



# Islamabad POST

Wednesday, May 19, 2021

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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**US wants to avoid a militarisation of the arctic, says Blinken**

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**China offers to host intra-Afghan talks**

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**Israel has no business to be in Palestine lands**

Detailed News On Page-08



## Briefs

**Covid-19 vaccine is safe**

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Health Dr Faisal Sultan updated the nation about the vaccine safety profile that out of 3.8 million plus doses, 4,329 reports of adverse effects have been reported so far and nearly all reports were of mild, expected side effects. Dr Faisal Sultan said of the 4,329 cases, 90 percent involved pain at the site of injection or fever. He further added, "Only 6 serious events reported - each investigated thoroughly and each found to be coincidental and non-attributable to vaccine." Earlier, a special flight of PIA brought one million doses of COVID-19 vaccine from Beijing.

**Afzal Latif assumes charge of ED Secretary**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Establishment Division Secretary Afzal Latif on Wednesday assumed the charge of his office. According to a notification of the Establishment Division which issued here, Afzal Latif, a BS-22 officer of Pakistan Administrative Service (PAS), has assumed the charge of the post of Secretary Establishment Division with immediate effect.

**Palestine Solidarity Day on Friday**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister's Special Representative for Religious Harmony Maulana Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi says the nation will observe Solidarity Day with Palestinians on Friday. Talking to media in Islamabad on Tuesday, he said the day is being observed to strongly condemn Israeli atrocities against unarmed Palestinians. He said that Pakistan is effectively highlighting the Israeli violence against Palestinians at international fora and also engaging with Muslim countries including the OIC on the matter.

## Pak to send medical aid to Palestine

Infor Minister Fawad Ch says the Palestinian leadership acknowledges Pakistan's firm stance



SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Federal cabinet on Tuesday approved sending medical aid to Palestine on humanitarian grounds in view of the medical emergency faced by the Palestinians as a result of Israeli aggression. A meeting of the Federal Cabinet on Tuesday chaired by Prime Minister Imran Khan reviewed 14-point agenda. The political and economic situation of the country and the latest situation in Palestine were also discussed in the meeting. The prime minister briefed the Cabinet on his dis-

cussions with world leaders on this important issue. The federal cabinet also ratified the decisions of the ECC meeting. The ECC had approved the payment of 40% dues to IPPs. In addition, approval was given in principle to exempt Kartarpur Corridor project from PA-PRA rules. According to sources, the cabinet also approved to take four UN vehicles to Kabul via Pakistan. It was also decided to issue a commemorative coin on the completion of 70 years of Pak-China diplomatic relations. The Cabinet also approved the issuance of SROs relating to the jurisdiction of the Railway Police, submission of the annual report of the Election Commission in Parliament, and issuance of passenger and cargo licenses to private airlines. Approval for appointment of Chief Executive of Pakistan Housing Authority Foundation, appointment of members of Electronic Certification Accreditation Council and appointment of Community Welfare Attach in Pakistani missions abroad was also postponed during the meeting.

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## EU relaxes visa rules to attract skilled labour

NEWS DESK

BRUSSELS: The European Commission on Tuesday welcomed the agreement reached between the regional bloc's parliament and the council to relax the visa rules for workers coming to the continent to work as skilled labourers. The new rules have been changed under the revised Blue Card Directive. The new scheme will introduce efficient rules for at-

tracting highly skilled workers to the EU, including more flexible admission conditions, enhanced rights, and the possibility to move and work more easily between the EU member states. A press release issued by the commission said that the agreement on the revised Blue Card is a "key objective" of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum. "Today's agreement gives the EU a modern, targeted legal migration scheme that will allow us to respond to skills

shortages and make it easier for highly skilled professionals to join our workforce," said Vice-President for Promoting our European Way of Life, Margaritis Schinas on the changes. Schinas said that the card will help "sustain economic growth, respond to labour market needs and increase productivity" of the regional bloc so it can bounce back strongly after the coronavirus pandemic.

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Turkey Ihsan Mustafa Yurdakul met with Ambassador of Palestine Ahmed Rabei and expressed solidarity. - DNA

**Turkey envoy visits Palestine embassy**

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Turkey Ihsan Mustaf Yurdakul visited the Palestine embassy on Tuesday and met with the Ambassador of Palestine Ahmed Rabei. The Turkish ambassador expressed solidarity with the ambassador and condemned Israeli aggression. The Turkish ambassador assured Ambassador Ahmed that Turkey stood with the people of Palestine at this critical juncture.

**Multiple dead in Karachi rain, storm**

DNA

KARACHI: Various parts of Karachi were hit by a dust storm and received rainfall on Tuesday, with the Meteorological Department (Met Dept) saying the rains are likely to stop and storm clouds will dissipate after two to three hours. The weather took a sudden turn as dark clouds covered most parts of the city and a dust storm appeared on the horizon. PMD Director Sardar Sarfaraz said thunder cells have developed over Karachi due to the sweltering heat. "Winds are blowing from the northeast. The clouds are forming in the northern part of the city," he said. Sarfaraz added that the PMD had warned of strong winds when it had issued the threat advisory for Cyclone Tauktae a couple of days ago.

## Pak, Turkey to move UNGA over Palestine

The two Foreign Ministers decided to jointly raise voice against the Israeli persecution of Palestinians

IP REPORT

ANKARA: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi on Prime Minister Imran Khan's direction would leave for the USA along with Palestinian, Turkish, and Sudanese counterparts to raise the issue of Israeli aggression in the UN General Assembly. FM Qureshi on Tuesday met Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu and agreed to raise the issue of Israeli attacks on Palestinians in the United Nation General Assembly (UNGA)

## UNGA urgent session on Thursday

NEW YORK: The UN General Assembly will hold an urgent meeting on Thursday to discuss the "grave deterioration" of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, as Israel presses on with its deadly offensive in Gaza. The session is in response to a request from the chairmen of the OIC Group at the UN and the Arab Group in a joint letter to the 193-member Assembly President Volkan Bozkir of Turkey. - Agencies

unitedly. Qureshi arrived in Turkey capital on a diplomatic mission to support Palestinians as Pakistan would not leave

them alone. He would deliver a special speech at the UNGA session of debate on

Continued on Page 06

## Incompetent ministers destroyed country: Shehbaz

STAFF REPORT

SIALKOT: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) president and opposition leader in National Assembly (NA) Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday said that the incompetent ministers of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government have destroyed the country. While talking to media in Sialkot, the PML-N leader said that his party had controlled loadshedding and inflation during its tenure. The incumbent government is involved in numerous scandals, he added.



Earlier, Shehbaz Sharif said that Israeli forces attacked innocent Palestinians in Al-Aqsa Mosque during holy month of Ramadan. Addressing the floor of the Lower House, he said that the Israeli airstrikes pummeled the Gaza strip and destroyed hundreds of homes.

## Remittances rise to all-time high in April

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan thanked on Tuesday overseas Pakistanis once again for ensuring that the country recorded remittances at an all-time high of \$2.8 billion in April, 56% higher than last year. "I have always believed Overseas Pakistanis to be our greatest asset. In April, your remittances rose to an all-time high of \$2.8bn. Remitting \$24.2bn in the first 10 mths of FY21, you have broken the record level achieved in the entire FY20," the premier wrote on Twitter. He also thanked the expats for their faith in Naya Pakistan. Meanwhile, the state bank of Pakistan also tweeted the update. "At \$24.2bn during Jul-Apr FY21, up 29% from last year, these have also surpassed the full FY20 level by over \$1bn, creating a new record," the central bank said on Twitter. - DNA

## Pakistani kidnapped in Morocco recovered

Dr. Ikram was kidnapped and held hostage by his in-laws; Pakistan embassy intervened and helped recover Ikram; Ambassador Hamid Asghar Khan played key role in this recover; Dr. Ikram all praise for Pakistani mission and staff for quick action

SPECIAL REPORT

RABAT: The Pakistan embassy in Rabat, Morocco has helped recover a Pakistani doctor who was reportedly kidnapped by his in-laws. Dr. Ikram Ullah, a Ph.D after his release visited the Pakistan embassy in Rabat and met with Ambassador Hamid Asghar Khan and expressed his gratitude. It may be mentioned here that brother of Dr. Ikram had sent a plea to Pakistani mission in Rabat asking for help. In his plea he had mentioned that his brother Dr. Ikram Ullah (Ph.D), national of Pakistan with passport ID BU1324122 was held hostage for the last two weeks at the residence of his now ex-wife Wiam El Alami daughter of Ahmed Bin Mohammed and Fatiha Bint Mohammed at her parent's residence located at 65 MARJANE 1 TRANCHE 1 MEKNES. They were married in August 2019 at Morocco with the consent and blessings of their parents at Wiam's residence in an intimate family gathering. Their marriage was registered at Morocco. After marriage Dr. Ikram went to China to continue his Post Doctoral research. Later, Ikram and his wife visited Ikram's par-



RABAT: Dr. Ikram meeting with Pakistan's Ambassador in Morocco Hamid Asghar Khan after his release from his in-laws house where he was kept as a captive. - DNA

ents in Pakistan in Feb 2020. After spending some days here, his wife went to Morocco to see her parents. After that, lockdown started in result of Covid-19. Since then, Feb-March 2020 his wife was in Morocco and Ikram in Pakistan. Last month Dr. Ikram flew to Morocco as flights resumed and he got two months visa from Morocco embassy after lot of effort to meet his wife and also to attend final marriage ceremony which was postponed last

time due to visa issues. After three days once he reached there, Wiam and her family closed internet on him, took away his passport, return ticket, held him hostage, kept him in seclusion, mentally tortured him and demanded divorce to which he conceded. His brother further narrated that somehow, he got internet and contacted his friends and family to report the matter in the mission to rescue him. Our last and only contact with him since he left for Morocco was on last

Thursday, 6th of May 2021. He was terrified and scared to the core. He told us that they had taken divorce from him on Quran and wanted him to appear in court for the same to which he agreed. He told us that he will contact us after that hearing in the court but he didn't. Since then, we haven't heard from him. We are very much concerned about his safety and life. We want immediate intervention of our mission in Morocco to take up the matter with Moroccan authorities to rescue him and take him out for his safe return to his family in Pakistan, the plea concluded. Upon this letter, the Pakistan embassy contacted the in-laws and wife of the doctor and asked them to free him. Upon refusal, the Pakistan mission started weighing all its legal options. As a final resort, doctor was released when he told the captives that Pakistani embassy team along with police force was on its way to Meknes. Dr. Ikram in his video message thanked the Pakistani embassy staff and especially Ambassador Hamid for quick action. He said the way Ambassador took personal interest in this matter is a clear manifestation of his earnest desire to help Pakistani Diaspora and those trapped in difficult situations like him.

## Covid-19 positivity rate at 8.61%

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan reported 2,500 new coronavirus infections over the past 24 hours, taking the total caseload to 882,928 on Tuesday. Pakistan's coronavirus positivity rate stands at 8.61% with 67,665 active cases as of Tuesday. Meanwhile, at least 135 more succumbed to the virus, raising the total death toll to 19,752 nationwide. According to National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC), Pakistan carried out 29,801 COVID-19 tests in the last 24 hours, out of which 2,566 returned positive.

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## Briefs

## OGDCL discovers new gas reservoir in Balochistan

ISLAMABAD: Oil and Gas Development Company Ltd (OGDCL) Tuesday announced to make a new gas discovery at X-4 well in Jandran block, located in District Barkhan of Balochistan province.

"The structure of Jandran X-4 was delineated, drilled and tested using OGDCL's in house expertise. The well was drilled down to the depth of 1200 meter into Parh Limestone," a news release said.

Based on Wireline logs data, successfully DST (Drill Stem Test) was carried out in Mughal Kot Formation wherein the well tested 7.08 Million Standard Cubic Feet Per Day (MMSCFD) gas and 0.55 Barrels Per Day (BPD) condensate with Well Head Flowing Pressure (WHFP) of 1300 Pounds Per Square Inch (PSI) at 32/64" choke size. - APP

## Commissioner for completing floods arrangements

MEHBOOB AHIR

SARGODHA: Commissioner Sargodha Farah Masood has directed the departments concerned to complete all arrangements to tackle expected floods before the start of monsoon season. She was addressing a meeting, called to discuss a plan for dealing with the possible flood hazards, here on Tuesday.

Chief Engineer Canals Chaudhry GhulamMurtaza, Deputy Commissioner Sargodha Naila Baqir, Additional Commissioner Shahbaz Hussain Naqvi, CO Metropolitan Corporation Khaliqad and other officers attended the meeting. She said that a detailed report should be prepared by re-surveying the embankments of rivers, canals and watercourses and ongoing development projects should be completed on time.

The commissioner said that desilting of all watercourses should be done on time while Rescue-1122, Civil Defence and other civil agencies should conduct mock exercises in that regard.

Dr Farah said that machinery, boats, generators and other necessary equipment should be made functional for their use in case of possible floods. She ordered for removal of encroachments on waterways.

Chief Engineer Canals Chaudhry GhulamMurtaza gave a detailed briefing on the ongoing desilting and development works in the zone, the water situation in rivers and barrages and other issues including manpower.

## KP Govt purchases 20 kanals land to preserve Kalash Valley

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government has purchased a 20 kanal of land in the Chitral district to preserve the ancient culture and unique architecture of the world's famous Kalash Valley.

According to the Tourism and Archeology Department of KP, Kalash Valley has archaeological and historical significance and the measures have been taken to preserve its old look and ancient culture.

The canal land each has been acquired for graveyards at Karakal and Bumburate, four kanal for graveyard at Broom Bumburate, four kanal for dancing place at Batrik Bumburate, 1.5 kanal for graveyard at BehalBirir, 0.306 Kanal for dancing place at BehalBirir, 0.335 kanal and two kanal for Kalash Festivals at Balangur and ButhetRumboor respectively, 1.5 kanal for graveyard at Batrik Bumburate, 0.28 kanal at Kalashagram, Rumboor, and 0.16 kanal for Batrik, Bumburate. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan and Cabinet members offering Fataha for martyrs of Palestine during Federal Cabinet meeting. - DNA

## Pakistan, Belarus vow to strengthen bilateral ties

The head of the Belarusian Diplomatic Mission briefed the interlocutor on the state of Belarusian-Pakistani relations, planned bilateral events, as well as inter-parliamentary cooperation between Belarus and Pakistan

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Belarus Andrei Metelista met with Ehsan Tiwana, Chairman of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs of the National Assembly of Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The head of the Belarusian Diplomatic Mission briefed the interlocutor on the state of Belarusian-Pakistani relations, planned bilateral events, as well as inter-parliamentary cooperation between Belarus and Pakistan.

The meeting specially focused on the topic of intensifying contacts between the relevant Parliamentary

commissions of the two countries, including mutual visits at the level of their chairmen.

Due to the fact that Ehsan Tiwana is also a member of the working group of the Pakistani Parliament on agriculture, the Sides discussed options for developing cooperation in this area using parliamentary dimension, primarily for the exchange of experience on legislative regulation of relations in the field of agriculture.

The Sides agreed to maintain working contacts to use the resources of parliamentarians in strengthening bilateral cooperation in various areas. Last month Speaker National Assembly



Asad Qaiser talking to Ambassador of the Republic of Belarus Andrei Metelista, who called on him in Islam-

abad said that multifaceted bilateral parliamentary and economic cooperation between Pakistan and Belarus was a commendable feature of relationship between both the countries.

NA Speaker said that Pakistan strongly desired to further solidify bilateral relations through cooperation in diverse sectors. Asad Qaiser said that legislature of friendly countries played an immensely important role in deepening bilateral relations. He called for active engagement between parliamentarians of Pakistan and Belarus for sharing experiences and views. He suggested that committees of both the legislatures on

agriculture should interact to explore cooperation in agriculture sector. Ambassador of the Republic of Belarus Andrei Metelista said that Belarus also valued high its relations with Pakistan and wanted to further strengthen the existing relation through economic and diplomatic relations. The Ambassador said that Belarus and Pakistan were closely cooperating on the international arena in addressing pressing issues of the global and regional agenda.

He said that establishment of an assembly plant of Belarus Tractor in Pakistan was in process and would start its operations.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi being briefed about the National College of Arts, Lahore, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. - DNA

## DC distributes certificates of appreciation among officers

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ali distributed certificates of appreciation among the administrative and supervisory officers for the successful holding of Ramadan bazaars. The ceremony was held in the committee room of DC office in which ADCs Fazal e Rabi' AfifaShajia' Muhammad Khalid' KhuramPervaiz' Assistant Commissioners Umar Maqbool' Syed AyubBukhari' Faisal Sultan' Numan Ali' Zain ul-Abidein' Muhammad Haidar' Director Labour Malik MunawarAwan' Secretary DRTA ZameerHussain' AOC RiazAnjum and other

supervisory officers were awarded certificates. Deputy Commissioner said that due to the hard working of officers the successful conduct of Ramadan bazaars was being possible and consumers were always provided with standard items at discounted rates and relief from the general market. He said that public confidence in Ramadan bazaars increased day by day which was a clear proof of their success. He hoped that the officers would continue to serve the people with the same diligence and dedication. On the occasion, the officers thanked the Deputy Commissioner for his full encouragement.

184093 people got vaccination

As many as 184093 people have so far been vaccinated against corona at Corona Vaccination Centers in Faisalabad district of which 146502 people have been given first dose and 37591 second dose. District Health Officer Dr. Ata ulMoenum has said that 18611 persons of age 30 to 34 have vaccinated likewise 23961 persons aged 35 to 39, 45997 persons of age 40 to 44 years have vaccinated. 45076 persons aged 45 to 49 years, 91845 persons aged 50 to 59 years, 33878 persons aged 60 to 64 years, 28357 persons of 65 to 69 aged and 30578 of 70 plus age have vaccinated so far. He said that so far 21130 health work-

ers have also been vaccinated against corona and those registered at 17 centers of the district are being vaccinated. He said that implementation of Corona SOPs is also being ensured.

11 shopping malls sealed As many as 11 more shopping malls were sealed yesterday while 7 persons were arrested from public places and fined Rs 63500 for not wearing face masks. In the last 64 days, 2130 shopping malls, plaza, restaurants, wedding halls, private schools, offices and bus stands were sealed and fined Rs. 34.21 million in addition to sealing shops and closing 132 passenger vehicles, 952 people roamed the streets and public places without masks.

## IGP for changing police culture

LAHORE: IGP Punjab Inam Ghani on Tuesday said that crime control and timely solution of citizens' problems by improving the working of police stations was among his top priorities. The Punjab police has declared fiscal year 2021-22 as the year of Police station as all development funds received by the police during this period would be spent on construction and renovation of police stations and provision of modern facilities and resources in them, he added.

He said that a total of 444 police stations across the province including Lahore, Multan, Rawalpindi, Gujranwala and Faisalabad would be converted into special initiative police stations and computers, vehicles besides other electronic equipments as well as provision of all necessary facilities would be given priority. - APP

## Israeli attacks blatant HR violation: CM

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar on Tuesday termed the continuous Israeli attacks on Palestine as a blatant violation of all human rights. In a statement, he said Israel's hands were drenched with the blood of innocent Palestinians. Israel would continue to indulge in similar brutalities if it was not stopped today,

he stressed. Meanwhile, the continuous silence of the international community, over the situation in Palestine, was a big question mark, he said. The defenceless Palestinians had an equal right to live, he added. While the silence of the international community was resulting in human tragedy, the CM said and added that the people and the government of Pakistan had full sympathies towards Palestinians.

## Funeral prayers of martyred cop offered

KARACHI: Funeral prayers of a cop Noman Shah, who martyred during an encounter with robbers early morning Tuesday were offered at Police Headquarters Garden. Senior police officers and officials including IGP Sindh, Additional IGP Karachi and Sindh Education Minister Saeed Ghani also attended the funeral prayers of the martyr, according to spokesperson for Karachi Police. Constable Syed Noman Shah, posted at Sukhan Police Station, was killed in an encounter with robbers at Lath Basti street no. 3. Three alleged robbers were also killed during an exchange of firing while three others managed to escape from the scene.

The martyred constable was 31 years old. He has left behind a widow and three minor sons to mourn his death. Police Constable Syed Noman Shah had joined Karachi Police in 2017. - APP

## Judges visits jail, releases 26 prisoners

SARGODHA: Additional District and Sessions Judge (AD&SJ) Syed AnjumRaza Tuesday visited the district jail Sargodha, along with Civil Judge AzharHumayun, and ordered for releasing 26 prisoners involved in petty crimes. The judges inspected different blocks of the jail and checked food and security arrangements for the prisoners. They also visited the female and children wards in the jail and listened to their problems. They expressed satisfaction over security arrangements. Jail Superintendent Akhtar Iqbal and Deputy Superintendent Allah Ditta were also present.

Three buses impounded District Road Transport Authority (DRTA) on Tuesday impounded 3 vehicles and imposed fine of Rs 15,500 on 13 vehicles owners for violation of corona related SOPs. A spokesman for the department said that DRTA secretary Farooq Haider Aziz checked 60 vehicles during his visit at three bus stands and impounded three buses and challaned 13 vehicles for floating SOPs pertaining to coronavirus. He directed the transporters to ensure strict implementation of corona SOPs at all terminals. - APP

## 9 profiteers arrested

FAISALABAD: Nine profiteers were arrested, another nine were booked and 26 were fined for selling essential items at higher rates in tehsil Saddar areas on Tuesday. According to official sources, a team headed by Assistant Commissioner Saddar Umar Maqbool visited different markets in Thikriwala, Gatwala, Pancherah, Dijkot and other areas and held more than 50 inspections. The team checked prices of mutton, beef and chicken besides fruits and vegetables and took action against shopkeepers. - APP

## CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

FINAL PUBLIC NOTICE  
(Non - Compliant Agro Farms)

Agro Farming schemes were launched for promoting active farming (Poultry & Vegetable and Orchard) for supply of commodities to the citizens of capital city. For this purpose, lands were allotted / leased. However, with the passage of time, most of the owners of such properties discontinued with farming and as such committed violations of the terms & conditions of allotments / lease but also Building Regulations of the authority

In this regard, all those farm houses which have been allotted by CDA and are being used in violation of the terms & conditions of the allotment / lease and Building Regulations of the Authority have, time & again, been informed / directed through National Dailies and individual notices and show cause notices for bringing the property in conformity with the permissible usage i.e. either orchard or Poultry & vegetable whatever the case may be and removal of excessive constructed building areas. In this regard, recently on February 28, 2021 public notice was also served in leading newspapers followed by service of individual notices / show cause notices, however, compliance has not been made by those farm house owners who are using their properties violating the rules and regulations of the Authority.

The Authority taking serious note of this non - compliance has decided to take stern action against all those violators who have failed to comply with the terms & conditions of the allotment / lease and ICT Building Control Regulations - 2020 and further decided to seal the non - compliant properties. Before start of this action, all the violators are finally warned through this public notice to bring their properties in conformity with the permissible usage and covered areas without any delay. This shall be treated as final notice and no further time / notice shall be given in this regard. In case of continued non - compliance, the premises / properties shall not only be sealed at the risk & cost of the owner(s) but allotment / lease would also be cancelled.

(Faisal Naem)  
Director Building Control - I

PID (I) No.6241/20

## Attacks in Gaza, result of Arab rulers' compromise

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: A senior Pakistani analyst and professor of international relations criticizing the US silence on Zionist aggression said that what is happening in Gaza today is the result of compromise of Arab rulers with Tel Aviv.

Professor at Institute of Business Administration (IBA) Huma Baqai in an interview with IRNA on Tuesday said the implication of so-called Abraham Accords is now unfolding because the Arab veto to Zionist action has been practically over. "As a result, Israel has committed human rights

violations, international law violations, human rights abuses, and violence on Palestinian people," Baqai said. The scholar went on to say the silence from the US is questionable and US President Joe Biden once again said that it is about right of self-defense, ignoring the fact that it is initiated by Israel who violates all international laws. Baqai added that targeting the tower of foreign journalists in Palestine was another attempt made by Zionist regime to show how little it cares about international red lines, be it how it treats the Palestinian people or what is on Palestinian land. "What is different this time

is the international reaction: the protest against what is happening to Palestinians and what is being done by Israeli forces in Palestine," she said. The professor said the excessive use of uncalculated force is being protested in European capitals, the US and even inside Zionist regime, it is dividing the Israeli people themselves; and of course, the protests are happening in the entire Muslim World; it is quite heartening that this time the people are protesting against the Zionist violence around the globe. She said the reaction from Hamas and the Iranian support for Hamas and the

Palestinians must be giving cold feet to Zionist rulers. "It is a fact that social media channels have been shut down in Zionist regime and people taking flights out of Zionist regime," she said. Baqai in her views said that the rockets are nothing as compared to Zionist brutalities against Palestine, but it shows the resistance of oppressed people of Palestine. "I hope the international community and civil society is mobilized enough to come with a solution where they asked Israelis to vacate Palestinian territories," she noted. The occupying Zionist forces started their brutal attacks and aggression in the Gaza Strip on Monday.

## Briefs

### Seven anti-social elements arrested

FAISAL MUNIR

ATTOCK: Attock City police have arrested seven anti-social elements from a brothel situated in Dar u Salaam Colony Attock. All have been booked under the act and have been sent behind the bars. Those arrested include Allah Dad r/o Rawalpindi, Tahira Syeda r/o Awan Sharif, Tariq r/o Saidan, Salma r/o Mirza, Robina Bibi r/o Rawalpindi, Zakiya Bibi and Farzana both r/o District Jhang.

### Traders demand to reopen wedding halls, hotels

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Trade bodies of the city on Tuesday have demanded the government to allow permission for the reopening of hotels, restaurants and wedding halls under the strict standard operating procedure and precautionary measures. President Markazi Anjuman Tajran Punjab, Sharjeel Mir while talking to APP said that as the government has permitted businesses to work "why govt banned other businesses associated with the tourism sector to operate, he questioned. Lauding the role of administration for controlling COVID-19 spread during Eid Holidays, President Hotel and Restaurant Association Sain Ijaz urged the government to lift the ban on holding functions in wedding halls and restaurants. He said that the hotel industry was badly affected due to continued lockdown and was facing an unadorned financial crisis. Ijaz said that people attached to the tourism sector and hotel industry and further closure of their outlets would lead to an increase in poverty and unemployment.

### One died six injured in road accident

FAISAL MUNIR

ATTOCK: A woman died while six (a man, two women and three children) received multiple injuries when the speedy rickshaw they were traveling by turned turtle on Attock Basal road in Kala-Chitta hills. The ambulances of Rescue 1122 Attock shifted the dead and injured to DHQ Hospital Attock. Meanwhile Regional Emergency Officer Dr. Abdul Rehman visited Rescue 1122 Office Attock where he was received by District Emergency Officer Attock Dr. Ashfaq Mian and briefed him about the facilities being provided to the people in emergency.

### FBR launches software for electronic tax audits

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has launched the software of electronic hearing of tax audit and assessment cases to facilitate the taxpayers. This has been done by enabling and functionalizing the e-Hearings module in the Iris. The module enables online hearing both from the dedicated hearing rooms established in the field formations and from the places of the taxpayers. Such e-Hearings would be recorded and archived for further legal and administrative utilization. In the first phase, the module has been launched and tested in LTO Islamabad, RTO Rawalpindi, RTO Faisalabad and RTO Peshawar wherein online e-Hearings through the dedicated e-Hearing Rooms and from the places of the taxpayers, have been enabled.



ISLAMABAD: Members of civil society showing solidarity with Palestine during their visit to Palestine embassy. – DNA

## Businessmen discuss pharma industry challenges

Chain Pharmacy businessman have set up an exemplary institutions to improve their business and are providing better services to the people and will continue to play their effective role in providing better medical services to the people

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A meeting of business man associated with the Chain pharmacy from across the country was held in Lahore, which was attended by all the concerned person. In this meeting issues related to business of retail pharmacy was discussed and future course of action was also finalized. The office bearers were also elected unanimously. Mehboob Ahmed Clinics Lahore as President, Zahid Bakhtawari D Watson pharmacy as General secretary, Arjumand Maqsood Mehmood Pharmacy Lahore as a Senior Vice President and Tariq Mehmood Shaheen Chemist as a Vice President, and Zain Maqsood as a Media Coordinator will run



the affairs of chain pharmacy association. It was discussed that Chain Pharmacy businessman have set up an exemplary institutions to improve their business and are providing better services to the people and will continue to play their effective role in providing better medical

services to the people. In this regard A strategy to resolve the related issues were also made and the elected officials will also hold meetings with the pharmaceutical companies. It was also noted that all the health workers is given front line status but pharmacy staff which struggle 24hours

has not been recognized as front line workers and this is the dilemma of our system. Also present at the meeting were Kamran Khan Sobi green pharmacy, Bilal Maqsood Mehmood pharma, Atiq-ur-Rehman from Green Plus Lahore Pharmacy Syed Usman from Farooq CSH

Pharma, Zafar Bakhtawari and Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari from D Watson Group of Pharmacies Ali Farooq, Hamza Farooq mehmood pharma, Tahir Abbas from Survaid Lahore pharma, Haroon Sheikh survaid and Taimur Sheikh from Fazzal din pharma Lahore attended the meeting.

## Int'l Museum Day observed globally with full spirit

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: International Museum Day 2021 on Tuesday observed across the globe including Pakistan with the theme "The Future of Museums: Recover and Reimagine". The objective of the day is to raise awareness about the fact that, "Museums are an important means of cultural exchange, enrichment of cultures and development of mutual understanding, cooperation and peace among peoples." National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage (NIFTH) and other provincial archeological departments have organized online seminars

to celebrate the day. Executive Director, Lok Virsa Talha Ali said NIFTH is trying to inculcate awareness among museum professionals and younger generation about the cultural heritage of the country. Alberto Garlandini President, ICOM in a message on International Museum Day said that today, May 18th, museums and communities from all over the world are coming together to celebrate the International Museum Day and address the 2021 theme "The Future of Museums: Recover and Reimagine". "Through its 44 years of history, the Museum Day has become an extraordinary occasion to advocate for the

role of museums in society" he said. He said this year, the Museum Day comes at a pivotal moment, adding that the Covid-19 pandemic is still storming in many countries around the globe. "While some museums have reopened with major limitations, many others stay closed" he said. He said our sector is going through the most serious crisis in modern times, with severe economic, social and psychological repercussions. He said "we can glimpse the end of the tunnel, but incertitude remains great and big challenges still lie ahead". "In a scenario marked by the crisis of mass tourism, fewer resources, and

persistent sanitary restrictions, many museums have to reconsider their business models and redefine their social and educational role", he added. "On this Museum Day, ICOM sends a powerful message: museums are bridges between people and cultures, museums promote participation and diversity, museums innovate and experiment to respond to the social, economic and environmental challenges of our troubled present" he added. He said "on behalf of ICOM, I invite museums, communities, cultural institutions, and governments to act together and reimagine together the museum of the future".

## Waqar's efforts being recognized

ISLAMABAD: The owner of the world's largest cryptocurrency exchange, followed Waqar Zaka on Twitter. Waqar Zaka is the only Pakistani crypto expert whose services and skills were followed by Changpeng Zhao. As well as being the first person to introduce the word crypto in Pakistan, Waqar Zaka has also been honored to be the first Pakistani to be followed by the owner of the world's largest crypto exchange, Changpeng Zhao on Twitter. There are a total of 2.3 million followers and he himself follows 1671 people, most of whom are people who specialize in cryptocurrencies from different countries. Waqar has developed Pakistan's first digital currency, TenUp.IO. He also attends international conferences on cryptocurrency and blockchain as an expert. He is also a member of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Corruption Committee and the government occasionally seeks his opinion. Given Waqar Zaka's background, Changpeng Zhao has now started following him on social media platforms. – DNA



## AIOU commences 'books mailing process'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) is commencing the process of mailing of books today for the students enrolled in intermediate programs offered in spring 2021 semester. According to the admission department, the process of mailing of books for matriculation programs, offered in spring 2021 semester, was completed before the commencement of Eid ul Fitr holidays. The students enrolled in these programs are required to

contact their nearby post office or AIOU regional center in case they do not receive course books within the due time period. Moreover, university has also uploaded PDF copies of the course books on the university website to provide academic support to the students enrolled in these programs so that they may begin working on their assignments in time. Provision of online books is, indeed, a testimony of successful realization of digitalization objective of key administrative and academic operations which was initiated two years ago.

## IESCO issues power suspension programme

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Tuesday issued a power suspension programme for Wednesday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different

feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 9:14 AM to 2:00 PM Nogzi, Fazaia 1 & 2, Top City, I-14/3, Feeders From 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM, Mandi Balwal, Sparco, Mansoor Shaheed, Emmar, New Rawat Feeders, From 08:00 AM to 01:00 PM Fazal Ahmed Shaheed, Choa Khalsa Feeders From 6:00 AM to 10:00 AM Club 1 Feeder and surrounding areas.

## RWMC Board to discuss matters

DNA

RAWALPINDI: A meeting of the Board of Directors of Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) was held at RWMC Head Office here Monday with Chairman Col (r) Ajmal Sabir Raja in the chair.

The meeting was attended by the Board members Ghulam Abbas Khan, Jahangir Akhtar Mirza, Zahid Farooq, Dr. Ruhama Gill, Anil Peter and the Company's Secretary Mian Tahir Bashir. The meeting was presented agenda items and made decisions after discussing each item in detail.

While addressing the meeting, the Chairman RWMC said that the Company was determined for the cleanliness in Rawalpindi city and everybody has the responsibility to make and keep the city neat and clean.

He directed for keeping strict check on attendance of workers and added that there would be no compromise on cleanliness. Strict action would be taken against those workers who were found guilty of not performing their duties properly, he expressed.

He said we have to reduce our expenses in compliance with the Prime Minister's austerity policy.

Our first priority is to give a clean environment to the citizens, take their suggestions about cleanliness up to the citizens' satisfaction as our ultimate goal, he said and added that all out resources would be utilized to get the destiny of Clean and Green Pakistan without any compromise.

Providing neat and clean environment to the citizens is our utmost responsibility and there will be no compromise on the matter. Rawalpindi will soon be made one of the cleanest city of Punjab through dedicated efforts and excellent performance of the Company's sanitary staff, he concluded.

## Chairman PAL condoles demise of Saleem Raz

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Yousuf Khushk, Chairman, Pakistan Academy of Letters (PAL) has expressed deep sorrow over the demise of renowned Pashto poet, writer and intellectual Saleem Raz. In his condolence message, he said that Saleem Raz was a fearless intellectual of progressive thinking. He remained attached to his ideals and progressive ideologies till his death. He always spoke out against class oppression and injustice. Among his most important works are "Tanqeedi Karkhe" (Pashto prose) and a collection of poems "Lehza Lehza Qatleam". He said that "Khushal Khan Khattak Award" was also presented to Saleem Raz by the PAL. He said that with the demise of Saleem Raz, Pashto literature has lost an important writer.

Dr. Yousuf Khushk, Chairman, PAL prayed that Allah Almighty grant him a high position in Paradise to the late and may He grant patience to those who are left behind. – APP

## Around 193,393 people get Covid-19 jabs

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: As many as 193,393 people including senior citizens have contracted themselves vaccinated against the lethal coronavirus (COVID-19) from 22 centers operating across the district since the vaccination administering drive launched on March 10. District Health Officer (DHO) Dr. Jawad Zahid told APP, that the vaccination drive is being carried out simultaneously at different centers. Sharing details, he said as many 141,488 people had been inoculated the vaccine in Tehsil Rawalpindi, 16,798 in Taxila, 16,132 in Gujjar Khan, 7,583 in Kalara Syedan, 6,968 in Kahuta, 3,166 in Murree and 1267 received the shot at tehsil Kotli.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Privatization Mohammed Mian Soomro called ex-state minister, Chairman Board of Investment and Senior Partner of Alcalde & Fay (Virginia) Umar Ahmed Human. – DNA

## Briefs

## Karamatullah Khan appointed DG DGII-IR

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Federal board of Revenue (FBR) has appointed Karamatullah Khan Chaudhry, a BS-21 officer of Inland Revenue (IR) Services as Director General, Directorate General of Intelligence and Investigation -IR, Islamabad. According to FBR notification issued here Tuesday, Rao Shahzad Akhter Ali Khan, an officer of IR Service has appointed as Deputy Commissioner-IR (BS-19 on regular basis), RTO, Lahore. He has relinquished the charge of the post Deputy Commissioner-IR (BS-18), Regional Tax Office, Lahore and assumed the charge of the post.

## Residents asked to remain alert

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Commissioner Rawalpindi Syed Gulzar Hussain Shah asked the residents to strictly follow Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) related to business activities to ensure safe working conditions. Chairing a meeting to review anti-C arrangements here Tuesday, he said though COVID-19 cases had witnessed a sharp fall during Eid holidays due to timely measures taken by the government, there is a need to remain alert as the 3rd wave of COVID-19 spread not ended. On the occasion, District Health Authority briefed the meeting that 192 more C positive cases were reported during the last 24 hours included 180 from Rawalpindi and 12 from other districts. Among the new cases, 52 reported from Rawal town, 53 from Potohar town, 59 from Rawalpindi Cantt, 6 Gujjar Khan, 5 Taxila 4 Murree, 3 Islamabad, 3 Chakwal, 3 AJK and one each from Kotlissattian, Attock, Jehlum and Lahore. "Presently 91 confirmed patients were admitted to various city facilities, counting 10 in Holy Family Hospital, 9 in Benazir Bhutto Hospital, 47 in Institute of Urology, 24 in Fauji Foundation Hospital and one in Hearts International and one in Akhtar Rukhsana Memorial hospital while 3 people lost their battle of life during the last 24 hours " the meeting was briefed. The Commissioner said that the government was adopting all protective measures to fight the pandemic and committed to providing the best health care facilities to the residents at their doorstep. Gulzar renewed his pledge that no negligence would be tolerated in ensuring the standard operating procedures (SOPs) aimed to effectively control the prevailing wave of coronavirus pandemic.

## Public lambasts Maryam for holding gathering

ISLAMABAD: People from different walks of life have condemned the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) Leadership specially Maryam Nawaz Sharif for holding procession at Sheikhupura and violating the standard operating procedures (SOPs) set by the government against deadly Coronavirus. "A large number of people were called by PML-N at Javed Latif's residence by violating the SOPs to prevent COVID-19 and that behavior showed that Maryam Nawaz Sharif was playing with the lives of the citizens of the Sheikhupura for her personal interests," said a resident of Sector I-8/4 Haji Ghulam Muhammad while talking to APP. He said it's a crime which was done by a political leader Maryam Nawaz and gave the wrong message to the people by holding a procession. "At one hand, per day deaths and infections are increasing and people are dying and the Indian variant is ravaging human lives magnanimously in the region which should be taken seriously," he added. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Minister of state and Parliamentary Secretary of Religious Affairs Aftab Jehangir in a meeting with Ambassador of the State of Palestine to Pakistan, Ahmed Ameen Rabei at Embassy of Palestine. - DNA

## Pak for resilience against increasing GLOF threat

The SAPM said the country was among the top 10 vulnerable countries due to climate change as it was facing the adverse impacts of environmental degradation in the shape of recurring phenomenon of natural disasters

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam on Tuesday said Pakistan was enhancing its resilience against glacial lake outburst flood risk in its Northern Areas due to melting of the glaciers with rising increase in temperature. The SAPM said the country was among the top 10 vulnerable countries due to climate change as it was facing the adverse impacts of environmental degradation in the shape of recurring phenomenon

of natural disasters.

Amin in a video message explained the risk level of the country amid glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF) events and the mitigation measures to reduce damage and destruction caused to the local communities and infrastructure. He said, "The country possesses the third largest reserve of fresh water in the Northern Areas which is referred as the third pole globally." The glacial lakes, he said were formed due to rapidly melting glaciers mainly because of rising temperature amid global warming. "The glacial lakes formed in the



Northern Areas have increased five times. From just 30 in 2015, within just three years in 2018 there have been 150 glacial lakes formed in the North," Amin told. He said keeping in view the GLOF risk a US\$40 million UN

funded project was launched to install early warning systems which was aimed to educate and aware masses about the glacial melting induced floods and preparation to ensure safe evacuation and less damage to both humans and infrastructure. While elaborating the GLOF phenomenon, Amin said once temperature rises in the Northern Areas at the onset of summer season, the glacial lakes were formed into the giant glaciers with increase in melting of snow. As a result, the snow and water mixture in the shape of a mountain tsunami flows down like a stream as the

glacial lake pushes the glacier downward causing serious flooding in the region, he added. The early warning systems, he said would predict the happening of GLOF phenomenon and would help local masses to take preemptive measures for preventing massive damage and destruction. "We are also developing GLOF resilient infrastructure in the vulnerable region that would help to preserve roads and bridges during glacial flooding," the SAPM informed. Amin said the country was developing its resilience against GLOF for a sustainable and climate safe future.

## RCCI urges Finance Minister for Budget Consultations

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) President Mohammad Nasir Mirza has urged Finance Minister Shaukat Tareen to increase consultations with the business community for the upcoming budget 2021-2022. In a statement, RCCI President Nasir Mirza said that the business community has high hopes for the Finance Minister as Tarin is an experienced man and we are hopeful that his policies would help stabilize the country's economy and restore the confidence of the business community. He said that a comprehensive budget proposal was prepared on the occasion of the International Chambers Summit (ICS 2021) organized by the Rawalpindi Chamber. These suggestions should be included in the budget, he added. Former President and group leader Sohail Altaf said that all the former finance ministers have not been able to get good results due to lack of consultation with the business community. There was a disconnect between the business community and the finance ministry. This is the right time to intensify consultation with the business community for the upcoming budget, he emphasized. We need constructive and comprehensive policies to put the economy on the right path rather than making new experiences or trying new things, he added. - DNA

## KFUPM Post-Doctoral Fellowships announced

ISLAMABAD: The HEC on Tuesday announced the positions for Post-Doctoral Fellowships at King Fahd University of Petroleum & Minerals (KFUPM). The KFUPM is an elite institution of high repute in Saudi Arabia and is the leading engineering university in the region, the official sources told APP. They said that KFUPM is in search of brilliant postdoctoral fellows with distinguished research performance and record. The excellent PhD degree holders, who have obtained their doctoral degrees within the last 3 years, from well ranked reputable universities in the areas including AI, Intelligent Secure Systems Refining & Petrochemicals, Intelligent Manufacturing & Robotics Nanotechnology, Communications Systems and Sensing, Renewable Energy, Advance Materials, Macro/Micro-Economics, Membranes and Water Security, Business Administration, Management, Smart Mobility and Logistics Finance could apply for the opportunity. - APP

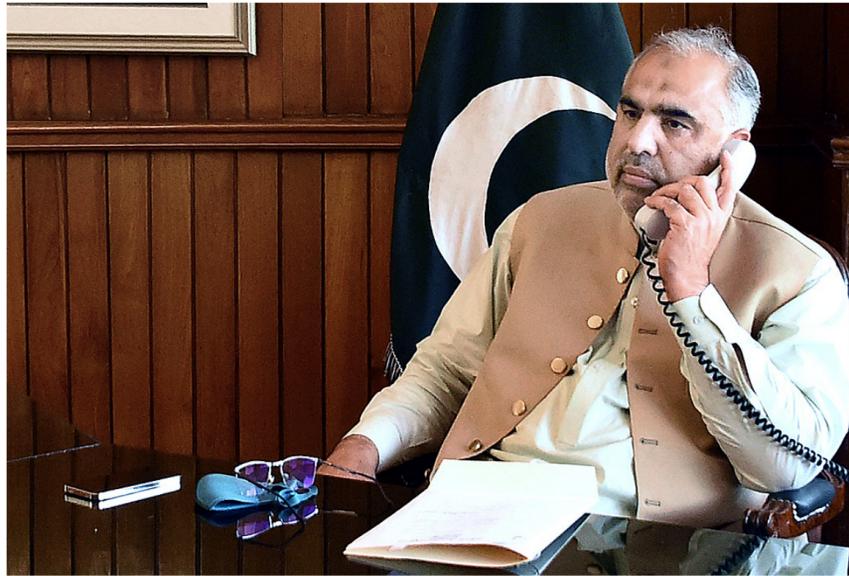
## IWMB's Margalla cleanup drive initiated

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB) under its "My Waste My Responsibility" has lifted 152 trash bags of 10 kg and above during its nine-day long clean up drive launched in Margalla Hills National Park. The IWMB initiated the Clean Up campaign to engage people from all walks of life after irresponsible and negligent attitude of visitors and tourists littering in the National Park jeopardized wildlife and biodiversity, a senior IWMB official told media on Tuesday.

He said the campaign was aimed to educate masses to own one of the most scenic and close to urban proximity National Park proliferating with bird, animal and plant species which irresponsible tourists were polluting by dumping takeaway food wrappers and leftovers. The official underscored that over 300 volunteers including members from the foreign diplomatic community proactively participated in the cleanup campaign and highlighted on social media to urge masses for maintaining cleanliness in the natural environ. He said the masses visiting the National Park shall have to discourage litter-

ing and any other hazardous activity being done in the forest area. "It is a very unique facility they had to cherish in leisure time and enjoy natural peace and tranquility along with maintaining physical health," he added. To a query, he said around 40 to 50 volunteers on average were visiting trails of Margalla Hills National Park to lift waste during the nine-day long drive. He added that the cleanup was carried out on Trail 2, Trail 3, Trail 4, Trail 5 and Trail 6 where the first two of the above mentioned had maximum littered waste due to its close proximity to Daman-e-Koh view point and restaurants.



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaiser in a telephonic call with Speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly of Iran Mohammad Bagher Ghslifab. - DNA

## Opp. requisitions Senate session to condemn Israel

"Pakistan has always condemned Israel's use of disproportionate force and its deliberate policy of expanding illegal settlements forcing Palestinians to leave their homes but these recent Israeli hostilities are the worst that this territory has seen since the 2014 war

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Speaking about the requisition for an extraordinary session of the Senate of Pakistan to condemn Israel's systematic assault against Palestinian worshippers in the Haram-al-Sharif during the holy month of Ramzan, PPP Parliamentary Leader in the Senate, Senator Sherry Rehman said, "The motion for the requisitioned session of the Senate which was signed by 49 opposition Senators, demands an end to Israeli state terrorism and murderous attacks on Gaza, as well as the ongoing

violent and illegal occupation of Palestinian lands in the worst example of settler colonialism." "Pakistan has always condemned Israel's use of disproportionate force and its deliberate policy of expanding illegal settlements forcing Palestinians to leave their homes but these recent Israeli hostilities are the worst that this territory has seen since the 2014 war. Their security forces raided the mosque multiple times and used tear gas, stun grenades and rubber-coated steel bullets to disperse worshippers at the mosque. At least 212 Palestinians have



been killed in hundreds of airstrikes in Gaza, including 61 children and 37 women. About 34,000 Palestinians have been displaced

from their homes. There can be no normalization of Israel's actions which are a clear violation of international humanitarian laws; it must be held accountable for its one-sided aggression," she added. She said, "Since there is no temporary truce, the medics in Gaza do not even have time to recover people from under collapsed buildings. The health care system in Gaza was already struggling because of the surge in Coronavirus infections and now it is overwhelmed with the wounded. At this point Israel is deliberately targeting health facilities with air strikes, and bombing the roads

surrounding al-Shifa, the largest medical Centre in the Gaza Strip." "It is important to do more than just issue statements that condemn Israel's aggression, and this session should also serve as an important opportunity to share strategies that could lead to a just peace. Like always, Pakistan continues to stand with Palestine and support the people in their struggle. Unfortunately so far whatever we have done has not been enough so we all must come together to find the path to ending this historic injustice," concluded Vice President PPPP Senator Sherry Rehman.

## Conference on Digital Futures on Thursday

DNA

ISLAMABAD: National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) School of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science (SECS) is arranging an International Conference on Digital Futures and Transformative Technologies (ICoDT2) from May 20-22. ICoDT2 2021 will provide an excellent international forum for sharing knowledge and results in theory, methodology and applications of Intelligence Systems. The aim of the Conference was to provide a platform for researchers and practitioners from both academia as well as industry to meet and share cutting-edge development in the field. Due to the third wave of COVID-19 and in the interest of the research community, it is decided to move the conference online while trying to preserve as much of the real-life experience as possible. Participants and presenters will be able to attend the presentations, have live question and answer and attend other live events associated with the conference online using CISCO WebEx events. The virtual conference will have 12 sessions and invited talks by renowned national and international speakers. The participants can register for free at <https://forms.gle/pWy8CdhfHGfL67fx7> They can get more information through visiting <http://icodt2.seecs.edu.pk/>

## Telehealth platforms established to provide healthcare

ISLAMABAD: Telehealth platforms have been established to provide virtual healthcare advice during Covid-19 pandemic, said a report issued by Ministry of human Rights titled "Covid and Human Rights". According to report, mental health service was an underserved area in the country and had received limited attention at the national level even during COVID-19. A rigorous public service messages campaign had been launched on all media outlets. TV channels have frequent advertisements explaining the standard operating procedures (SOPs) and mobile dial-tones have also changed to recordings of messages with reiteration of COVID-19 precaution measures. The Sindh government launched counseling a psychosocial support services, with support of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), during COVID-19 emergency which could be reached on helpline 1093, web page COVIDPSS. PK and community-based psycho-social support mobile app on android and IOS. A telehealth dashboard has also been prepared on which doctors in Pakistan can sign up to volunteer their time for consultations after verification. In Punjab, a telecommunication company, was working with the Minister's Delivery Unit (MDU), Punjab Health Department, and Mind Organization, a non-profit mental health care provider, to launch a COVID-19 mental well-being helpline titled the Mental Health Portal or ZehniSehat Helpline. - APP

## NTC senior director passes away

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: National Telecommunication Corporations (NTC) lost its Senior Director Muhammad Umer Farooq who passed away after seven-month's battle with multiple organ dysfunction. His Namaz-e-Janazah was offered in Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi which was attended by a large numbers of NTC and Arid University employees. Later on, he was buried in his native village in Dera Ghazi Khan. Umer Farooq survived by his wife and three children. NTC management expressed great sorrow and grief and extended heartfelt condolences to his family. Talking to the family members, Managing Director NTC Miraj Gul said: "Umer Farooq remained a dutiful, hardworking and honest officer throughout his career, his death is a great loss, we greatly value the services of Umer Farooq for the Corporation."

## Pak-US ties

**P**AKISTAN and the US have a long history of mutual friendship and have been close allies since the 1950s for the most part, together playing a role in many regional developments most notably in Afghanistan. Since the Biden government assumed power in Washington in January this year, there seems however to have been some loss of warmth, with few overtures made by the US to Pakistan. The decision by a Pakistan court to order the release of Omar Saeed Sheikh may have been a factor in what appears to be a cool off, with Washington obviously displeased over the freeing of the man who is accused of playing a role in the 2002 murder of Wall Street journalist Daniel Pearl.

Against this background, the telephonic conversation by Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi with Secretary Blinken once again comes as a welcome step. The US secretary of state has in a tweet said his country hopes for a mutually beneficial relationship with Pakistan, while the Pakistan FM has said Pakistan hopes to build a close accord with the US, which would include economic relations and move along the path of Pakistan's commitment to development and peace in the region and elsewhere.

Pakistan needs the US as a partner in its efforts to develop as a nation which is not isolated and is able to play a role at various international forums. We can only hope then that the Biden Administration will show willingness to engage in a relationship with Pakistan which involves no dictation or threat to sovereignty but is based on the recognition that the two countries need to work together for the sake of the region, notably given the situation in Afghanistan. Inevitably, Afghanistan will be a key factor in any ties. Islamabad must also give out signals of its willingness to work with the Biden government, and make it clear to Washington that it wishes to engage in a mutually beneficial relationship. The US hosts a large population of Pakistanis and has many reasons to work closely with Pakistan. Any misunderstandings must then be patched over, and efforts made to rebuild the relationship of the past, without allowing the US to dominate as far as Pakistan's policy decisions go.

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#FreePalestine



## Looking for excuses

**A**FGHANISTAN President Ghani's recent interview in a German publication is a worrying indication that the current political leadership of Kabul has not moved past its narrative of deflecting blame on Pakistan for personal failings. The Taliban have neglected to attend negotiations of their own volition. Kabul has been unable to offer any incentives for the non-state actor to change its mind. And yet somehow, Pakistan shoulders all responsibility for when things go wrong or there is a stalemate. This is unacceptable. For decades, there has been an overstated exaggeration regarding Pakistan's influence on the Taliban. However, as evidenced by our failure to counter TTP's designs from within Afghanistan, there is little Pakistan can do for peace on Afghan soil.

Even if we assume for a second that the claims of Ghani and successive US administrations are entirely true—that the Pakistani leadership and the Taliban are close—realpolitik dictates that the Taliban would look out for themselves above all else.

The real reason as to why the non-state actor has refused to come to the table is also incidentally, the foundational principle for why Pakistan cannot bring the organisation to the negotiation table; the Taliban is not coming because it sees a strategic gain from holding off on dialogue.

The situation in Afghanistan remains bleak. The fighting only paused momentarily for Eid but has since continued. There are still fears of whether the defence forces of the country will be able to hold their own when the US leaves.

If anything, President Ghani must try and get his allies in the US and other developed countries to use the threat of cutting developmental aid to the future government if all parties do not negotiate. Whoever wins on the battlefield will then have to run the country as well. For that, outside support is essential since the Afghan economy is in tatters. This is the real point of pressure that can be applied. The US and its allies in Kabul would do well remember that Pakistan has successfully staved off terrorism—the only threat we have is from Afghanistan still. Why would Pakistan not want this cycle of violence to end?

# Contemporary challenges, opportunities in Asia Pacific

Khalid Taimur Akram



The Asia Pacific region is encircled with both complexities and opportunities. Therefore, to understand the nature of challenges and existing potential in the wider region, examining the global politics in this multipolar world is highly significant

**T**HE 21st century is the most revolutionary age in history. The pace and scope of the transformation have never been this great. However, the world is also facing complexities. Therefore, it is important to take full account of the complex balance sheet involving challenges and opportunities to access different aspects of International Relations in the Asia Pacific region. The Asia-Pacific is one of the most important regions globally, covering a substantial amount of its landmass, number of people, and share of economic activity. The region is comprised of the countries which are emerging economies. However, the emerging challenges in the region, i.e., rising non-traditional security (NTS) threats, are vital to examine in changing dynamics of the world. In this aspect, the article highlights the challenges in the Asia Pacific region. The study also provides the way forward in curtailing the common challenges with multi-

lateral cooperation under the framework of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Moreover, the article also elaborates on the existing opportunities in the Asia Pacific region in the context of global politics.

### Explaining the Regional Contours:

The Asia Pacific region is encircled with both complexities and opportunities. Therefore, to understand the nature of challenges and existing potential in the wider region, examining the global politics in this multipolar world is highly significant. While analyzing the historical perspective, it is evident that the era after the cold war brought many changes. The liberal framework vis-à-vis peace was considered the most efficient and universal blueprint to 'repair' or 'reconstruct' post-conflict societies. The model or established framework focused on building up neo-liberal state institutions, economies, and societies that resembled the Western ones. From the 1990s, liberal peace started to be criticized with the movement of the 'peace from below'. A new model was discussed, which was the 'post-liberal peace model'. The model defied the neo-liberal, top-down Western-based programs which fail to build sustainable peace. It aimed to prevent the issue of externally-imposed peacebuilding emanated from the local realities and needs. Moreover, it also redefined the link between international organizations (intervening for peacebuilding) and the local societies affected by the conflicts. However, it created legitimacy issues. Post-liberal peace, or more precisely hybridity, is increasingly used in peacebuilding and is already criticized. It becomes a dynamic interaction made of opposition, resistance and adaptation, cooperation and compromise. In recent years, the liberal international economic order has been facing legitimacy challenges. The ongoing deadly pandemic of Covid-19, amid the looming non-traditional security threats both require multilateral interventions, arrived when the established liberal international order had already been facing severe strains.

For local and international peacebuilding, developing mutual consensus is significant. It requires the prominent role of the international or regional organizations working for conflict resolutions or peacebuilding under global politics. However, under the neo-liberal world order, the legitimacy of states has been challenged. Therefore, it has been criticized by a significant number of regional and international players in order to create peace in this multipolar world order through respect, legitimacy, and sovereignty. The Asia Pacific regional states are facing severe challenges. The threats range from regional conflicts, internal disputes, and emerging non-traditional security challenges (Climate change, rising sea level, pandemic, etc).

### Contemporary Challenges in the Asia Pacific Region: An Overview

No state is immune from the devastating impacts of rising non-traditional security challenges (NTS), including hybrid warfare, transnational crimes, cross-border environmental degradation, food insecurity, climate change, rising temperature, infectious diseases, drug trafficking, human smuggling, etc. In the changing dynamics of the world, these threats are causing serious risks on the na-

tional security pillars of countries. These common global threats call for global solutions. The consequences of environmental threats are associated with the non-conventional nature of the security paradigm. In this aspect, the countries of the Asia Pacific regions are also facing repercussions due to these non-conventional security perils.

In the book '2020 world of war', the authors' Paul Cornish and Kingsley Donaldson argued that an absence of national strategy leaves governments in an entirely reactive position in the current complex operating environment. It has become far more complex because of the recent environmental issues, cybersecurity to rapid industrialization, and development in weapon technology. In recent times, security exists in a world of changing climate, mass migrations, resource issues, risks on the healthcare system, and financial security. Post-realistic, Unlike the traditional realists, do include the environment as an important security concern. Therefore, the economic foundation of a country has its effect on the economy. Considering the economy as a pillar of national security, it is vital that environmental hazards have negative implications on the economy as it slows the pace of growth, hamper social cohesion and destabilize the political structure. Under these assertions, the Asia Pacific regional countries are more inclined towards cooperation in countering these perils. The Governments must examine the consequences of environmental issues on security and socio-economic fabrics more closely. In this aspect, Track-II diplomacy can also play a substantial role.

Track-II diplomacy mechanisms bring academics and other interested parties together in a non-official, non-governmental capacity to discuss relevant issues. These meetings help generate awareness, innovative ideas, and approaches to security concerns, build confidence and create understandings and commitments. The transboundary and non-military character of NTS issues has compelled states across the region to seek deeper and more substantial levels of security integration. In this regard, the Committee on Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) play a significant role as the primary Track II vehicles. Under the ASEAN framework, the Asia Pacific countries can formulate an integrated mechanism to counter these common menaces. ASEAN has a pivotal role in the Asia Pacific region, and due to its effective role, the regional cooperation among countries is experiencing a positive transformation.

### Pivotal Role of ASEAN in the Asia Pacific Regional Cooperation

ASEAN is substantially contributing to the socio-economic development of Asia Pacific region countries and enhancing multilateral cooperation. Apart from the regional economic, social and cultural development, ASEAN has an ambitious agenda to promote regional peace and stability by adhering to justice and the rule of law in the inter-state relationships in the region. In its more than 40 years of history, ASEAN has steadily progressed in internal economic integration. In 2003, the ASEAN leaders established an ASEAN integrated community comprising three pillars: security community, economic community,

and sociocultural community. In this aspect, it can be seen that the ASEAN countries are inclined towards resolving their internal disputes, combating NTS threats vis-à-vis cooperation under the ASEAN framework, and contributing to the stability of the Asia Pacific region.

Indonesia is the major economic power in the ASEAN region. Moreover, it has been assisting other states in resolving their conflicts. Within ASEAN, Indonesia enjoys the limelight as a new focus. In recent years, China's engagement with ASEAN has increased manifold. Both are linked via multilateral frameworks, institutional involvements, constructive engagements, and aid projects. Moreover, the ASEAN countries are directly part of the BRI and Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) projects. Therefore, the full inclusion of China as a member state in ASEAN would be beneficial for the region and all parties involved. Pakistan has the status of Sectoral Dialogue Partner (SDP) in ASEAN. Indonesia has been helping Pakistan to attain the status of a full dialogue partner in the organization. The relationship between Indonesia and Pakistan has marked significant progress in recent times. The valuable asset of the relation is that the ASEAN countries are convinced of Pakistan's sincere intentions to engage fruitfully with the region. In this aspect, ASEAN-Pakistan Joint Sectoral Committee works effectively to seek deeper association with the Asia Pacific region and ASEAN countries.

### Opportunities in Asia Pacific Region in the Context of Global Politics

The Asia Pacific region has experienced important economic development progress since the formulation of strategy 2020. In a book, 'Why Nations Fail', the authors' Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson analyzed how nations or societies failed to get prosperity. They stated that the economy is a major pillar for any society to grow internationally and secure. Countries differ in their economic structures and progressive patterns because of their different institutions. In this aspect, the role of institutions is necessary to examine the economic rules and incentives that motivate people. They concluded that the role of "Extractive and Inclusive political institutions" is vital that in the failure of any state.

Under these assertions, it can be clearly understood that the role of institutions in the Asia Pacific for regional cooperation and constructive regional engagement is highly significant. In this regard, the region has exceptional potential for sustainable growth and strategic alliance building while having a rising economy, i.e., Indonesia, and effective regional organizations such as ASEAN and Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The Asia Pacific regional countries are amid non-traditional security challenges. However, they also work collectively to resolve their internal disputes and combat emerging non-traditional security threats. These common menaces require global solutions. Therefore, ASEAN countries integrate under their consolidated pillars to promote peace, strengthen maritime security, build nations' resilience, and tackle common threats.

—The writer is the Executive Director, Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad

# US-Israel alliance criminally on Palestinian genocide

Munir Ahmed



49 Palestinians were killed in the enclave, the highest single-day figure since Monday. Seven people have been killed in Israel: a soldier patrolling the Gaza border, five Israeli civilians, including two children, and an Indian worker

**G**AZA conflict intensified on Friday as the Israeli land forces joined the airstrikes, the news agency Reuters reported. Six days of severe cross-border fighting showed no sign of abating on Saturday, while Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the campaign "will take more time" to deal with Gaza's ruling Hamas group with "iron fist" before any ceasefire.

The news agency reported that "violence has also spread to mixed communities of Jews and Arabs in Israel, a new front in the long conflict. Synagogues were attacked and fighting broke out on the streets of some towns, prompting Israel's president to warn of civil war. At least 215 people have been killed in eight days of air strikes on Gaza, including 58 children and two senior doctors. On Thursday alone, 49 Palestinians were killed in the enclave, the highest single-day figure since Monday. Seven people have been killed in Israel: a soldier patrolling the Gaza border, five Israeli civilians, including two children, and an Indian worker, Israeli authorities said."

The US President Joe Biden called on Thursday for a de-escalation of the violence. On the other hand, the US very callously blocked a public virtual meeting of the UN Security Council scheduled for Friday to address the escalating conflict in the Gaza Strip and Israel. Very hypocritical and criminal move. The open meeting was requested by China, Tunisia and Norway to be held on Friday, but the US said "an open meeting tomorrow will not support these de-escalatory efforts". Instead, the US proposed an open debate on Tuesday – very generously giving time to Israel to deal with the ruling Hamas Group with "iron fist". Israel took the opportunity well to add land strikes on Friday and have done great deal of damage by the filing of this piece.

US – the veto-power – had stopped earlier the UN Security Council joint declaration against the recent Israeli attacks on Gaza on Wednesday. The US, Israel's key ally, was the only opponent to the statement against 14 mem-

bers in a UNSC second emergency meeting on worsening hostilities between Israel and Palestinians, reported the French news agency AFP from the UN quoting diplomats. The meeting was called to deescalate recent tension.

AFP reported, "The United States saw the Security Council meeting as a sufficient show of concern, and did not think a statement would 'help de-escalate' the situation. At this stage, a Council statement would be counterproductive, said one source familiar with discussions, also speaking anonymously."

The same day, Washington's chief diplomat Antony Blinken announced that a US envoy would travel to the Middle East to seek to calm tensions between Israel and the Palestinians. Blinken's statement was taken as a frustrating delay to give enough time to Israel for further air and land strikes on Palestine.

Despite the US delay, as many as four UNSC members from Europe – Norway, Estonia, France and Ireland – issued a joint statement later Wednesday condemning the firing of rockets from Gaza against civilian populations in Israel by Hamas and other militant groups, and termed them totally unacceptable and asked to stop immediately. "The large numbers of civilian casualties, including children, from Israeli airstrikes in Gaza, and of Israeli fatalities from rockets launched from Gaza, are both worrying and unacceptable. We call on Israel to cease settlement activities, demolitions and evictions, including in East Jerusalem."

During a first emergency meeting last Monday, the United States also refused to back a text proposed by Tunisia, Norway and China calling on all parties to refrain from provocation.

The week-long sequence of incidents has once again proved the US-Israel alliance as unholly and criminal against Palestine. Renewed rocket fire and rioting in mixed Jewish-Arab towns has fuelled growing fears that deadly violence between Israel and Palestinians could descend into full-scale war. The US has given ample time

to it. The US has been fueling violence against Palestine for decades now by strengthening Israel with huge strategic, diplomatic, military, technical and financial aid. More recently, in fiscal year 2019, the US provided \$3.8 billion in foreign military aid to Israel. Israel also benefits from about \$8 billion of loan guarantees. Almost all US aid to Israel is now in the form of military assistance, while in the past it also received significant economic assistance. So, the US governments had been openly and evidently involved in a gradual and systematic genocide of Palestinians.

In South Asia, the US practicing the same in Illegally Indian Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IOJ&K) in connivance with India. A country involved in such heinous crimes against humanity should be checked with a joint force. If there could be a NATO force, what stops the making of OIC force? Even a force of a larger bloc, comprising armed forces from all the countries that are against the US hegemonic interventions across the globe. Bipolar world is a dire need of the hour and very imperative for peace and to end the armed conflicts in different parts of the world.

The OIC has condemned Israeli attack on Palestine yet again. Is it enough or the representative organization of the Muslim world should go beyond it? Certainly, the OIC has to take up a unanimous strong action plan for consistent check and monitoring of violence against Muslims across the world. It should also seek support from other friendly countries and those against the US-Israel alliance. Only a strong face of the OIC can serve the objective of peace for Muslims.

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## Briefs

Equestrian  
Usman  
injured during  
Olympic  
qualifier

## SPORTS DESK

KARACHI: Pakistan's top equestrian Usman Khan suffered a critical injury in an incident during Horse Trials CIC-4\* Olympic Games Qualifiers in Australia.

While he received multiple injuries and in under monitoring, his horse 'Kasheer' died during last stages of the qualifier.

According to reports, Usman and the horse fell close to the finish after clearing the last fence. Usman fell so close to the finish line that he wanted to crawl towards it. Kasheer had a rotational fall and landed on his neck. Within 30 seconds the local vet reached. Kasheer sadly died on impact. It must be noted here Usman had qualified for the Tokyo Olympics in 2019 through his partner Azad Kashmir but AK died last year.

EU relaxes  
visa rules...

## From Page 01

"This agreement on a key migration file also shows that, by working together, the EU can equip itself with a future-proof migration system," said the EU official. On the other hand, the EU's Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva Johansson noted that migrant workers make an important contribution to the bloc's economy. But she explained that there was a need to change the law as the EU is heading towards a "shrinking, ageing society". "Today's agreement is a key element of the New Pact on Migration and Asylum that will allow us to normalise our migration policy. New rules will make it easier to work and move within the EU and will recognise the potential of highly skilled workers from diverse backgrounds, including beneficiaries of international protection," remarked Johansson.

## New changes

To obtain an EU Blue Card, the salary threshold will be reduced to between 1 and 1.6 times the average gross annual salary. The new rules will also reduce the minimum duration of a contract of employment to 6 months. The press release said that the changes will also help in facilitating "recognition of professional skills for occupations in the information and communication technologies sector". "Applicants with professional experience equivalent to a higher education qualification in some specific sectors will also be eligible to apply," said the press release.

Under the new rules during the first 12 months, EU Blue Card holders will only need to complete a new labour market test if they wish to change position or employer. "Only after this period, EU Blue Card holders may be subject to an obligation to notify a change in their situation to the relevant national authorities," read the press release.

The statement also said that highly skilled beneficiaries of international protection will be allowed to apply for an EU Blue Card.

The new law also states that the EU will now allow EU Blue Card holders to bring their family to the country they will be working in and also allows them to access the EU labour market.

The new rules also ease up the Intra-EU mobility for the Blue Card holders. Now the cardholders and their family members will be able to move to a second member state based on simplified mobility rules after 12 months of employment in the first country.

"Periods of time spent working in different member states will also be taken into account, facilitating easier access to the EU long-term resident status," said the statement.

Even though the rules have been agreed by the Parliament and the council they still need to be confirmed formally by adopting the EU Blue Card Directive.

"Once the directive is formally adopted, member states will have two years to transpose the rules into national law," said the statement.

Azerbaijan, Belarus set to  
continue co-op in all spheres

DNA

BAKU: President Ilham Aliyev has said that Azerbaijan and Belarus will continue cooperation in military, technical and other spheres.

Receiving the visiting Defense Minister of Belarus Viktor Khrenin on May 18, Aliyev said that the cooperation between the two countries has a long history, adding that Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko's recent visit to Azerbaijan confirmed the strength of these relations.

Aliyev also told Khrenin that Azerbaijan has invited Belarusian companies to participate in the restoration of territories liberated from the Armenian occupation in the last year's war.

"As far as I know, there is already interest in participating in these issues. Also, in the near future, a delegation led by the Minister of Agriculture of Azerbaijan will visit Belarus within the framework of agreements that were reached during the visit of the President."



Furthermore, the president spoke about the destruction and Armenian vandalism in Azerbaijan's formerly-occupied territories.

In turn, Minister Khrenin said that the exchange of visits at a high level always indicates that we have good and excellent

friend and ally, has always played an important role both in the regional and international political arena.

I would like to express our gratitude to you personally for your support on global platforms, for political support first of all for the Republic of Belarus," the minister said.

The 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war ended with the Russia-brokered peace deal signed on November 10 by the Azerbaijani, Russian and Armenian leaders.

The trilateral peace agreement stipulated the return of Azerbaijan's Armenian-occupied Kalbajar, Aghdam and Lachin regions. Before the signing of the deal, the Azerbaijani army had liberated around 300 villages, settlements, city centers and historic Shusha city. The signed agreement obliged Armenia to withdraw its troops from the Azerbaijani lands that it has occupied since early 1990s.

Earlier, President Ilham Aliyev said that companies from friendly countries would be invited to reconstruct Azerbaijan's newly-liberated territories.

interaction and cooperation. He reiterated President Lukashenko's words that "Azerbaijan has reliable support in Central Europe through Belarus, and Belarus through Azerbaijan has reliable friends in the Caucasus."

"Azerbaijan has traditionally been our

UAE govt  
gives green  
signal for  
PSL 6

## SPORTS DESK

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) finally got a green signal from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) government to stage the remaining Pakistan Super League (PSL) season 6 in Abu Dhabi in July.

According to the sources, the UAE government has allowed PCB to stage the remaining PSL 6 in Abu Dhabi. After the confirmation, PCB has raced their efforts to put things in place for the successful completion of the tournament.

The cricket board will release the revised schedule soon once they complete planning on a new budget, production, logistics, bio-secure bubble, and other things. Remember, a British company has already been hired to manage the bio-secure bubble.

Players will undergo COVID-19 testing on Thursday and will gather to enter the bio-secure bubble.



BELARUS: Pakistan ambassador to Belarus Sayed Sajjad Haider met with Yuri Primakov, Director and organizer of the football club Diplomate and discussed promotion of sports ties between both countries. – DNA

US approves release of oldest  
prisoner at Guantanamo

"The Pakistanis want him back, and our understanding is that there are no impediments to his return"

## FOREIGN DESK

WASHINGTON: A 73-year-old from Pakistan who is the oldest prisoner at the Guantanamo Bay detention centre has been notified that he has been approved for release after more than 16 years in custody at the US base in Cuba, his lawyer said.

Saifullah Paracha, who has been held on suspicion of ties to al-Qaeda but never charged with a crime, was cleared by the prisoner review board along with two other men, said Shelby Sullivan-Bennis, who represented him at his hearing in November.

As is customary, the notification on Monday did not provide detailed reasoning for the decision and concluded only that Paracha is "not a continuing threat" to the United States, Sullivan-Bennis said.

It does not mean his release is imminent. But it

is a crucial step before the US government negotiates a repatriation agreement with Pakistan for his return. President Joe Biden's administration has said it is aiming to resume efforts to close the detention centre, a process that former President Donald Trump halted.

Paracha's lawyer said she thinks he will be returned home in the next several months.

"The Pakistanis want him back, and our understanding is that there are no impediments to his return," she said.

A Pentagon spokesman had no immediate comment. The prisoner review board also informed Uthman Abd al-Rahim Uthman, a Yemeni who has been held without charge at Guantanamo since it opened in January 2002, that he had been cleared, according to his lawyer, Beth Jacob, who spoke to him by phone.

"He was happy, relieved and hopeful that this will actually lead to his release," Jacob said.

Paracha, who lived in the US and owned property in New York City, was a wealthy businessman in Pakistan. Authorities alleged he was an al-Qaeda "facilitator" who helped two of the conspirators in the September 11 plot with a financial transaction.

He says he did not know they were al-Qaeda and denies any involvement in terrorism.

The US, which captured Paracha in Thailand in 2003 and has held him at Guantanamo since September 2004, has long asserted that it can hold detainees indefinitely without charge under the international laws of war.

In November, Paracha, who suffers from a number of ailments including diabetes and a heart condition, made his eighth appearance before the review board, which was established under President

Barack Obama to try to prevent the release of prisoners who authorities believed might engage in anti-US hostilities upon their release from Guantanamo.

At the time, his lawyer said he was more optimistic about his prospects because of Biden's election, his ill health and developments in a legal case involving his son, Uzair.

Uzair Paracha was convicted in 2005 in federal court in New York of providing support to terrorism, based in part on testimony from the same witnesses held at Guantanamo whom the US

relied on to justify holding his father. In March 2020, after a judge threw out those witness accounts and the government decided not to seek a new trial, Uzair Paracha was released and sent back to Pakistan.

Saifullah Paracha is one of 40 prisoners still held at Guantanamo, down from a peak of nearly 700 in 2003.

Hockey Wales to  
deliver online session

ISLAMABAD: In an ambitious project to mark the #HockeyInvites Year of the Youth 2021, Hockey Wales are planning to deliver the largest online hockey skills session to take place this year.

The European Youth Session, titled 'United Through Hockey', will be delivered by young people to other hockey-loving young people across the entire European hockey community, International Hockey Federation (FIH) said Tuesday on its website.

The driving force behind the initiative is Hannah Bevan, who is Head of Development for Hockey Wales. She says: "Our aim is to provide our clubs and youth leaders the opportunities to connect with others who share the same passion for hockey across the world and all collaboratively work together to be part of the world's largest online hockey session in December 2021."

Hockey Wales, in partnership with the European Hockey Federation and online platform Scord, will use the power of technology to coach skills to hockey-lov-

ing young people no matter where they are located across the continent. This will not only be a fun, innovative session, it will also overcome geographical and cultural barriers that all too often prevent people engaging in sporting activities.

The project is in its infancy, but the three organisations plan to work in close collaboration to bring as many national associations into the fold as possible.

The project has two focus areas: clubs and workforce. Explaining how the sessions will work, Bevan says: "We will utilise various platforms to connect clubs and young leaders from our country with clubs and other young leaders from across Europe and beyond to inspire and learn from one another, through the common interest of hockey."

"We understand the importance of collaboration and the power of learning and experience that comes from it, therefore we want to facilitate this collaboration for our clubs and young leaders to form an attractive and unique offer for Hockey in Wales. – APP

## Pak, Turkey...

## From Page 01

the situation in the Middle East after tomorrow (May 20).

During his visit to New York in the United States, he would also highlight the stance of Pakistan before the international media on Palestine. In the meeting with the Turkish counterpart, Qureshi told him to observe the Kashmir Solidarity Day on May 21 just to highlight the issue at the global level.

This came at a meeting between Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi and his Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu in Ankara.

Both the foreign ministers met at the Turkish foreign ministry and discussed the peace situation in Palestine. The two Foreign Ministers also decided to jointly raise voice against the Israeli persecution of Palestinians.

Shah Mahmood Qureshi said we will not leave alone our Palestinian brothers. He said the entire Muslim community is in a state of pain due to the Israeli bombardment and the violence against Palestinians during Ramadan-ul-Mubarak and Eid-ul-Fitr.

The Minister said on the direction of Prime Minister Imran Khan, we are observing a day of solidarity with our Palestinian brothers on Friday.

The Turkish Foreign Minister appreciated Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi's address at the OIC's Executive Committee at the level of Foreign Ministers and Pakistan's continuous and robust support to the oppressed Palestinians.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu also hosted a luncheon reception in honor of the foreign minister and his delegation. Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, who arrived in Turkish capital on Prime Minister Imran Khan's directive, on diplomatic mission to support Palestine, resolved that Pakistan would never leave the Palestinian people alone.

Later on Twitter, Foreign Minister Qureshi said, "Nothing can shake our resolve as we stand shoulder to shoulder with the people of Palestine in their legitimate right to self-determination & establishment of independent state with pre-1967 borders & Al Quds Al Shareef as capital."

## Pak to send...

## From Page 01

Later, briefing the media about the decisions taken in the cabinet meeting, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Fawad Chaudhry said PM Imran Khan has provided leadership to the Muslim Ummah from day one on the Palestine issue. This is also recognized by the Muslim Ummah. He said Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah laid the foundation of Pakistan's policy on Palestine and Imran Khan is now trustee of it.

The Information Minister said the Palestinian leadership also acknowledges Pakistan's firm stance on the matter, adding that the nation will observe solidarity day with the Palestinians on Friday.

He said Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi is in Turkey and he along with some other Foreign Ministers of the Muslim countries will go to New York to attend the UN General Assembly session.

Chaudhry went on to say that the cabinet was also briefed about investigation into Rawalpindi Ring Road project. He said the preliminary investigation reveals that the alignment of the project was changed to benefit some housing societies. However, he said, the investigation carried out so far shows that no minister or advisor is involved in it. He said Zulfi Bukhari resigned as Special Assistant on Overseas.

Pakistanis on high moral ground and he has no link with the issue. He said Minister for Aviation Ghulam Sarwar Khan also does not own any land in the area.

Referring to electoral reforms, the Information Minister said the government is committed to introduce electronic voting machines to ensure transparency in elections and give right of vote to overseas Pakistanis. He regretted that the opposition is not serious in electoral reforms and the PML-N and the PPP have not made their position clear on the right to franchise to overseas Pakistanis.

## Quds deserved firm response: Haniyeh

The Hamas chief emphasized that the enemy commits the most barbaric crimes against the people of Gaza with the deadliest internationally-banned weapons every day and carries out the most heinous crimes against the demonstrators in Quds, the West Bank and the 1948 occupied territories

## FOREIGN DESK

TEHRAN: In a letter to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, a senior Hamas leader says Israel's continued acts of aggression against the Palestinian people and their sanctities necessitated a firm response from the resistance movement in Gaza, calling on for joint global efforts to end the regime's atrocities against the Palestinians in Gaza and the occupied territories.

In his new letter to the Leader on Tuesday, Ismail Haniyeh, head of the Hamas Political Bureau, outlined the brutal crimes of the Zionist occupiers against the Sheikh Jarrah neigh-

borhood in East Jerusalem al-Quds, al-Aqsa Mosque, the Gaza Strip and the territories occupied since 1948. Given the intensification of the occupying Israeli regime's acts of aggression against the Palestinian people, we held extensive contacts with various parties, asking them to stop the enemy from advancing its crimes and sinister goals and warning that the Palestinian people and resistance would not let these crimes go unanswered, Haniyeh said.

He added that the insistence of the Zionist regime's criminal leaders on continuing their acts of aggression against the Palestinian nation, land, and sanctities required a decisive and legitimate response through



resistance in the Gaza Strip. The Hamas chief emphasized that the enemy commits the most barbaric crimes against the people of Gaza with the deadliest internationally-banned weapons every day and carries out the most heinous crimes against the demonstrators in Quds, the West Bank and the 1948 occupied territories. In the face of such relent-

less crimes, Haniyeh said, we call for immediate action as well as Arab, Islamic and international mobilization in order to take decisive stances and force the Zionist enemy to stop its aggression against the besieged people in Quds, the inhabitants of Gaza, the al-Aqsa Mosque and the Palestinian worshippers. The blockaded Gaza Strip and the occupied West

Bank have been simmering with rage in the past weeks over the regime's scheme to forcefully and illegally expel dozens of Palestinians from their homes in the volatile Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of the Old City in occupied East Jerusalem al-Quds, and adopt proper measures to stop the acts of aggression being perpetrated by Israeli forces in the holy city.

Meanwhile, five Palestinian resistance groups and movements have written separate letters and messages to the Leader, thanking him for his firm stances on supporting the cause of Palestine, which were expressed in Ayatollah Khamenei's speech on the occasion of International Quds Day.

women, have been killed and 1400 others injured in the Israeli onslaught.

In a message addressed to Ayatollah Khamenei earlier this month, Haniyeh called on the Muslim world to take up a firm stance in support of the residents of the occupied Jerusalem al-Quds, and adopt proper measures to stop the acts of aggression being perpetrated by Israeli forces in the holy city.

Meanwhile, five Palestinian resistance groups and movements have written separate letters and messages to the Leader, thanking him for his firm stances on supporting the cause of Palestine, which were expressed in Ayatollah Khamenei's speech on the occasion of International Quds Day.

## Briefs

Bangladesh  
arrests  
journalist  
for COVID  
reporting

## WEB DESK

DHAKA: The arrest of a female Bangladeshi investigative reporter who wrote scathing stories on the country's response to the coronavirus pandemic has triggered protests by hundreds of reporters.

Rozina Islam, an investigative journalist for Prothom Alo newspaper, the country's largest circulated newspaper, was detained late on Monday under the Official Secrets Act, police said. She appeared in court on Tuesday charged with stealing health ministry documents under the act. A new hearing was set for Thursday.

Islam, known for unearthing government corruption, faces up to 14 years in prison and the death penalty if charged and convicted. Rights groups and media watchdogs say a crackdown on the media has grown during the coronavirus crisis and hundreds of journalists went to the Dhaka police station where the 42-year-old reporter was taken.

The Committee to Protect Journalists called for Islam's immediate release. "We are deeply alarmed that Bangladesh officials detained a journalist and filed a complaint under a draconian colonial-era law that carries ridiculously harsh penalties," said Aliya Iftikhar, CPJ's senior Asia researcher in a statement.

Egypt  
pledges \$500  
million to  
rebuild Gaza

CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi pledged Tuesday \$500 million to help reconstruction efforts in Gaza, his office said, after a week of Israeli air strikes on the Palestinian enclave.

"Egypt will provide \$500 million... for the reconstruction process in the Gaza Strip as a result of recent events, with expert Egyptian construction companies implementing the rebuilding," the presidency said in a statement.

Cairo has sought to mediate a ceasefire between Gaza's Islamist rulers Hamas and Israel since the deadly violence erupted on May 10.

Since then, Israeli air strikes have killed more than 200 Palestinians in Gaza, according to the Hamas-run health ministry. Twelve people have been killed on the Israeli side, according to authorities in the Jewish state.

Sisi is holding talks in Paris with his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron and Jordan's King Abdullah II aimed at seeking a rapid truce to the lethal conflict. Egypt also sent 65 tonnes of medical aid to neighbouring Gaza, its health ministry said. — APP

Vaccine inequity triggers  
'disconnect' between countries

While COVAX has delivered 65 million doses to 124 countries and economies to date, the WHO chief called on manufacturers to publicly commit to sharing their vaccines with COVAX by lifting contractual barriers "within days not months"

NEW YORK: Although coronavirus cases and deaths continue to decline globally for a second consecutive week, the UN health agency chief said Monday that "a huge disconnect" is mounting between some highly vaccinated countries, which see the pandemic as largely resolved, while huge waves of infection continue to grip others where shots are scarce. "The pandemic is a long way from over, and it will not be over anywhere until it's over everywhere", Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) told journalists once more, at the regular press briefing in Geneva.

Tedros pointed to "dramatic increases" in cases, hospitalizations and deaths, in places where the coronavirus had previously been contained and added that new variants, fragile health systems, relaxed public health measures — and shortages of oxygen, dexamethasone and vaccines — were compounding the problem.

"But there are solutions", he said, urging people to adhere to physical distancing, continue to wear masks and avoid large gatherings. "Even where cases have dropped, ge-

netic sequencing is critical so that variants can be tracked and measures are not eased prematurely".

Although WHO has been responding to the surge in India and other flashpoints, immediate additional funding is required to sustain support in all countries experiencing new waves of cases.

The 2021 response plan is already underfunded, and the vast majority of it is "ring fenced" by donors for specific countries or activities, which is constraining WHO's ability to provide "an adaptable and scalable response in emerging hotspots", Tedros said.

Urgent and flexible funding would allow the UN health agency to scale up support for countries and the ACT Accelerator. Meanwhile, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) outlined a 190 million dose shortfall in the UN-backed COVAX vaccine initiative for equitable COVID inoculations.

While COVAX has delivered 65 million doses to 124 countries and economies to date, the WHO chief called on manufacturers to publicly commit to sharing their vaccines with COVAX by lifting contractual barriers "within

days not months". He also pressed manufacturers to give the right of first refusal to COVAX on any additional doses and encouraged them to make deals with companies willing to use their facilities to produce COVID-19 vaccines.

"We need to collectively set ambitious goals to at least vaccinate the world's adult population as quickly as possible", Tedros underscored.

Although pandemic lockdowns and telecommuting has led to fewer car journeys and road crashes, the WHO chief pointed to a converse problem caused by drivers' speeding. This has meant the number of deaths had not decreased proportionately.

Kicking off UN Road Safety Week, Tedros asked for national and local policy commitments "to deliver 30 kilometre per hour speed limits in urban areas and generate local support for low speed measures overall". Addressing the risk of road traffic deaths is also fundamental to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically those affecting health security, sustainable cities and reducing inequalities among and within countries.

And policies that tackle the impact of road traffic, and create environments for safe, sustainable and inclusive transport options, also unlock action for protecting the climate and gender equality.

A paradigm shift in how streets are designed can make streets safer, accessible and equitable for all road users — delivering multiple benefits while accelerating action across interlinking SDGs, according to WHO. Approximately 1.35 million people die each year because of road crashes. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has set an ambitious target of halving the global number of deaths and injuries from road traffic crashes by 2020.

Road traffic crashes cost most countries three per cent of their gross domestic product. More than half of all road traffic deaths are among pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists.

Some 93 per cent of global road fatalities occur in low- and middle-income countries. Road traffic injuries are the leading cause of death for children and young adults aged 5-29 years. — APP



ANKARA: Foreign minister of Pakistan Shah Mehmood Quraishi in a meeting with Turkish counterpart on his way to New York. — DNA

TunisAir first  
foreign carrier  
to resume  
Libya flights

TUNIS: TunisAir announced Tuesday it has resumed flights to Libya, becoming the first foreign carrier to fly the route for seven years in the wake of UN-sponsored peace efforts. Its planes landed Monday in both the capital Tripoli and Benghazi, Libya's second city, the company said, adding that the event was celebrated with hoses firing water arches on arrival. It has scheduled three flights a week to Tripoli and two to Benghazi in eastern Libya.

The Libya Observer tweeted that the first plane landed at Mitiga airport used to serve the capital. TunisAir was also the last foreign airline to suspend flights to Libya in August 2014 because of insecurity. — APP

Myanmar: At least  
802 killed since coup

## FOREIGN DESK

JAKARTA: Myanmar's military junta has killed six more people in the country, raising the death toll in protests against the Feb. 1 coup to 802, according to a local monitoring group.

The military has detained at least 4,120 people so far, with 92 of them having been convicted, the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) said in an update late on Monday.

Junta forces used "civilian vehicles to crash into protesters, leaving many injured" in Dawei town in the Tanintharyi Region. Seven civilians were also arrested and one shot with a rubber bullet at the protest.

"Junta forces are now using this brutal method of suppressing protests by crashing into civilians with cars on a daily basis," said the AAPP. The military fired heavy artillery and live ammunition in various areas in the town of Mindat in Chin State, following massive raids in the city on Sunday. Several houses were destroyed in the attacks and a "10-year-old girl who was hiding inside a house was shot and remains in a critical condition," according to the report.

"In South Dagon Township, Yangon Region, the junta returned the rotting body of a man who was arrested on May 14. His body was returned displaying many wounds consistent with torture," the AAPP said.

UN: 52,000 Palestinians  
displaced in Israeli attacks

## FOREIGN DESK

GENEVA: The United Nations said that at least 52,000 people had been displaced in the Gaza Strip due to Israeli attacks on the area and the number of people sheltering in UN schools is increasing. Laerke said OCHA welcomed the Israeli authorities opening of Kerem Shalom crossing for essential humanitarian supplies.

"It is critical that Erez crossing is also opened for the entry and exit of critical humanitarian staff," he said. The Israeli military said Tuesday it fired more than 100 munitions at 65 targets, including the homes of Ha-

flux into our schools. As I mentioned, there are 47,000 as of this morning in UNWRA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency) schools. So it is climbing that number, and there are above 52,000 total IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons)," he added. Laerke said OCHA welcomed the Israeli authorities opening of Kerem Shalom crossing for essential humanitarian supplies.

mas commanders. It said more than 60 fighter jets took part in the operation. At least 213 Palestinians have been killed in heavy airstrikes so far, including 61 children and 36 women, with more than 1,400 people wounded, according to the Palestinian Health Ministry. The strikes have brought down several buildings and caused widespread damage in the narrow coastal territory, which is home to more than 2 million Palestinians and has been under an Israeli-Egyptian blockade since 2007, when Hamas took over the strip. The UN spokesman said power supplies across Gaza are still limited to six to eight

hours a day on average due to damage to feeder lines and networks. "This disrupts the provision of health care and other basic services including water, hygiene, and sanitation," said Laerke. He said six hospitals and nine primary health care centers had been damaged, with one center sustaining severe damage and one hospital unable to function due to a lack of fuel.

"As far as the security situation allows, the UN along with our humanitarian partners provide food and non-food items to displaced families in Gaza, and immediate cash assistance to more than 52,000 people," said Laerke.

Spain  
sends 2,700  
migrants back  
to Morocco

## FOREIGN DESK

MADRID: The move comes after more than 6,000 migrants swam from the North African country into Spanish enclave of Ceuta, deepening a diplomatic spat between Rabat and Madrid. A Spanish legionnaire indicates the direction to follow to Moroccan citizens on El Tarajal beach, as they get out of the water on the Spanish side of the fence between the Spanish-Moroccan border, Ceuta, Spain, on May 18, 2021. (Reuters)

Spain has deployed its military to the Moroccan border after thousands of Moroccans took advantage of their government's relaxed border controls to swim or paddle in inflatable boats onto European soil.

Live footage on Spain's public broadcaster TVE showed dramatic scenes of soldiers carrying children in their arms and Red Cross personnel helping migrants who were emerging from the water exhausted and cold. One unconscious woman laid on the sand before she was carried away on a stretcher.

The sudden influx of migrants has deepened the diplomatic spat between Rabat and Madrid and created a humanitarian crisis for Ceuta, the Spanish city of 85,000 that lies in North Africa on the Mediterranean Sea, separated from Morocco by a double-wide, 10-metre (32-feet) fence.

US wants  
to 'avoid a  
militarisation'  
of the Arctic

REYKJAVIK: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Tuesday that Washington wanted to avoid a military build-up in the Arctic, a day after Russia defended its military activities in the strategic region.

"We have concerns about some of the increased military activities in the Arctic. That increases the dangers or prospects of accidents... and undermines the shared goal of a peaceful and sustainable future for the region," Blinken told a press conference in Reykjavik.

"What we need to avoid is a militarisation of the region," Blinken said on the eve of an Arctic Council meeting of foreign ministers on Wednesday and Thursday where he will meet his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov. As climate change makes the Arctic more accessible, interest in the region's natural resources, its navigation routes and its strategic position has grown among countries bordering the Arctic as well as China.

President Vladimir Putin has in recent years made Russia's Arctic region a strategic priority and ordered investment in military infrastructure and mineral extraction, exacerbating tensions with Arctic Council members. — APP

## The regional course of head of Uzbekistan is a symbol of renewal

## AKRAMJON NEMATOV

CENTRAL Asia has undergone a radical transformation in recent years. The positive trends observed in the region have affected almost all spheres — from political and economic to cultural and humanitarian. The formation of a new political climate in Central Asia is evidenced by the increased contacts between heads of state, the growth of trade volumes, and the implementation of large joint projects.

From the first days of his presidency, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, outlining the continuity of the foreign policy course, defined Central Asia, which is associated with the vital interests of Uzbekistan, as a priority of the country's foreign policy. This approach is reflected in many strategic documents, initiatives and steps taken. The issues of cooperation with the closest neighbors traditionally occupy a special place in the annual messages of the head of state to the Oliy Majlis.

As a result of the establishment of strategic cooperation with Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, the deepening of strategic partnership with Kazakhstan, a completely new political atmosphere based on mutual trust and good neighborliness has formed in the region.

The regional course of the head of Uzbekistan is a symbol of renewal not only of the foreign policy of Tashkent, but of the whole of Central Asia. Moreover, this is an example of transformation of relationships based on the following approaches. First, there are no unsolvable problems, there is a need for political will to resolve them. The principle of "discussing acute issues and finding reasonable compromises" made it possible to solve a number of regional problems on the basis of consistency and consideration of mutual interests. Unprecedented results have been achieved in resolving such sensitive issues as borders and the use of the region's water and energy resources.

Uzbekistan has begun to demarcate the border with Kazakhstan. In 2017, a historic document was signed — "Agreement on the area of the junction point of the state borders of three states — Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan", which made it possible to resolve an issue that was considered problematic for many years. A serious step in ensuring security and stability in the region was the agreements reached during the visit of Kyrgyz President S. Japarov to Uzbekistan (March this year), according to which the parties agreed to complete the legal registration of the Kyrgyz-Uzbek

border in the near future. Despite the existing problems, Uzbekistan, together with its neighbors, is making every effort to turn interstate borders into bridges of friendship, good-neighborliness and cooperation.

So in April this year, on the Kazakh-Uzbek border near the checkpoints "Zhibek Zholy" (Kazakhstan) and "Gisht Kuprik" (Uzbekistan), a ceremony was held to launch the construction of the International Center for Trade and Economic Cooperation "Central Asia". The center with a total area of 400 hectares, with a throughput capacity of 35 thousand people, and 5 thousand trucks per day in both directions is intended to become a major industrial, trade and logistics platform for the implementation of joint investment projects in such promising areas as the agro-industrial complex, light industry and manufacturing sector.

On 23 April 2021, on the initiative of Uzbekistan, a business forum "Border Integration - the Key to Development" was held in Ferghana. Along with the heads of the border regions — Batken (Kyrgyzstan), Sughd (Tajikistan) and Ferghana (Uzbekistan), representatives of local industrial and agricultural enterprises took part in the event. The holding of the business forum can be safely regarded as a significant achievement

in improving economic ties between the border regions of the three countries.

In addition, the parties are taking steps to deepen regional cooperation in the field of water use. A working group has been created to develop proposals on all areas of water relations between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. The Regulations are being developed on the establishment of a joint bilateral water management commission with Kyrgyzstan in order to achieve a constructive solution on the issues of the water and energy sector. Interaction with Turkmenistan is fruitfully developing within the framework of a trilateral working group with the participation of the Amu Darya basin water management organization.

Practical measures are being developed to launch the full-fledged operation of a single energy ring in Central Asia. An agreement was reached with Kyrgyzstan on mutual supplies of electricity in the amount of up to 750 million kWh. "At a conditional price" per 1 kWh, which will allow filling the Toktogul reservoir and providing Uzbekistan with water during the growing season 2021-2023.

The planned jointly with Tajikistan construction of two 320 MW HPPs on the Zarafshan River is an important step in regional cooperation in the use of transboundary

water resources. In addition, Tashkent has shown its readiness to participate in projects for the construction of the Kambor-Ata and Rogun hydroelectric power plants. According to the World Bank, improving the use of hydro-power potential and joint planning of capacity reserves in the region in 2020-2030, can bring CA countries up to US\$6.4 billion in economic benefits.

Secondly, a consolidated and predictable Central Asia is becoming more attractive in economic and investment terms.

According to R. Hoagland, a member of the Board of Trustees of the Caspian Political Center, the new strategy includes subtle changes in American policy that take into account the current realities of the development of the situation in this strategically important region of the world. Moreover, according to him, this document can be seen as a significant "victory" for the countries of Central Asia, since it states the continued full participation and assistance of Washington in an era when the United States backs away from its obligations in other parts of the world.

In October 2020, the foreign ministers of the Central Asian countries and Russia met for the first time in the Central Asia + Russia format, which resulted

in the adoption of a Joint Statement on Strategic Directions of Cooperation. In the document, the parties expressed agreement in such areas as the political and diplomatic sphere, security, trade and economic relations, transport links, environmental protection and adaptation to climate change, energy, sanitary and epidemiological situation, migration and humanitarian spheres. At the same time, it is noted that the participating countries will make efforts to establish regular and multi-level consultations between the foreign ministries of the countries to discuss topical issues of the global and regional agendas during regular meetings of the CA + 1 format, as well as, as necessary, within the framework of joint events at the sites of the CIS, UN and OSCE.

According to Russian analysts, today Russia is systematically interacting with some countries in the region within the framework of the CSTO or the EAEU. However, only the new Central Asia + Russia format appears to be the platform where the Russian Federation can interact with all Central Asian countries. So far, this format is not an institutional instrument and does not have a fixed organizational structure. However, it allows you to "compare notes" and discuss regional

risks and challenges.

The regional approach was reflected in Beijing's new approach to the region. In July 2020, a meeting of foreign ministers was held in the "Central Asia - China" format. Previously, the regional dialogue was held annually on the basis of multilevel meetings of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. So, over the years, 7 forums of cooperation between China and Central Asia have been held in different provinces of the PRC, which were organized by the Chinese Committee of the SCO for Good Neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation. Representatives of government agencies, businessmen, experts and journalists took part in its work.

As observers note, the organization of a separate dialogue platform "Central Asia-China" has become in demand, on the one hand, due to the need to create a fully independent platform of the Central Asian countries and China, on the other, as a result of improved cooperation within Central Asia itself. Regular meetings of leaders of states since 2018 and a course of rapprochement create a favorable basis for Beijing's regional initiative.

Thus, the trends and achievements of the past few years indicate that Central Asia is transforming. A new political climate is being shaped here, which is characterized by a

significantly strengthening of unity and cohesion. The joint efforts of the countries contribute to the formation of Central Asia as a stable, open and steadily developing region, a promising predictable international partner.

The countries of the region have demonstrated their ability to independently resolve existing problematic issues and contradictions without the intervention and involvement of external forces. Our common and, of course, priority task is to ensure sustainable development, stability and prosperity in the Central Asian region.

The attention to Central Asia is growing in the world, the interest of leading states and international financial institutions in supporting joint initiatives of the states of the region is increasing. In this regard, the region, and Tashkent, in particular, has unique opportunities to change the current situation, to determine development trends not only within the region, but also outside it.

—First Deputy Director of the Institute for Strategic and Interregional Studies under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan and Chief Researcher of the Institute for Strategic Lobar Umarova, Interregional Studies under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan

**Briefs**

**Pakistan condemns killing of two Kashmiris**

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Tuesday strongly condemned the extrajudicial killing of two more innocent Kashmiris in Khanmoh area in the outskirts of Srinagar by the Indian occupation forces in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). "The impunity granted to the Indian occupation forces has resulted in the systematic targeting of Kashmiri youth through extrajudicial killings, torture in custody, enforced disappearances and incarcerations under the cover of draconian laws such as Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), Public Safety Act (PSA) and Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA)," the Foreign Office said in a statement.

"Pakistan has consistently emphasized that the gross and systematic violations of human rights being perpetrated by the Indian occupation forces warrant an investigation by a United Nations Commission of Inquiry, as recommended by the OHCHR (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights) in its reports of 2018 and 2019," it added. "Pakistan reiterates its call for independent inquiry under international scrutiny to investigate the unabated extrajudicial killings of Kashmiris by the Indian occupation forces and to bring the perpetrators of these heinous crimes to justice," the statement stressed.

**Board exams to be held in any case, says NCOC**

ZUBAIR AHMAD

ISLAMABAD: The National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) has decided to refer the matter of opening the educational institutes to the Inter-Provincial Education Ministers Conference (IPEMC). The NCOC meeting was held in Islamabad on Tuesday in which the Ministry of Health briefed the participants of the meeting about the current situation of Covid-19 in the country. It has been decided to refer the matter of reopening educational institutes to the IPEMC.

But it has also been decided that board exams all across the country will be held in any case. However, the meeting decided that the IPEMC will take decisions regarding holding of examinations and students' promotion to the next grades. According to sources, the Inter-Provincial Education Ministers Conference will hold its meeting before May 23. And schools will start taking 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th grades classes in the first phase of reopening, sources added.

**Israeli forces wound 5 Lebanon protesters**

BEIRUT: Five people protesting on the Lebanon-Israel border against air strikes in Gaza were wounded Tuesday by tear gas canisters and smoke bombs fired by Israeli forces, Lebanese state media said. "A number of demonstrators climbed a concrete border fence, raised Hezbollah flags and banners, and threw stones," the official National News Agency reported.

"Israeli forces fired tear gas and smoke bombs, leaving five people wounded." NNA did not say if those injured were Lebanese citizens or Palestinian refugees. Since last week, a series of protests along Lebanon's frontier have been held against Israel's air campaign on Gaza, a densely populated Palestinian enclave. That air assault has killed 213 Palestinians, according to Gaza's health ministry, while 12 have been killed on the Israeli side by thousands of rockets fired at the Jewish state from inside Gaza. - APP

**Death toll climbs as Israeli air attacks continue**

The UN Security Council session, the fourth since the conflict escalated, was called after the United States, a key Israel ally, blocked adoption of a joint statement calling for a halt to the violence on Monday for the third time in a week

GAZA CITY: Heavy air strikes and rocket fire in the Israel-Gaza conflict claimed more lives on both sides Tuesday as tensions flared in Palestinian "day of anger" protests in Jerusalem and the occupied West Bank. The UN Security Council was to hold an emergency meeting amid a diplomatic push to end the fighting, a day after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed Israel would "continue striking at the terrorist targets". Israel's intense bombing campaign has killed 213 Palestinians, including 61 children, and wounded more than 1,400 people in Gaza in more than a week of fighting against Hamas, according to the health ministry in Gaza.

The death toll on the Israeli side rose to 12 when a volley of rockets Hamas fired at the southern Eshkol region killed two Thai nationals working in a factory and wounded several others, police said. Israeli strikes

**Israel has no business to be in Palestinian Territory: Pakistan**

NEW YORK: Pakistan called on the Nonaligned Movement (NAM) to demand an immediate end to Israel's deadly offensive in Palestine when the 120-member body's Coordinating Bureau met here Monday to discuss the "horrendous" situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. At the same time, Ambassador Munir Akram cautioned NAM members against succumbing to the rhetoric of the aggressor by drawing a moral or a military equivalence between a beleaguered and unarmed Palestinian people and one of the strongest militaries in the region. "Our response has to be based on the principles, which we espouse - the principle of self-determination of peoples, the principle of struggle against foreign occupation and aggression," the Pakistani envoy said, while voicing solidarity with the Palestinians. "It is very disturbing to hear attempts to draw an equivalence between the aggression of the Israelis and the defence of the Palestinians," he added in his remarks to the meeting. "The solidarity which is required by our Palestinian brothers today is a solidarity that is based on the principle - that Israel has no business to be in the Occupied Palestinian Territory; it has no business to be in East Jerusalem; it has no business to attack Gaza..." Regretting that the UN Security Council has been blocked by one state from issuing a ceasefire call, the Pakistani envoy called for stepped up efforts so that it (that state) lifts its veto on demanding a cessation of hostilities. - APP

that again sent fireballs, debris and black smoke into the sky have levelled homes and multi-story towers, cratered roads and left two million Palestinians in the enclave desperate for reprieve.

"They destroyed our house but I don't know why they targeted us," said Nazmi al-Dahdouh, 70, of Gaza City who remained shocked by what he called "a terrifying, violent night". A convoy of international aid trucks that started rolling into Gaza through a border crossing from Israel, Kerem Shalom, was halted when Israel quickly shuttered it again, citing a mortar attack on the area.

The UN Security Council session, the fourth since the conflict escalated, was called after the United States, a key Israel ally, blocked adoption of a joint statement calling for a halt to the violence on Monday for the third time in a week. - APP

**China offers to host Afghan talks**

DNA

BEIJING: With American and NATO forces leaving the country, China has offered to host intra-Afghan peace negotiations. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi held out the offer in a telephone conversation with National Security Advisor Hamdullah Mohib on Monday. In Beijing, a statement from the Foreign Ministry said: "The Chinese side is ready to facilitate intra-Afghan negotiations, including creating conditions for holding the talks in China."

Wang claimed the US decision to pull out its troops from Afghanistan - a process to be completed by September 11 - had led to uncertainty in Afghanistan. The minister said: "Peace is a general trend, fully consistent with the fundamental and long-term interests of the Afghan people. It is also the common aspiration of the entire international community," the statement quoted the foreign minister as saying. With peace efforts underway, Wang stressed, all parties must demonstrate patience and goodwill.

**US to release Pakistani prisoner in Guantanamo**

WEB DESK

WASHINGTON: A US prisoner review board has approved Saifullah Paracha for release, a 73-year-old prisoner in Guantanamo Bay detention centre. Saifullah Paracha from Pakistan, has been in custody for more than 16 years at the US base in Cuba, his lawyer said in a statement. Paracha, was held on suspicion of ties to Al Qaeda but never formally charged with a crime. He was cleared by the prisoner review board along with two other men, said Shelby Sullivan-Bennis, who represented him at the hearing in November.

A notification concluded that Paracha is "not a continuing threat" to the United States, the lawyer said. It does not mean his release is imminent. But it is a crucial step before the US government negotiates a repatriation agreement with Pakistan for his return. Saifullah Paracha's lawyer said she thinks he will return home in the next several months. "The Pakistani wants him back, and our understanding is that there are no impediments to his return," she added. Paracha, who lived in the US was alleged by authorities having suspected links with Al Qaeda network.

**'Barbarity against Palestinians must be halted'**

ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaiser has said that barbarity and cruelty against innocent Palestinians must be halted immediately. He expressed these views while telephonically talking to his Iranian counterpart Muhammad Baqar Qalibaa on Tuesday, said a press release. He stressed on the need of unity especially among Muslim countries to highlight this Israel terrorism against innocent civilians. He said that such oppression and tyranny is condemnable in every possible term.

Speaker Asad Qaiser mentioned that he had written letters to all OIC members to highlight Israel barbarity. He also informed his counterpart that National Assembly of Pakistan has unanimously adopted resolution against Israeli Oppression and this also demanded from international organization and UNO to immediately stop this aggression. He expressed his sadness over the silence of all champions of basic human rights. He said that Iran has pivotal role to play to bring unanimous action against Israel. He also invited his counterpart for participation in seminar of Parliamentary Assembly for Economic Cooperation which is going to be held in the last week of May 2021. Iranian Speaker Muhammad Baqar Qalibaa also agreed with the proposal of Speaker NA for bringing unity among Muslim countries. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Outgoing High Commissioner of Malaysia Ikrum Muhammad Ibrahim presenting a souvenir to renowned dentist of Pakistan Dr. Abrar ul Hasnain. The Malaysian envoy is leaving Pakistan on May 30 after completing his term. - DNA

**Inquiry against Pervaiz Elahi to be closed**

LAHORE: An accountability court on Tuesday allowed plea filed by National Accountability Bureau (NAB) for closing illegal appointments' inquiry against Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) leader and Speaker Punjab Assembly Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi. Accountability Court Judge Sheikh Sajad Ahmad heard the application filed by the Bureau. In his final arguments, the NAB prosecutor argued before the court that the main accused had expired whereas the other accused had retired. He further submitted that the NAB chairman and its executive board had given the approval for closing the inquiry. He pleaded with the court for granting final approval to close the inquiry.

At this, the court reserved its verdict but later, allowed the application filed by the bureau. It is pertinent to mention here that the court had already granted final approval for closing two inquiries against Pakistan Muslim League - Quaid (PML-Q) leaders Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi, and their family members over charges of accumulating assets beyond means, on May 3, 2021. The bureau had filed applications for closing three inquiries initiated 20 years ago against Chaudhry brothers. The first inquiry against Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain and his family members was related to allegations of accumulating assets beyond means. - APP

**ADB to support Pakistan in climate resilience**

BUREAU REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) under its Country Partnership Strategy with Pakistan (2021-2025) would provide support in building liveable cities, building climate and disaster resilience for mitigating climate change challenges and its negative impacts on agriculture and other sectors of national economy.

The bank in its Climate Risk Country Profile Pakistan has projected rises in the annual maximum and minimum average temperature, which would likely to amplify the pressure on human health, livelihoods, and ecosystems. The city governments will be encouraged to explore new sources of funding to meet infrastructure requirements and bring in sustainable planning processes by integrating climate resilience and disaster risk management considerations. Besides, the ADB will invest in sovereign and non-sovereign projects to improve water supply and sanitation systems as well as urban transport infrastructure, including bus rapid transit and non motorized transport systems. It said that smart cities will be promoted through the application of technology, including digital access to services, digital payments, smart water meters, and charged parking. ADB would also maintain its support for building the resilience of communities and infrastructure to climate change and for strengthening climate change adaptation and disaster risk management.

This includes investing in the sustainable management of watersheds and mangrove forests, improving the management of water resources, strengthening flood risk management in vulnerable coastal districts. The bank under country partnership strategy would also help in bolstering climate policy, financing and planning frameworks, besides upgrading the management of solid waste, and providing safe water in cities and towns. The ADB would continue backing the National Disaster Risk Management Fund, including through recapitalization, to help implement national plans to reduce disaster risks and enhance preparedness.

**27 dead as cyclone batters India**

MAHUA: At least 27 people were dead and more than 90 missing on Tuesday after a monster cyclone slammed India, compounding the country's woes as it recorded a new record number of coronavirus deaths in 24 hours. The colossal swirling system dubbed Cyclone Tauktae is the latest in what experts say is a growing number of increasingly severe storms in the Arabian Sea as climate change warms its waters. Hundreds of thousands of people were left without power after the storm hit the Gujarat coast in western India on Monday evening, leaving a trail of death and destruction.

Winds up to 130 kilometres (80 miles) per hour smashed seafront windows and knocked over power lines and thousands of trees, blocking roads leading to affected areas, officials said. "I have never experienced such intensity in my life," a hotel owner in the town of Bhavnagar said. "It was pitch dark as power was cut off and winds were making a roaring sound. It was scary." One support vessel serving oil rigs that were walloped by eight-metre waves off Mumbai sank and 93 of the 273 people, who had been on board, were missing, the Indian Navy said Tuesday. The defence ministry said 180 people

were rescued, with warships attempting to save the rest of the crew in "extremely challenging sea conditions". Navy helicopters managed, however, to rescue all 137 people stuck on another barge that also slipped its anchor and ran aground. One other barge and an oil rig were also adrift. Elsewhere, seven fresh casualties took the toll to 27 including a child crushed by a collapsing wall, an 80-year-old woman killed by a falling pole and a teenage girl by a crumbling roof. More than 16,500 houses were damaged, 40,000 trees were uprooted and 2,400 villages were without power. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador Adam M. Tugio of Indonesia held a meeting with Chairman, National Assembly Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Mr. Malik Ehsan Ullah Tiwana. - DNA

**'Ready' to fight Taliban after US pullout: Ghani**

DNA

KABUL: President Ashraf Ghani said that the Afghan government is ready to fight against the Taliban after the full withdrawal of international troops from the country, reiterating that the key to peace talks is accepting the election as a way forward for Afghanistan's future government. "The threat of terrorism has changed. It has not disappeared. We are all agreed on this," Ghani said in an interview with PBS. "The United States is committed to support things, providing support. This is financial, in the security area, in the economic area, in the

humanitarian area, because the United States, fortunately, shares the values of supporting the gains of the last 20 years. And our discussion is enormously productive. The same, fortunately, applies to NATO members and non-NATO members who have been our partners." President Ghani has recently held talks with influential political leaders, namely the reconciliation council chief Abdullah Abdullah, former president Hamid Karzai, former mujahideen leader Abdul Rab Rasul Sayyaf, and others to build a consensus around peace and form a high-level state council. Sources familiar with the meetings said that the list of the members of the council

**Ghani, Karzai, Hekmatyar agree to form powerful HSC**

KABUL: Senior Hezb-i-Islami Afghanistan (HIA) member Humayon Jareer has claimed President Ashraf Ghani, former president Hamid Karzai and HIA leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar have agreed on formation of a powerful High State Council (HSC). This was agreed during a recent meeting between the trio at Karzai's residence, said Jareer, adding that they stressed over a unified peace plan and political consensus for peace and it was agreed that the creation of a powerful HSC was necessary for this purpose. But Government Media and Information Centre (GMIC) Head Dawa Khan Menapal said it was as yet not clear what powers shall the council have and how many members the council will have. Salahuddin Rabbani's led Jamiat Islami Party said majority of politicians and leaders will not become part of a council led by President Ghani. According to Jareer, the three leaders agreed that HSC will have two specialities - one its members would be limited from seven to eight persons and second the council will have the power to decide about major national issues. - DNA

will be finalized by the end of this week. Moreover, the Taliban has shown signs of willingness to resume the peace negotiations in Doha. But in Afghanistan violence remains increasingly high despite a three-day ceasefire from May 12 to May 15. The Defense Ministry reported clashes in 18 provinces just two days after the end of the ceasefire. President Ghani once again reiterated that "the key to a political dialogue is that the Taliban accept that the future political system of Afghanistan is based on elections." "That is the fundamental bottom line. Other things are discussible, negotiable. But if fundamental issue is not granted, then the question

of rights and the question of gains that have occurred in the last 20 years, particularly vis-a-vis women, youth, minorities, all walks of life, will be put into question," Ghani said as quoted by PBS. US and coalition forces commander, Gen. Scott Miller, said this week that the Taliban might increase violence after the three-day ceasefire that ended on May 15, but he reiterated that the US will support Afghan forces until the full withdrawal of their troops from the country. On Monday, some sources close to the Taliban said that there has been some progress in the release of 7,000 prisoners of the group by the Afghan government.