

Fawad urges people to follow SOPs

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hussain Wednesday urged the people to cooperate with the government and follow the standard operating procedures (SOPs) to stay safe from coronavirus pandemic. In a video message, he warned that if people would not comply with the SOPs, Pakistan could also face a situation similar to neighbouring India.

He, therefore, asked the people to adopt 'stay home and stay safe' policy during the Eid-ul-Fitr holidays. He said instead of visiting the relatives on the occasion of Eid, they should use the means of internet and phone for communication with them as this was important for the safety of everyone. Fawad said the government had also imposed ban on intra-city transport to limit the mobility during Eid holidays.

Taliban seize district on outskirts of Afghan capital

KABUL: The Taliban have seized a district from Afghan government forces on the outskirts of Kabul, ahead of a three-day ceasefire agreed between the warring sides, officials said. Nerkh district is around 40 kilometres (25 miles) from the Afghan capital in neighbouring Wardak province, which has long been used by militants as a gateway to reach the city and launch deadly attacks. Violence has soared since May 1 when the US military began formally withdrawing its last remaining troops, even as peace efforts between the Taliban and the Afghan government have stalled.

"Security and defence forces made a tactical retreat from the police headquarters of Nerkh district," Interior Ministry spokesman Tareq Arian told media.

Zabihullah Mujahid, a spokesman for the Taliban, said the insurgents had captured the area on Tuesday, adding its fighters had seized the police headquarters and an army base. The Defence Ministry on Wednesday said it would launch an offensive to win back the district, home to more than 60,000 people. "Commandos reinforcements are on their way," Fawad Aman, a spokesman for the defence ministry said. Large swathes of Wardak and neighbouring Logar province have been controlled or contested for years by Taliban fighters and have served as a strategic staging ground for militants hoping to enter Kabul.

The main highway that connects Kabul to southern Kandahar province - the former Taliban

255 Afghan civilians killed during Ramadan

KABUL: The Ministry of Interior Affairs has said that 15 suicide attacks and dozens of other attacks have been carried out "by the Taliban" since the start of Ramadan on April 13. The ministry said that 500 more civilians were wounded in the attacks during this period. The Interior Ministry said that the Taliban were responsible for 200 blasts and 15 suicide bombings during Ramadan. The Taliban has denied the government's claims that the group has a big hand in civilian deaths. The first day of Ramadan on April 13 witnessed clashes between Afghan security forces and the

stronghold and the scene of intensive fighting in recent weeks - crosses through the district. Taliban fighters have been increasingly encircling major Afghan urban centres, spurring speculation the militants are waiting for the Americans to withdraw before launching all-out assaults on the country's cities. The capture of Nerkh comes after the Taliban and the Afghan government agreed to observe a three-day ceasefire to mark the Eid al-Fitr holiday starting on Thursday. Ceasefires in the past have widely held in what is largely thought to be an exercise by the Taliban leadership to prove they have firm control over the myriad factions across the country that make up the jihadist movement. Violence has intensified across the provinces, particularly in the south,

since the US missed a May 1 deadline agreed with the Taliban to withdraw the last of its troops. While the Taliban have avoided engaging American forces, attacks against government and civilian targets have not stopped. Thousands of residents in Helmand have been displaced because of clashes, which saw the US military called in to defend Afghan forces. In the latest violence to rock Kabul, more than 50 people were killed and scores wounded in a western district of the capital when three bombs exploded outside a girls' school on Saturday. It was the deadliest attack in more than a year and came as residents were out shopping ahead of Eid. The US military has so far completed between six and 12 percent of its final withdrawal, the Pentagon said Tuesday. - APP

KSA begins arrangements to hold Hajj 2021

DNA

MAKKAH: Saudi Arabia's Deputy Minister of Hajj and Umrah Dr. Abdul Fattah Mashat has said the Kingdom doesn't intend to call off this year's Hajj pilgrimage. This he said in a meeting with Maulana Tahir Ashrafi, Special Assistant to the PM on Religious Harmony, in Makkah.

The minister said the Kingdom has started making arrangements to hold this year's Hajj pilgrimage with Covid safety protocols. All possible steps are being taken to facilitate pilgrims, he said. He maintained that Covid-19 vaccination is mandatory for people intending to perform the annual Hajj pilgrimage this year. Maulana Ashrafi said the people and leadership of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are close to each other. The Saudi government's measures for pilgrims are laudable, he added.

New vaccine underway at Al shifa

ISLAMABAD: Al-Shifa Trust President Major General (retd) Rehmat Khan on Wednesday said that last stage human trials of corona virus vaccine developed by Chinese multinational Anhui Zhifei Longcom Biopharmaceutical Co Ltd are successfully underway at the Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital, which would be available to public soon.

Around 8000 volunteers were initially recruited for trials, and no serious underlying medical issues was reported during ongoing trials and it is effective in triggering immunity response, he said while speaking to a private news channel.

He made it clear that the results from trials of Chinese Academy of Sciences' (CAS) Covid-19 vaccine candidate, ZF2001, showed that it was safe and triggered immune responses.

A state-of-the-art Clinical Research Unit has already been established at Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital and trials will be completed soon, he added. He hoped that the vaccination process in Pakistan will be accelerated after the successful completion of the trials of new Chinese vaccine. - DNA

Court sends Mian Javed Ltif on 14-day remand

DNA

LAHORE: A Lahore court on Wednesday granted 14-day judicial remand of PML-N MMA Mian Javed Latif in a case registered against him for allegedly delivering anti-state remarks.

Police produced him before the court on completion of his physical remand. The prosecution side informed the court that the PML-N leader's 14-day physical remand has completed.

Javed Latif complained to the judge about "ill treatment" meted out to him during his being in police custody on the physical remand. His lawyers contended that the police didn't have any evidence to corroborate treason charges against their client.

"Will court hand down capital punishment if section 302 (punishment for murder) is incorporated in an FIR," they questioned.

The court sent the lawmaker to jail on 14-day remand and adjourned the hearing until May 26.

Islamabad to receive rain on Eid

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Meteorological Department has predicted rain in Islamabad, Lahore, and Peshawar on Eid this year. Gujranwala and Rawalpindi will receive rain with lightning and thunderstorms as well.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the downpour is forecast on Wednesday and Thursday. The Pakistan Disaster Management Authority has, on the other hand, predicted rain for the upcoming five days in Peshawar and neighbouring areas. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Interior, Sheikh Rashid Ahmed and Adviser to Prime Minister on Accountability, Barrister Shahzad Akbar addressing a Press Conference after attending meeting of the sub-committee of the Cabinet on ECL. - APP

63 passengers test positive at Pak airports

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) have asked the foreign ministry to ensure that those traveling to Pakistan from abroad should have undergone tests from reputed laboratories as 63 passengers have tested positive for COVID-19 at nationwide airports.

According to a letter written from the NCOC to the foreign ministry, passengers traveling from Gulf countries have been arriving with negative COVID reports, however, after undergoing rapid testing at the airports, as many as 63 of them have tested positive in the last five days.

Those arriving from Gulf countries should be asked to undergo tests from reputed laboratories, the letter said while asking the foreign ministry to take measures in this

regard. It has been further conveyed that the national and foreign airlines should be bound to accept COVID test reports from designated labs. On May 01, National Command Operation Centre (NCOC) on Saturday devised new protocols for the inbound passengers, imposing a condition of COVID testing at Pakistan airports. Under the guidelines, the passengers will undergo rapid COVID testing at the Pakistani airports and would stay in quarantine for 10 days at their homes.

In case of testing positive,

the passengers will have to shift to a quarantine facility, where they would be re-tested for COVID-19 on the eighth day.

The guidelines stated that the passenger

would bear the expense of the isolation facility and in

case of testing positive for the second time, the passenger would be shifted to a hospital.

Hopefully have until Saturday to register and will then

Iran's Ahmadinejad submits name for presidential poll

"Millions of people across the country have invited me to stand for election, and even ordered me to come here to register, placing a heavy responsibility on my shoulders"

TEHRAN: Iranian ultra-conservative ex-president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad put his name forward Wednesday as a candidate to succeed moderate President Hassan Rouhani in elections next month.

"Millions of people across the country have invited me to stand for election, and even ordered me to come here to register, placing a heavy responsibility on my shoulders," Ahmadinejad said, speaking after he submitted his application to the interior ministry. The build-up to June 18 polls comes as Iran and world powers wrangle over reviving a 2015 nuclear accord, from which the US withdrew unilaterally in 2018, reimposing crippling sanctions.

Hopefuls have until Saturday to register and will then

be vetted by the conservative-dominated Guardian Council before a list of approved candidates is published by May 27, after which campaigning begins. But Iranian media consider Ahmadinejad's chance of being approved are close to zero. The 64-year-old said that if he is not approved, he will "not participate" in the election, either by backing a candidate or voting.

Ahmadinejad claimed, as he has often done in recent years, that the Iranian people have lost confidence in the country's authorities. He added that he considered the upcoming election "perhaps the last chance" to save the Islamic republic in the face of "very sensitive" challenges, both domestic and international.

Ahmadinejad, president from

2005 to 2013, had to stand down at the end of two consecutive terms as per the constitution - like outgoing president Rouhani will in June.

In 2009, Ahmadinejad's disputed re-election sparked protests that were severely put down, shaking the Islamic republic. On Wednesday he was cheered by several supporters as he submitted his name, chanting "we support you!"

The populist ex-president had also put his name forward for the 2017 presidential election, against the advice of the country's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Unsurprisingly, his candidacy was rejected by the Guardian Council, an unelected body dominated by conservatives and responsible for overseeing the presidential polls. - APP

Indian Covid-19 variant found in 44 countries: WHO

Doubts surround India's Covid-19 death toll

NEW DELHI: India's coronavirus death toll passed 250,000 on Wednesday but comparisons of official data with those from people on the frontlines suggest the true number is several times higher.

Across the vast nation, the devastating Covid-19 wave has overwhelmed hospitals with patients and crematoriums with bodies, and many coronavirus deaths are not being properly recorded as such.

Experts say the official quarter-million death count is hugely underreported.

"Even three to four times would be an underestimate," Anant Bhan, an independent health policy and bioethics researcher, told AFP.

Harrowing images from overwhelmed crematoriums, graveyards, and even makeshift funeral pyres have highlighted the scale of the crisis.

gerous than the original version of the virus because they are either

being more transmissible, deadly or able to get past some vaccine protections.

The WHO explained Wednesday that B.1.617 was added to the list because it appears to be transmitting

more easily than the original virus, pointing to the "rapid increases in prevalence in multiple countries".

WHO also pointed to "preliminary evidence" that the variant was more resistant to treatment with the monoclonal antibody Bamlanivimab, and also highlighted early lab studies

indicating "limited reduction in neutralisation by antibodies".

It stressed, though, that "real-world impacts" on the effectiveness of vaccines against the variant for instance "may be limited".

WHO said the spread of B.1.617, alongside other more transmissible

variants, appeared to be one of several factors fuelling India's dramatic surge in new cases and deaths.

India - a country of 1.3 billion people - is the world's second-most infected after the United States with nearly 23 million Covid-19 cases, and is currently recording more than 300,000 new cases and close to 4,000 deaths each day.

The new surge in cases has ravaged major cities, including the capital New Delhi and financial hub Mumbai, pushing hospitals to breaking point and leading to severe shortages in oxygen and beds.

"WHO found that resurgence and acceleration of Covid-19 transmission in India had several potential contributing factors, including increase in the proportion of cases of SARS-CoV-2 variants with potentially increased transmissibility," it said.

It also pointed to "several religious and political mass gathering events which increased social mixing; and, underuse of and reduced adherence to public health and social measures". - Agencies