



Islamabad POST

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Sehr & Iftar Timings		
Ramadan Kareem		
CITY	SEHR	IFTAR
ISLAMABAD	03:33 am	07:00 pm
FAISALABAD	03:41 am	06:55 pm
LAHORE	03:35 am	06:50 pm
KARACHI	04:24 am	07:08 pm
SARGODHA	03:40 am	06:58 pm
FIQA JAFARIA		
CITY	SEHR	IFTAR
ISLAMABAD	03:23 am	07:10 pm
FAISALABAD	03:31 am	07:05 pm
LAHORE	03:25 am	07:00 pm
KARACHI	04:14 am	07:18 pm
SARGODHA	03:30 am	07:08 pm

Ghani lauds Pak role in Afghan peace

We will always support "Afghan-led-Afghan-owned" peace process based on [the] mutual consensus of all stakeholders: Gen Bajwa

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

RAWALPINDI: Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani on Monday lauded Pakistan's sincere and positive role in the Afghan peace process as he met Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa in Kabul.

The army chief arrived in Kabul on a day-long visit, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement. Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa (left) and Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani (centre) meet in Kabul on May 10, 2021. — ISPR

The ISPR said matters of mutual interest, current developments in the Afghan peace process, enhanced bilateral security and defence cooperation, and the need for effective border management between the two brotherly countries were discussed during the meeting.

Chief of the Defence Staff UK was also present during the meeting, while Director General Inter-Services Intelligence Lieutenant General Faiz Hamid accompanied COAS during the visit. In call with COAS Bajwa, US defence chief reiterates commitment to 'maintaining strong' ties with Pakistan in meeting with COAS Bajwa, UK defence chief appreciates Pakistan's efforts for Afghan peace process COAS, in his meeting with President Ghani, reiterated that a peaceful Afghanistan means a peaceful region in general and a peaceful Pakistan in particular.

"We will always support "Afghan-led-Afghan-owned" peace process based on [the] mutual consensus of all stakeholders," the army chief said.

Meanwhile, the Afghan President thanked

Pak Army values ties with UK: COAS

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: General Sir Nicholas Patrick Carter, Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), UK called on General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff (COAS).

During the meeting matters of mutual interest, regional security situation particularly current developments in Afghan Peace Process and measures to further enhance bilateral and defence cooperation were discussed. COAS also offered condolences on sad demise of His Royal Highness Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh and said that the world has lost a highly respected friend.

Visiting dignitary appreciated Pakistan's sincere efforts for peace and stability in the region, especially the Afghan Peace Process. COAS thanked the dignitary for UK's contribution towards fight against COVID-19 in Pakistan and said that Pakistan Army greatly values its friendly relations with the UK.

COAS for a meaningful discussion and appreciated Pakistan's sincere and positive role in the Afghan peace process.

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KABUL: Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa in a meeting with President of Afghanistan Ashraf Ghani. — DNA

Briefs

PM to take telephone calls

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan will directly engage with the public via telephone tomorrow (Tuesday), PTI Senator Faisal Javed Khan said on Monday.

Taking to Twitter to make the announcement, Faisal Javed said that under the initiative of 'Ap Ka Prime Minister Ap Kai Sath' [Your Prime Minister With You], the prime minister would take direct telephone calls from the public at 1:30 pm on Tuesday. The telephonic conversation between the prime minister and the public would be broadcasted live on television, radio and digital media platforms, the senator added.

This is not the first time that Prime Minister would be interacting with the public on the telephone.

IIOJK not India's internal matter: FM

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi Monday categorically said Jammu and Kashmir was not India's internal matter and the final settlement of the dispute lay in the resolutions of United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

"Let me be clear: Jammu & Kashmir is an internationally recognised dispute on the UN Security Council agenda," he said in a tweet. The foreign minister mentioned that the UNSC resolution called for "free and impartial plebiscite under" the UN auspices to resolve the dispute.

"Nothing about J&K can be India's internal matter," he said.

Fawad: govt to reopen Hudaibiya mills cases

Information Minister says the legal team gave a detailed briefing to Prime Minister on the cases against Shahbaz Sharif

ZUBAIR AHMED

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Fawad Chaudhry said Monday the federal government has directed relevant institutions to re-investigate the Hudaibiya Paper Mills case. "Hudaibiya [mill's] case is the most important source of corruption of the Sharif family. Shahbaz Sharif and Nawaz Sharif are the main suspects in this case," Chaudhry said on Twitter.

The method adopted in laundering money out of the country through the Hudaibiya Paper Mills was later adopted in every case, and it is very important to bring this case to an end, he said. Chaudhry said today the legal team gave a detailed briefing to Prime Minister Imran



Khan on the cases against Shahbaz Sharif.

"The government has decided that the Hudaibiya Paper Mills case needs to be re-investigated." Earlier, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hussain said there was no difference between the narrative of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader JavedLatif, AltafHussain and banned terrorist organisation Balochistan Liberation Army

(BLA). In a tweet, he said senior PML-N leader ShahidKhaqanAbbasi himself condemned JavedLatif's anti-state remarks.

He said JavedLatif should seek unconditional apology for his statement. Fawad said under Article 5 of the Constitution, it was mandatory for every citizen to be loyal to the state and not allowed to deviate from it.

In response to the development, PML-N spokesperson Marriyum Aurangzeb said the decision to reopen the Hudaibiya Paper Mills case proves PM Imran Khan has admitted the cases against PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif were "fake". The spokesperson said the Ashiana, clean water, metros, and assets beyond means cases were based on political revenge.

Pakistan records decline in new COVID-19 cases

Lockdown decision bears fruit; number of daily COVID deaths also comes down

NEHAL MIRAJ

ISLAMABAD: After a continuous rise in coronavirus cases, Pakistan has registered a gradual decline in new COVID-related deaths and new infections.

According to the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOCC) data, 3,447 new infections emerged when 37,756 samples were tested during the same period. The positivity rate of new cases was recorded at 9.12%, the NCOCC said. The countrywide tally of confirmed cases climbed to 861,473 with the addition of 3,447 new cases. Thus far, 753,712 patients have recuperated from the disease. The number of Covid-19 pa-

Islamabad puts up new vaccination centers

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: The federal capital of Pakistan has Monday announced the setting up of five new vaccination centers within the city to escalate its drive to jab people with COVID-19 shots to offset resurgence of the global pandemic into its third wave.

District Health Officer of Islamabad Capital Territory said five new vaccination centers have been installed in the health centers of the city's outlying parts, including Shah Allah Ditta, Jagiot and Rawat. In his tweet earlier today on a microblogging site, Islamabad DHO Dr Zaeem Zia said referring to this new development, "Vaccination is at the doorstep in the rural areas." "Vaccination has started," he said of these stations, now functional. Separately today in a bid to constrict Covid spread, the Punjab government imposed a ban on inter-district, inter-city and intra-city public transport in the province from May 10 in wake of rising COVID-19 cases. A notification has been issued in this regard.

tients in critical care across the country stands at 4,903. A total of 1,256,823 tests have been conducted so far in Pakistan since the outbreak of the pandemic. Meanwhile, Punjab also witnessed a significant drop in new cases of Covid-19 after the government imposed a set of restrictions to contain the third wave of the virus. According to the Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department, a total of 1,393 new infections were reported across the province over the last 24 hours. Whereas, 26 people succumbed to the disease. Of the total 1,393 cases, Lahore reported 501 infections while five people died from the coronavirus in the city.

Iran confirms Saudi talks

TEHRAN: Iran's foreign ministry Monday for the first time confirmed the Islamic republic is holding talks with regional rival Saudi Arabia but said it is "too soon" to discuss the results. Media reports, later confirmed by diplomatic and Iraqi government sources, revealed that Iranian and Saudi officials met in Baghdad in April, their first high-level meeting since Riyadh cut diplomatic ties with Tehran in 2016. "The purpose of the talks was both bilateral and regional," Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh told reporters. — DNA (Detailed News on Page 6)

Eid: Taliban declare three-day ceasefire

Pakistan welcomes Taliban's ceasefire

MAHNOOR ANSAR

KABUL: The Taliban on Monday declared a three-day ceasefire across Afghanistan to mark this week's Eid al-Fitr holiday, just two days after being blamed for killing more than 50 people — mostly young girls — in a bomb attack outside a school in the capital. The interior ministry reported Monday that at least 11 people were separately killed just hours before the Taliban announcement by a bomb that struck a bus in restive Zabul province. The ceasefire announcement comes as the United States continues to pull out

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Monday welcomed the three-day ceasefire announced by Taliban in Afghanistan on the eve of Eidul Fitr. "We fully support all efforts that lead to reduction in violence and contribute to achieving durable stability and lasting peace in Afghanistan," the Foreign Office said. The Taliban declared a three-day ceasefire across Afghanistan to mark this week's Eidul Fitr holidays.

"Mujahideen of the Islamic Emirate are instructed to halt all offensive operations against the enemy countrywide from the first till the third day of Eid," a statement released by the Taliban said on Monday.

"But if the enemy conducts any assault or attack against you during these days, stand ready to robustly protect and defend yourselves and your territory," it added.

Continued on Page 06

UN urges restraint as Israeli airstrikes kill 21

The Palestinian Red Crescent Society said more than 180 Palestinians were injured in the violence, of whom more than 80 were transferred to hospitals

NEWS DESK

JERUSALEM: The Israeli Occupation on Monday launched multiple airstrikes over Beit Hanoun, northern Gaza Strip which resulted in nine deaths and several injuries.

According to Arab media, "Gaza's health ministry said nine Palestinians were killed by Israeli [Occupation] air strikes on the Strip." Three of the deaths included children, witnesses told reporters. Additionally, local Palestinian sources reported that Israeli Occupation drones targeted a motorcycle near the Al-Taqwa Mosque in Beit Hanoun with at least one missile, noting that the children who were killed were pedestrians at the

moment of the bombing. Ambulances transported the bodies of the deceased and injured to a hospital. Earlier Monday, Hamas launched a missile strike against the Israeli Occupation in occupied Jerusalem, in response to its crimes and aggression against the Holy City and its abuse of the people of Sheikh Jarrah and Al-Aqsa Mosque. Hundreds were wounded in new clashes Monday between Palestinians and Israeli security forces in Jerusalem as a planned march marking Israel's 1967 takeover of the holy city threatened to further inflame tensions. Palestinians hurled projectiles at Israeli officers in riot gear who fired rubber bullets, stun grenades and tear gas, an AFP correspondent at the

Presidents Abbas, Erdogan hold talks

NEWS DESK

RAMALLAH: President Mahmoud Abbas today received a phone call from his Turkish counterpart, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, during which they discussed the recent serious developments in occupied East Jerusalem and the Israeli assault against the Palestinian people and worshippers at Al-Aqsa Mosque, which led to the injury of hundreds of worshippers. They also discussed the attacks on Palestinians residing in Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of East Jerusalem and attempts to forcibly displace them from their homes and seize them for the benefit of the settlers.



scene said, following a night of sporadic clashes. "There are hundreds of people injured from the clashes" and about 50 were hospitalised, the Palestinian Red Crescent said about the latest unrest since violence escalated following the last Friday prayers of the holy Muslim month of Ramadan. The clashes were the latest in days of the worst such disturbances in Jerusalem since 2017, fuelled by a years-long bid by Jewish settlers to take over nearby Palestinian homes in Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem. A key court hearing scheduled for Monday on Sheikh Jarrah, the flashpoint east Jerusalem neighbourhood at the centre of the property dispute, has been postponed. There were fears of further

violence in the city ahead of a planned march Monday by Israelis to commemorate Israel's takeover of Jerusalem in the 1967 Six-Day War, an anniversary known as "Jerusalem Day" in the Jewish state. Israeli police had, as of Sunday, approved the march, which was scheduled to start around 4:00 pm (1300 GMT). The leader of the far-right Religious Zionism party, Bezalel Smotrich, has also announced a visit Monday to the tense Sheikh Jarrah district. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday defended Israel's response to the protests and rioting. "We will uphold law and order — vigorously and responsibly," Netanyahu said while vowing to "guard freedom of worship for all faiths".

Kaira laments fissures within PDM

ABID RAZA



LAHORE: PPP Central Punjab President Qamar Kaira said Monday that had the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) not resorted to infighting, the alliance could have sent the federal government packing. The PPP leader, addressing a press conference in Lahore, said that convening a PDM meeting without the presence of his party's leadership was not the right thing to do. Kaira said PDM chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman should take back the words he had uttered regarding the PPP.

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Briefs

CM's aide
urges masses
to stay home

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Hajj, Endowments and Religious Affairs Muhammad Zahoor-Shakir on Monday urged masses to show restraint and patience during the lockdown on the eve of EidulFitr as the measures taken by the government are for their protection against COVID-19. He said the present government was utilizing all available resources to provide better facilities at all the hospitals of the province, adding the people should ensure strict implementation of corona SOPs on the occasion of Sehri, Iftar, Itakaf and Eid-ul-Fitr. The CM's aide during a visit to HanguDoaba and other bazaars in district Hangu to review implementation of corona SOPs warned that no negligence would be tolerated in the health sector. Referring to Sasta bazaars, ZahoorShakir said that holding of cheap bazaars during the month of Ramzan has brought a lot of relief to the poor people, adding that for the first time any government has taken care of the people by ensuring the provision of subsidized food items during the month of Ramzan. He warned that no concessions would be made to profiteers and hoarders and legal action would be taken against them on the spot. - APP

Stolen
USC sugar
recovered

MUZAFFARGARH: Price Control Magistrate recovered illegally stored and stolen sugar bags and packets from a warehouse in suburban area of Muzaffargarh. According to official sources, Price Control Magistrate Muhammad Iqbal Abbasi, raided at house of ImtiazHussain son of Ahmed Bukhash and recovered 29 bags of sugar. Among 29 bags, 16 bags belonged to Utility Stores sugar. They also recovered packets inscribed with USC monogram. One person was arrested on the spot. However, cases were registered against the three outlaws including two officials from Utility Stores Corporation. - APP

Every 5th
person infected
in IIOJK

ISLAMABAD: A data from Srinagar based testing laboratories show that from the COVID-19 tests being conducted every 5th person is found infected with SARS-CoV2 in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir. According to Kashmir Media Service, in the beginning of this year every 70th person was testing positive. The shooting cases are fueling the fatality while putting a major strain on healthcare facilities in the territory. The occupied territory has already added over 40,000 new cases to its tally in May while more than 400 deaths have taken place. The official data on the pandemic shows that from 01 to 09 May, 3,84,000 COVID19 tests were carried out. Around 41,000 samples were found positive for SARS-CoV2. The positive percentage of these samples, taken from across the 20 districts of Kashmir and Jammu divisions, is roughly 11 percent. The tests, as per the authorities, are carried out both on RT-PCR equipment as well as Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) Kits. - APP

2bln fine
collected in
province wide
crackdown

KARACHI: As many as 13,000 shopkeepers and vendors were charged with fine amounting to over Rs 2 billion for over-charging across the Sindh province during holy month of Ramzan so far. Special Assistant to the Sindh Chief Minister for Bureau of Supply and Prices Dr. Khatu Mal Jewan here on Sunday informed through a handout that teams constituted by district administrations launched a crackdown to check profiteering and hoarding across the province so that availability of essential commodities could be ensured at reasonable prices. - APP

SOPs, lockdown enforcement
ensured in entire Faisalabad

Orders of NCOC will be implemented in true letter and spirit under the latest instructions of Department of Primary & Secondary Health Care Punjab and only those sections will be allowed for operation, which were exempted from lockdown, he added

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: The district administration devised a comprehensive plan to ensure implementation of covid-19 standard operating procedures (SOPs) and smart lockdown from Monday as per the directives of National Command & Operation Center (NCOC) to contain the spread of pandemic in district Faisalabad. In this connection, all markets,

shops, shopping malls and offices as well as business activities will remain closed during holidays of EidulFitr while stalls of moon night bazaars, henna, bangle stalls, jewellery, clothing and shoes, etc. will also be banned completely. A spokesman of local administration said here on Monday that district government along with police and other departments took necessary steps to check the covid-19 transmission. He urged the citizens to stay at home to keep them safe from coro-

na's the third wave as it was perilous. He said that medical stores, pharmacies, hospitals, clinics, vaccination centers, petrol pumps, ovens (Tandoor), dairy shops, food, take-aways and media offices would remain open round the clock whereas grocery stores, sweets shops, bakeries, vegetables, fruits, meat and chicken shops, utility services will be allowed from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily during Eid holidays. He said that it is mandatory for every citizen to wear a face-

mask, while inter-provincial and intra-city public transport will be completely prohibited from 6 p.m. on May 10 to May 15, 2021. However, trains will be allowed to carry 70 percent passengers, while private vehicles, taxis, cabs and rickshaws will be allowed to carry 50 percent passengers of their capacity, he added. Spokesman further said that all kinds of gatherings, sports competitions and cultural programs will be completely banned while parks,

shrines, fitness gyms, cinemas, theaters, etc. will also be closed completely. Similarly, wedding halls, marquees and community centers will also not be allowed to open during Eid holidays, he said. Orders of NCOC will be implemented in true letter and spirit under the latest instructions of Department of Primary & Secondary Health Care Punjab and only those sections will be allowed for operation, which were exempted from lockdown, he added.



KARACHI: Baluchistan Governor, Amanullah Khan Yasinzai called on President Dr. Arif Alivi, at Governor House Karachi. - DNA

Governor
Baluchistan
calls on
President

KARACHI: Baluchistan Governor, Amanullah Khan Yasinzai called on President Dr. Arif Alivi, at Governor House Karachi, today. They discussed political situation of the country as well as various developmental projects being undertaken by the Federal government for the uplift of Baluchistan. Talking to the Governor, the President said that Baluchistan had been ignored in the past but the present government accorded utmost importance to its development by undertaking a number of projects for the social and economic prosperity of the province. He expressed the hope that Gwadar Port and other infrastructural projects, being undertaken under CPEC, in Baluchistan would change the destiny of the province.

KP Govt starts campaign
for implementation of
SOPs ahead of Eid

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government has started special campaign for implementation of anti coronavirus SOPs and returned back tourists' vehicles in line of the decisions of National Command and Control Centre (NCOC) Islamabad. The district administration Swat spokesman told APP on Monday that police, Swat Levy and officials of district administration were deployed on all entry points of Swat district from where tourists was being returned back. Police and Swat Levy were deployed at main entry check points at Landaki, Shamizai bridge Ghoragat, Ranzara and Karkar to stop entry of tourists to scenic Kalam, Madyan, MalamJabba, Bahrain, Margazar and others tourists destinations

on eve of EidulFitr. Two tourists vehicles coming to Madyan were returned back from Ranzara check post, the spokesman said. The spokesman said all tourists destinations, sites, areas, parks, hotels and restaurants were closed in Swat from May 8-16 due to coronavirus pandemic in line of the NCOC decision. Famous hotels including Swat Sareena, Swat Continental, Kalam and Marghazar hotels besides rest houses and inns were closed till May 16. Meanwhile, tourists movement at Hazara were also restricted where parks, hotels and guesthouses in all famous scenic areas including Nathiagali, Thandyani, Ayubia were closed for Eid holidays due to coronavirus pandemic. In Peshawar, all

tourists areas including Peshawar zoo, Peshawar Museum, Wazirbagh and Shalimar gardens were closed for tourists and movement of tourists were restricted. Spokesperson of KP Tourism Department, Latefur Rehman told APP that besides tourists, parks, gardens and hotels, inter provincial and inter city transport was also banned in KP till May 16. However, private vehicles, taxis and rickshaws with half passengers were allowed for traveling for necessary works. The spokesman advised tourists to spend eid holidays at homes this time due to coronavirus pandemic and did not come to Swat, Hazara and others tourists places. The violators would be dealt according to law, he concluded. - APP

Fourteen
shopkeepers
booked over
lockdown
violation

MULTAN: As many as 14 shopkeepers were booked for violating lockdown in city on Monday. According to official sources, three shopkeepers were arrested as they were opening shops despite warning. However, 26 business centre were also sealed. On Sunday, the district administration impounded seven buses as these were carrying more than 50 percent passengers. Overall, a sum of Rs 230,000 fine was imposed on lockdown violators. The officials of police and armed forces were on continuous patrolling to ensure implementation on COVID 19 SOPs amid lockdown situation. - APP

Rupees 5b pledged for
global relief efforts

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: To mark its 135th anniversary, Coca-Cola announced to pledge a sum of PKR 5 billion for new global initiatives, whereby top priority was marked on Covid-19 - Stop the spread initiative, for which PKR 3 billion will be spent on partnering with credible local not-for-profit entities to support those who have been impacted the most during this pandemic. The Company's Covid-19 relief efforts have been ongoing in Pakistan - from the timely distribution of life-saving ventilators to assisting the Government in disease prevention by distributing protective equipment to front line health workers. Given the deadly rise of the third wave The Coca-Cola Foundation is working on broadening the scope of on-ground relief efforts. Furthermore, this Ramadan, Coca-Cola also partnered with Rizq, leading non-profit organization for food philanthropy in Pakistan, to donate over 600,000 meals across 13 cities over the duration of the Holy month. Over 135 million people have been impacted in Pakistan during Covid-19 due to hunger, and with this campaign "Ao Mil Kar Bhook Mitayain", the aim remains to fight hunger. This 135th birthday year is truly unique, since the Company is creating a fully networked organization with improved digital channels in its operations and communications - constantly gauging market research to stay agile and keep contributing to the economy in these unprecedented times. About 10,000 employment opportunities are created across the Company's chain. Highlighting the Company's history in Pakistan, Fahad Ashraf, VP and General Manager for Pakistan & Afghanistan region at The Coca-Cola Export Corporations said, "We are almost as old as Pakistan, and one of the few multinationals to adopt Pakistan as a home very early on."

Sarwar congrats son Anas
for winning Scottish election

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE, Punjab Governor Chaudhry Muhammad Sarwar congratulated his son Anas Sarwar for getting elected as a member of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) by the people of Glasgow. Chaudhry Sarwar said: "Congratulations to you and your colleagues for getting elected as a member of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) by the people of Glasgow. Chaudhry Sarwar also said, "I remain grateful to Glaswegians who gave me the honour to become the 1st Muslim MP in Great Britain and first Minority MP in Scotland." According to a private television channel report political, religious and social personalities have congratulated Governor Punjab on the success of his son. Anas Sarwar vowed that he would fight the case of other Pakistanis and the people of Glasgow and he was happy that as a Pakistani he is successfully advancing in British politics. Chaudhry Muhammad Sarwar said that overseers Pakistanis are shining the name of the country in every field.



LAHORE: Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar presides over a meeting at his office. - DNA Photo by Munir Sindhu

Buzdar takes notice of ministers' lack of interest

Punjab Chief Minister has also approved a special remission of 60 days in the sentences of convicts on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr. This will facilitate hundreds of prisoners, incarcerated in various jails, to celebrate the happy Eid occasion with their loved ones

DNA

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Usman Buzdar on Monday took notice of the lack of interest of the provincial ministers in the parliamentary affairs. The provincial law and parliamentary affairs minister told the CM about the sluggish behavior of the ministers. The Chief Minister ordered the provincial ministers to make sure of their attendance in the parliamentary meetings. The absence of the ministers from meetings affects parliamentary affairs. The usual business of the government gets delayed for months due to the absence of the ministers. It also provides an opportunity for criticism to the opposition.

Punjab Chief Minister has also approved a special remission of 60 days in the sentences of convicts on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr. This will facilitate hundreds of prisoners, incarcerated in various jails, to celebrate the happy Eid occasion with their loved ones. In this regard, the CM also asserted the government's commitment to reform the archaic Jail Manual, according to emerging needs, to bring ease to the lives of inmates adding that the Punjab government is committed to protecting the fundamental rights of the detainees. Punjab Chief Minister Usman Buzdar also chaired a video-link meeting at his office to map out the annual development program's priorities for the financial



year 2021-22. The meeting expounded suggestions to include Punjab-based mega development projects in the public sector development program. Federal Energy Minister Hammad Azhar, Provincial Finance Min-

ister Makhdoom Hashim Jawan-Bakht, P&D chairman and others attended the meeting while Federal P&D Minister Asad Umar, Federal Industries Minister Makhdoom Khuro Bakhtiar, Deputy Chairman Planning Commission and NHA chairman participated through video-link. Addressing the meeting, the Chief Minister disclosed the social sector development will be prioritised in the next ADP. The regional needs will be prioritized in development schemes as a separate development package has been devised for every district in consultation with the respective MNAs and MPAs, he added. A balanced package has been devised for PSDF by identifying local

needs, he further said. The Chief Minister apprised that the projects worth billions of rupees are being started under public-private partnership to provide more facilities to the masses by expediting the composite economic development process. Every area in Punjab will be provided with its rights and new projects are also being started along with timely completion of ongoing schemes, the CM concluded. Federal ministers Asad Umar, Hammad Azhar and Makhdoom Khuro Bakhtiar presented proposals for the next ADP and the participants agreed to further promote synergy between the Planning Commission and the Punjab government.

NTDC
installs
Shunt
Reactors

ISLAMABAD: National Transmission Dispatch Company Limited (NTDC) Project Delivery team of Hyderabad has installed 3x22 MVAR Shunt reactors (make TBEA, China) on 152 km long 500 kV Dadu-Jamshoro transmission line emanating from 500 kV Dadu Grid Station. The shunt reactors have been energized with an estimated cost of Rs340 million, said a press release. The spokesman said the newly installed Shunt Reactors will help to control voltages of power system more efficiently and enhance overall Power System Stability of NTDC Network. The smooth power supply will be ensured to the consumers of Sindh through Power Distribution Company (DISCO). Shunt Reactors are used in high voltage energy transmission systems to control the voltage during load variations.

The spokesman said the NTDC is vigorously pursuing its ongoing projects for early completion. Recently, the company has also completed four more 500 kV transmission line circuits for evacuation of electricity from power plants located in southern parts of the country. The transmission line circuits have been connected with HVDC Converter Station at Matiari. Moreover, up-gradation work of 130 km long 220 kV Jamshoro - KDA Transmission Line was also completed before its deadline. The transmission line is transmitting 450 MW additional power from National Grid to K-Electric, which is a big relief for the people of Karachi during the holy month of Ramazan. Upon completion of these projects, the NTDC Board of Directors has appreciated the efforts of NTDC management and its team. - APP

Three killed,
16 injured in
road accident

PESHAWAR: Three persons were killed and 16 other got injured in a road accident, in Jamrud district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Monday. According to Rescue 1122, the accident was occurred between a truck and passenger vehicle in SorKamar area on Pak-Afghan highway. Police said that many of those killed and injured were Afghan citizen going back to Afghanistan for eid holidays. Rescue 1122 ambulances and aid workers has reached on the spot and shifted injured to DHQ hospital and serious injured were shifted to Peshawar. - APP

PQA allocates
Rs. 5 crore
for PQD
workers

ISLAMABAD: Port Qasim Authority (PQA) has allocated an amount of Rs. 5 crore for the Port Qasim Dock (PQD) workers. Minister for Maritime Affairs Ali Haider Zaidi in a video message to PQD workers, said that "for the improvement in their conditions and lives, five Crore rupees were allocated by PQA". The minister also assured more assistance in the future to the workers community. Congratulating them, he also promised a visit to Port Qasim Dock Workers post Eid. The PQD workers thanked PQA and Minister for Maritime Affairs to allocate special funds for the welfare of the workers community in the testing time of COVID-19 pandemic. - APP

Quetta:
2 persons
injured
in blast

ISLAMABAD: Two persons were injured in a powerful roadside bomb explosion near Tariq hospital, Quetta on Monday. According to police, the blast was heard in distant areas due to its intensity and blast took place in roadside of Tariq hospital which leaves two persons in critical wounded condition, while additional contingents were also called in following the blast, a private news channel reported. Soon after receiving information about the incident, security personnel rushed to the area and shifted the injured to a local hospital Quetta. - APP

Briefs

Covid-19 keep upward trend in Attock district

FAISAL MUNIR

ATTOCK: The third wave of novel coronavirus (Covid-19) is getting thin and the situation in Attock district keeps an upward trend as six more persons tested positive during the last 24 hours raising the tally to 2067.

According to health authorities, during the month of May as many as 6 persons lost battle to the virus while 90 were tested positive during the month so far. District focal person for Covid-19 Dr Kashif Hussain said that among new positive patients 3 belongs to Pindigheab, two in Attock city while one belongs to Hazro.

He informed that the number of active patients in the district is 180 and in which 175 are home isolated while five others are hospitalized.

While giving details of active patients in the district, he informed that there are 127 active patients in Attock city, 16 in Jand, 15 in Hazro, 12 in Pindigheab, 3 in Hassanabdal while as number in Fatehjang. He informed that as many as four suspected patients are also admitted in hospitals in which three are in critical condition.

He informed that the number of suspected patients in the district raised to 33,338 while screening of as many as 36,590 persons was carried out across the district in which 31,033 were tested negative. Responding to a question, he said that the results of as many as 238 suspected patients are awaited.

He informed that so far 1848 persons have recovered from the virus in the district so far. Responding to a question, he said that safe burial of as many as 123 patients including Covid-19 positive and suspected have so far been carried out in the district.

1000 kitchen gardens set up at various institutions

RAWALPINDI: More than 1000 kitchen gardens have been set up in educational institutions, government departments and social welfare institutions to enhance environmental beauty as well as provide food for human needs.

National Cleaner Production Center, Incharge Irshad Ramay on Monday said that "Kitchen gardening" is very important for obtaining nutrients and producing food while during the prevailing COVID-19 like situation "we can achieve our daily use needs and get fresh vegetables and fruits from kitchen gardens instead of buying from markets", he added. Ramay said that the purpose of setting up a kitchen garden with the help of the community is to motivate people and get them involved in tree planting. - APP

RPO visits house of martyred cops

RAWALPINDI: Regional Police Officer RPO Rawalpindi Imran Ahmar paid a visit to the house of martyrs and met with the families before Eid ul Fitr, informed police spokesman.

RPO also met the children of martyrs and talked to them, RPO while showing compassion to the children of martyrs said that we stand with the families of martyrs.

He also paid tribute to martyrs who laid down their lives for noble cause.

All available resources for welfare will be utilized, the RPO said, adding that the police martyrs are alive in our hearts and the great sacrifices of the martyrs will always be remembered.

It is mentioned here that Constable Tahir Hussain was martyred in suicide attack in July 2007 while Constable Khurram Mahmood was also martyred by a motorcyclist during a fire in November 2013. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Azerbaijan Ali Alizada and Staff of the Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan to Pakistan visited the Shakarparian park in Islamabad to take care of the tree planted in memory of National Leader Heydar Aliyev. - DNA

Undue profiteering, hoarding be dealt with iron hands

The NPMC reviewed the price trend of essential commodities especially wheat flour, sugar, edible oil/ghee, pulses and chicken during the last week

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Mr. Shaukat Tarin, chaired the meeting of the National Price Monitoring Committee (NPMC) at the Finance Division Monday. Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Syed Fakhar Imam, Adviser to the PM on Commerce Abdul Razak Dawood, SAPM on Finance and Revenue Dr. Waqar Masood, Secretary Finance Division, Secretary M/o NFS&R, Chief Secretaries of the Provincial Governments, Member PBS, MD Utility Stores Corporation, Chairperson CCP and other senior officers of various Ministries participated in the meeting. The NPMC reviewed the price

trend of essential commodities especially wheat flour, sugar, edible oil/ghee, pulses and chicken during the last week. While briefing the NPMC about weekly SPL, the Finance Secretary apprised that prices of 07 basic commodities registered a decline whereas 26 items remained stable during the week under review.

Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Syed Fakhar Imam updated the NPMC about the wheat procurement drive of the Provinces and PASSCO to ensure steady supply of wheat at fair prices during the current year. He further apprised the NPMC that Punjab is ahead of other Provinces in procurement of wheat to date. Secretary M/o NFS&R informed the Committee that the summary to import 4 million metric ton



wheat would be presented before the next ECC for requisite approval to build strategic reserves and to ensure smooth supply of wheat across the country. While taking stock of the situation, the Finance Minister directed all the Provincial Governments to ensure daily release of wheat at subsidized rates in compliance

with the directives of the Prime Minister. He strictly urged the representatives of the Provincial Governments to ensure uninterrupted daily release without fail. While reviewing the price trend of basic commodities in international markets, the NPMC noted that major driver behind increase in prices of items of daily use is massive international price hike due to ongoing COVID-19 crisis. The Year-on-Year comparative analysis indicated that price of Crude Oil increased by 178% in April 2021 as compared to April 2020.

Similarly, the prices of Sugar in international market increased by 57% in year-on-year comparison. Furthermore, international prices of Palm oil, Soyabean oil and Wheat also registered a continued upward trend which, in turn, led

to sharp increase in prices of basic items in domestic markets. Speaking on the occasion, the Finance Minister stated that COVID-19 crisis has fuelled food prices in international markets especially edible oil, sugar, tea and wheat. The Government is making an all-out effort to ensure smooth supply of basic items through a network of Ramadan Sahaulat / Saasta Bazaars and chain of USCs outlets to ease shortages and mitigate price spike in domestic / local markets. The Chairperson, Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) presented findings before the Committee regarding completion of recent inquiry in the Poultry Industry. The CCP underlined some anti-competitive conduct that led to surge in prices of Chicken feed, which, in turn, increased prices of Chicken.

PAL organizes online Brahvi Int'l Mushaira

SHAHEEN HANIF

ISLAMABAD: In the Holy month of Ramadan-ul-Mubarak, an online Brahvi International Hamdiya and Naatiya Mushaira was organized by the Pakistan Academy of Letters (PAL). Mushaira presided over by Johar Brahvi (Dadu). Prof. Abdul Razaq Sabir (Quetta) was the Chief Guest. Noor Khan Mohammad Hassani (Quetta), Prof. Susan Brahvi (Quetta), Ustad Mehboob Aajez (Qatar) and Sail Mengal (Qatar)

were the guests of honor.

Dr. Yousuf Khushk, Chairman, PAL, gave the introductory speech. Qayyum Bedar (Quetta) and Nazir Shakir Brahvi (Shikarpur) were the moderators. Poets from all over the country and abroad recited Hamdiya and Naatiya poetry. Dr. Yousuf Khushk, Chairman, PAL, in his introductory remarks, said that Brahvi, like other Pakistani languages, has a tradition of Hamad is present in everything from folk literature to modern Brahvi poetry as a special creation and a spirit of devotion. If

we look at the tradition of Hamad and Naat in Brahvi literature, then Naat has been a part of our folklore, classical literature and ancient poetic tradition. Hamade and Naat were first found in written literature in Malik Dad Kalati's book "Tahafta-e-Ajaib" (1760) and then in 1870 by Maulana Abdul Hakim Mashwani. The dictionary appears in a good color in the Brahvi section of the Diwan "Char Bagh". An excellent example of divine love and love of the Prophet can be seen in the words of the famous Brahvi Sufi poet Taj Muhammad Tajal. Tajal's poetry exists

for the color of Sufism. We see a clear glimpse of Fana Fi Allah and Fana Fi Rasool in the words of Taj Muhammad Tajal as well as in the words of Faiz Muhammad Faizal Faqir. He said that adopting the tradition of Hamad and Naat from the scholars of such Maktab Durkhani, he regularly published books on Naatiya poetry. These include Abdul Majeed Choloi's book "Josh Habib", Maulana Muhammad Omar Din Puri's book "Shama'il Shari", "Mushtaq-e-Madina", "Fi Al-Faraq", Baiz-ul-Tayyib", "Fi Zikre-Habib" and other books.

Business community lauds Umar Dad Afridi's promotion

ISLAMABAD: Senior officials of the Chambers of Commerce and Industry Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry, prominent business leaders, officers of the Trade and Commerce Group and representatives of trade organizations and institutions lauded the promotion of Umar Dad Afridi, Senior Officer, Commerce and Trade Group, to Grade 21 and his appointment as Executive Director General, Head of the Trade Dispute Resolution under the Ministry of Commerce. They said that Umar Dad Afridi is considered to be an experienced and expert officer with high professional skills who performed his duties with utmost diligence and skill. They further said that Umar Dad Afridi has already served in this organization and has previously held key positions in Trade Development Authority of Pakistan, NAB, Ministry of Environment, Intellectual Property Rights, IPO Pakistan, DGTO, PATAD and various other organizations and has represented Pakistan in various international conferences. Ha They hoped that under the leadership of Umar Dad Afridi, the performance of the organization would be significantly enhanced. - DNA

1.5 kg drug recovered during raid

RAWALPINDI: Police have arrested a drug pusher and recovered more than 1.5 kg drugs from his possession, informed police spokesman here on Monday. During course of action, New Town police held Faisal Azad and recovered 1.5 kg drug from his custody. Police have registered a case against him under narcotics act and started investigation. - APP

Chairman CDA reviews D-12 development work

ISLAMABAD: The Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) visited Sector D-12 and reviewed the ongoing development works. Member Engineering, Director Environment, Director Sector Development and other concerned officers were also present during the visit to the parks and road infrastructure of the said sector. Competitive work should be completed immediately. Chairman CDA Amir Ali Ahmed on the occasion also directed the concerned officers to make the ongoing works in the said sector more efficient and expeditious. He said that after Eid-ul-Fitr, carpeting of all major, minor and major highways of the said sector should be completed. Providing the best road infrastructure is our top priority. Chairman CDA said that the parks should also be upgraded immediately to provide better recreational facilities to the residents of the said sector while new parks should be created where new parks are needed. Facilities in the parks should be further improved. Swings, flowers and fruit trees should be planted, walking tracks in the parks should be maintained in proper condition. Parks should be cleaned by cutting down trees and wild grass immediately. He said that no compromise would be made on the provision of facilities and services to the residents of the said sector, all the concerned officers should take stock of the ongoing development works in the said sector. - DNA

Havelian crash report; pilots' licences doubtful

ISLAMABAD: A report on the 2016 Havelian plane crash has termed the licences of both pilots of the ill-fated aircraft "suspicious". The report submitted to the Supreme Court (SC) in a case pertaining to the crash revealed that pilots Saleh Yar Janjua and Ahmed Mansoor Janjua had "suspicious licences". Forty-seven passengers, including TV personality Junaid Jamsheer, were killed when the ill-fated plane, PK-661, crashed in Havelian while travelling from Chitral to Islamabad in December, 2016. It is noteworthy that a petition filed by the parents of a pilot, who was killed in the crash, seeking directives for the authorities concerned to punish those responsible for the tragic incident is pending in the Sindh High Court (SHC). - DNA

Kids participate in NPC's competition

ISLAMABAD: Hundreds of children of working journalists from the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad took part in the two-day online 'Qirat' and 'Naat' competition, organized by the National Press Club (NPC) Islamabad on the 27th and 28th nights of the blessed month of Ramadan.

The competition, perhaps, the first of its kind not only in Pakistan but in the entire world for journalists' kids was the part of NPC's annual mega event, 'Ramazan Family Festival'.

The event was earlier scheduled to take place at the vast NPC lawn but owing to the ongoing COVID-19 onslaught, it was decided to hold it on Zoom.

The NPC office-bearers, led by their President Shakeel Anjam and Secretary Anwar Raza worked diligently over the past two weeks to make the event a real success. In their endeavours, they were fully supported by the office-bearers of Rawalpindi and Islamabad Union of Journalists (RIUJ), particularly President Amir Sajjad Syed and Acting General Secretary Tariq Ali Virk.

The NPC president said around 400 boys and girls aged between 4-16 years participated in the competition. He said the winner pocketed a cash prize of Rs 15,000, the runner-up Rs 10,000, and the third position-holder received Rs 5,000. "Besides, each participant was given Rs 1,000 as 'Eidi'," he added.

According to Shakeel, the credit to hold the contest on Zoom goes to former NPC president Afzal Butt. "We must acknowledge that it was he, who actually floated the idea. "Initially, it was looking a herculean task but with Afzal Butt and Tariq Chaudhry's (another former NPC president) guidance and encouragement we managed to hold it quite successfully," he added. Anwar Raza on the occasion said there had been several brainstorming sessions for holding the competition in a befitting manner. - APP

PTV to telecast special programmes on Eid ul Fitr

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Television Corporation on Monday issued a special telecast schedule for its viewers on the auspicious occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr titled "Eid-e-Umeed".

On the first day of Eid mini comedy series "Khata Meetha", a special children's Eid show, "Hum Sab Saath Hain" and Mazahia Mushaira will be telecast. Renowned poets of the country will present their unique poems in the Mushaira.

Other programmes to be presented on the first day of Eid include special play "Ishq Wishaq", Tribute to Mehdi Hassan, Ertugrul Ghazi, Legend of Markhor, Creative Kids and the behind-the-scenes recordings of the drama Ertugrul Ghazi.

The programs for the second day of Eid include the previous day's programs as well as "Eid Ki Naveed", "Becharey Kanwarey" and Star & Style (Eid Special). On the third day of Eid, "Meray Shokh Sanam" and Melody Night will be presented for the entertainment of the audience. - APP

Tobacco export decline 13.86% in 9 months

ISLAMABAD: The exports of tobacco from the country witnessed a decline of 13.86 percent during the first nine months of financial year 2020-21, against the exports of the corresponding period of last year.

The tobacco exports from the country were recorded at \$24.738 million during July-March (2020-21) against the exports of \$28.720 million during July-March (2019-20), according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS).

In terms of quantity, the exports of tobacco also decreased by 11.95 percent by going down from 10,640 metric tons to 9,368 metric tons, according to the data. - APP

Briefs

Govt committed for electoral reforms

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Secretary for Law and Justice Barrister Maleeka Bokhari Monday asked the opposition to debate in the parliament over voting rights to overseas Pakistanis as the ordinance had promulgated in the larger interest of the country. Talking to a private news channel, she said the government had fulfilled its promise, made with the overseas Pakistanis. Pakistanis diaspora should take active part in the elections as they had been playing an important role in the economic progress of the country, she added. Maleeka said the government had approved two important ordinances for using electronic voting machines in the general elections and granting voting rights to the overseas Pakistanis. She said the incumbent government was committed to introduce electoral reforms in the country that would ensure transparency in the democratic process. Criticizing the opposition parties especially Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), she said the PML-N believed in politics of self-interest, bullying and sale and purchase of loyalties. She said the PML-N had damaged the entire social, economic and political system during their regimes. Maleeka said the corrupt PML-N rulers had plundered the national wealth and built their properties not only in Pakistan but also in Europe and other parts of the world and added to the woes of the masses and the country. Lauding Prime Minister Imran Khan, she said he (prime minister) had entered in politics for serving the poor segments of society. — APP

Fawad for replacing science, tech, education

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hussain Monday proposed that in the Government of Pakistan (GOP) logo, jute and tea should be replaced with science and technology and education icons. In a tweet, he asked the graphic designers to send their ideas to him. — APP

NPMC sees rising int'l prices for inflation

ISLAMABAD: The National Price Monitoring Committee (NPMC) on Monday observed that major driver behind increase in prices of items of daily use was massive international price hike due to ongoing COVID-19 crisis.

The NPMC meeting was held here under the chairmanship of Finance Minister, according to press statement issued by the Finance Ministry. Among others was attended by Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research (NFS&R), Syed Fakhar Imam; Adviser to the PM on Commerce, Abdul Razak Dawood; SAPM on Finance and Revenue, Dr. Waqar Masood, Secretary Finance Division, Secretary Ministry of NFS&R, Chief Secretaries of the Provincial Governments, Member PBS, MD Utility Stores Corporation, Chairperson CCP and other senior officers of various Ministries participated in the meeting. While reviewing the price trend of basic commodities in international markets the MPMC observed that the Year-on-Year comparative analysis indicated that price of crude oil increased by 178% in April 2021 as compared to April 2020. Similarly, the prices of sugar in international market increased by 57% on year-on-year comparison while that of palm oil, soyabean oil and wheat also registered a continued upward trend which, in turn, led to sharp increase in prices of basic items in domestic markets. Speaking on the occasion, the Finance Minister stated that COVID-19 crisis has fueled food prices in international markets especially edible oil, sugar, tea and wheat. — APP

Capital giving deserted look as people leave

ISLAMABAD: The capital city is giving deserted look as most of the natives have left for their home towns little earlier to celebrate the festival of Eid-ul-Fitr due to closure of inter-city public transport aimed at curbing COVID-19.

While those who have their own transport are also leaving for their native towns to enjoy the festival with their loved ones, taking advantage of the long holidays from May 8-16.

The hustle and bustle of the city faded away after closure of markets and public transport to ensure prevention of the citizens from the deadly virus.

"I left for my hometown Bahawalpur prior to the closure of public transport to visit my parents and celebrate the upcoming Eid festival", Fatima Sohail, a working woman said.

Talking to APP, she said, "I bought all the essentials but could not manage to buy bangles and henna till the last minute due to rush in markets and now the shops are closed". "This festival of Eid is very important for us to spend more time with our parents after remaining busy in job outstation", she said. Amina Yusuf, a resident of the capital city said that Eid is the only occasion when we find time to visit our friends but most of the people left the city and we are unable to enjoy the vacations.

She was of the view that although all these steps being taken to stop the spread of deadly Coronavirus but this made our occasion color-



ISLAMABAD: Capital roads presenting deserted look because of lockdown and also because people have already left for their homes to celebrate eid. — DNA

less and we are feeling like a hostage in the houses. Sharing the positive side, she said that due to long holidays this Eid, we will be having enough time to spend with our family and we have planned to watch movies and enjoy BBQ at home. It is a routine for most of the natives living in Islama-

bad to leave for their hometowns on the occasion of Eid to spend quality time with their loved ones and celebrate the festival in the fullest manner.

However prior to this Eid, the main markets, public places and other recreational points in the capital have been closed to prevent the citizens from risk of catch-

ing COVID-19 which has further added to its deserts.

"Every source of possible entertainment like recreational spots, markets, malls etc were closed down before Eid so we are restricted to homes and have less opportunity to enjoy the festival but this is in a larger interest of all as nothing

is important than health", Ejaz Ahmed, a resident of F-10/3 said.

"We must try to engage our kids in home based entertaining activities, curtailing their outside social interactions to maximum level for ensuring their safety on Eid. Staying alive and healthy is a must, if we want to enjoy future festivals", he

said. It is pertinent to mention here that inter-city public transport was closed from May 8 in accordance with the directives of National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) in the federal capital and most of the natives left for their hometowns to celebrate the Eid festival. — Agencies

Al-Shifa Trust establishes research lab to fight COVID-19

SAIFULLAH

RAWALPINDI: Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital has transformed its research center into a state-of-the-art research laboratory to gear up the fight against COVID-19 threatening masses, a senior doctor said Monday. Final trials of the vaccine developed by a Chinese multinational are in progress after which it will be made available throughout Pakistan while the whole process will take a month, said Dr. Wajid Ali Khan, Chief of Medical Services, Al-Shifa Trust. He said that the lab will enable us to respond to the current outbreak in a better way through treatments and countermeasures that can save millions of lives. Dr. Wajid Ali Khan said that we would also be figuring



out how the new infection spreads and how it infects as this information will be vital in order to accurately test new vaccines and drugs against the virus. He added that this is the first time humans have encountered this particular virus which first emerged in December 2019 and rapidly evolved into a pandemic

that is endangering humanity. With the overwhelming numbers of patients the clinical laboratories are encountering enormous pressure therefore a better system is needed to rapidly and accurately diagnose the infected persons for quick response by the health workers, he added. He said that strategies are

urgently needed to educate masses and effectively detect the disease which satisfies patients for appropriate care to can prevent exacerbation of the disease. He noted that reinfection has also become an issue and we will take this issue as a challenge to overcome this problem through finding ways for long-term immunity in people. We don't have the luxury of time, speeding up research has become a necessity to fight this disease which has transformed into a global crisis, he said, adding that we should be working overtime to combat the disease resulting in lockdown disruption hitting millions. He noted that many people are not taking the problem seriously resulting in a steady increase in the cases which can result in a huge catastrophe.

Over 70 mln vaccine doses to administer till end of year 2021

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Secretary, National Health Services Regulations and Coordination Dr. Nausheen Hamid on Monday said that over 70 million (7 crore) Coronavirus vaccine doses would be administered in Pakistan till the end of this year 2021.

Talking to a private news channel, she said a biggest Coronavirus center would be set up in Capital city soon and the numbers of Covid related vaccine centers are being increased in all cities of Punjab.

She said Pakistan recently starts the production of vaccine and recently received frozen bags of the vaccine from the CanSino facility in China which will now be processed into the finished vaccine and securely packaged in vials in Islamabad to produce nearly 120,000 doses of the vaccine.

She said the vaccine would go through multiple tests during the process before being labeled and packed and then loaded into the freezers. She said CanSino vaccine consignment would reach in country within next few days and there is no any shortage of vaccine in the country.

Nausheen Hamid said federal government would further speed up the vaccination process and increase the capacity to administer three lakh Covid-19 vaccine doses per day in coming days after Eid. She further urged citizens the age of 40 to register themselves to get vaccinated so we can continue our mission to immunize our fellow citizens as we speed up our vaccination. — APP

IT industry achieves 43.61% growth

ISLAMABAD: Information Technology and Telecommunication Industry has achieved 43.61% growth rate compared to the corresponding period, July-March, 2019-20, during which IT exports remittances inflow totaled US \$1.052 million.

According to the report, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Pakistan's ICT export remittances, including telecommunication, computer and information services have surged to US\$1.512 billion during July-March, 2020-21 thus maintaining the track record of delivering consecutive exports remittances inflow growth.

Meanwhile, Pakistan Software Export Board (PSEB), an entity of the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication has launched a comprehensive project aimed at enhancing the quality and capability of IT professionals in Pakistan. The project would improve the skill-set of IT professionals by providing training in the latest, state of the art technologies such as machine learning, block chain, e-commerce management, digital marketing, penetration testing and mean/full stack development, said a news release.

PSEB would also provide training and assistance for obtaining international certifications such as AWS certified solution architect, CCNA, CEH and Computer Hacking Forensic Investigator.

Managing Director, Pakistan Software Export Board Osman Nasir, said that the program is 100% free for IT graduates and employees of public sector organization while 90% cost of training and certification of private sector IT professionals would be subsidized by Pakistan Software Export Board. — APP

COVID-19 claims 3 lives with 71 new infections

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: As many as 71 more COVID-19 positive cases were reported during the last 24 hours, raising the tally of confirmed cases to 24,919 in the district while three lost their battle of life against the deadly virus.

The total infected cases included 23,010 from Rawalpindi and 1909 from other districts.

District Health Authority informed Monday that among the new cases, 25 reported from Rawal Town, 10 from Pothohar town, 19 from Rawalpindi Cantt, 14 Taxila 2 Murree, and one from Kahuta. "Presently 131 confirmed patients were admitted to various city facilities, counting 30 in Holy Family Hospital, 22 in Benazir Bhutto Hospital, 57 in Institute of Urology, 14 in Fauji Foundation Hospital, 7 in Hearts International and one in Akhtar Rukhsana Memorial hospital," the health authority report said. District Health Authority informed that so far 22,645 patients were discharged after recovery and 2752 were quarantined including 1522 at home and 1230 in isolation.

IRSA releases 171,200 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 171,200 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 178,400 cusecs.

According to the data released by IRSA, water level in the Indus River at Tarbela Dam was 1408.03 feet, which was 24.08 feet higher than its dead level 1386 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 59,600 and 55,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1110.10 feet, which was 70.10 feet higher than its dead level of 1040 feet whereas the inflow and outflow of water was recorded as 52,600 and 50,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa and Sukkur was recorded as 72,300, 61,800 and 14,000 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from the Kabul River a total of 42,800 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 5,000 cusecs released from the Chenab River at Marala. — APP

PM's KSA visit termed tremendously important

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group of FPCCI, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain on Monday said the visit of Prime Minister Imran Khan to Saudi Arabia was tremendously important for both the brotherly nations. The main focus of the visit was increased economic cooperation, facilitation of greater investment and trade and improved bilateral relations to

exploit the existing potential. Mian Zahid Hussain said that the Prime Minister Imran Khan desired cemented relations with KSA which is hosting two million Pakistanis contributing to the development of the friendly nation and sending foreign exchange through remittances and Roshan Digital Account. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that an agreement for the establishment of the Supreme Coordination Council to institutionalize and nurture the political, security and most economic cooperation is also an achievement.



RAWALPINDI: A large number of people standing in queue for purchasing flour bags on subsidized rates from Satsa Ramzan Bazaar at Shamsabad.

Rawalpindi Chamber, Ladies Lounge ink MoU

ZUBAIR AHMED

RAWALPINDI: A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce & Industry (RCCI) and the Ladies Lounge aiming to create opportunities for women entrepreneurs.

Under the agreement, RCCI and Ladies Lounge will engage in close cooperation to facilitate and empower women members of RCCI for the platform to connect in Business-to-Business (B2B) and Business-to-Consumer (B2C) meetings.

The MOU document was signed by Chamber President Mohammad Nasir Mirza and CEO Ms Saba Haider on the behalf of Ladies Lounge. The signing ceremony was held



RAWALPINDI: RCCI President Nasir Mirza and CEO Ladies Lounge Saba Haider sign and exchange MoU document at a ceremony held at Chamber House Rawalpindi. — DNA

at Chamber House while Senior Vice President Osman Ashraf, Vice President Shahraiz Malik,

members of the executive committee, women convener Noreen Ghaffar and others were also

present on the occasion. RCCI President Nasir Mirza said that creating opportunities and

providing a platform to empower women in entrepreneurship had always been Chamber's priority.

"The main purpose of this MoU was to provide women a platform to improve their networking and excel in the field of entrepreneurship," he said.

CEO Saba Haider in her remarks added that the main purpose of Ladies Lounge is to create an empowering community for women by building a platform to connect.

The lounge provides a dedicated space for the display corners for women entrepreneurs and also offers get together, events & indoor & outdoor activities.

Under the agreement, all women entrepreneurs associated with RCCI will get special discounts on any training activity, displays, meetup, retreats or events.

Unjust occupation

THE Palestinians are once again under Israeli fire. In a recent attack by Israeli forces, at least 200 Palestinians were injured when the clashes between Israeli police and Palestinians erupted near Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. The blatant use of force by the Israeli police against innocent Palestinians is just one of the many incidents of growing violence in the region that continues to go unreported and unnoticed by the global community. It would be correct to say that the international silence all these years has encouraged Israel to eat away Palestinian lands one after another.

The recent riots are fuelled by a years-long land dispute between the Palestinian refugees and Jewish settlers near the Old City of Jerusalem. The matter, already decided by a district court in favour of Jewish families earlier this year, is likely to be taken up by the Israeli Supreme Court despite the warning issued by the United Nations (UN).

If previous Israeli actions did not amount to war crimes, the continued policy of evicting Palestinian families certainly does. There is no way Palestinians will leave whatever little land they have left. A third intifada is the only natural outcome of this brutal suppression. The annexation parts of East Jerusalem will make the two-state solution meaningless.

In the last few years, the moves of the US have exposed it as being a complete collaborator of the apartheid regime of Israel. Can we hope for any change in behaviour now that the Biden administration controls American affairs? It is doubtful.

On our part, Pakistan's stance has always remained clear. Islamabad's vow to provide all the necessary support and assistance to Palestinian people who have been under Israeli's oppression shows that Islamabad is against occupations of all kinds in principle. Nevertheless, the ever-worsening situation in the occupied territories of Palestine demands more diplomatic efforts from Pakistan.

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

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Email: dailyispost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960

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



Being civilized

MUHAMMAD OMAR IFTIKHAR

IT is in human nature to exhibit aggression. It is also in human nature to remain modest and obey the rules. We as a nation must show our pure side and refrain from being arrogant. However, it is a norm to see people drive on the wrong side of the road, throw litter where there are not supposed to, get electricity through immoral means and the list goes on. As individuals, we must follow the rules and not find any shortcuts.

These shortcuts lead to one becoming immoral, corrupt, and feel superior to others. The art of living a civilized life is to accept the rules, follow them diligently, and advise others to do the same.

The concept of following the rules seems to be unknown in our part of the world. We intend to do acts that we are not supposed to. Despite the availability of a pedestrian bridge, people risk their lives by crossing the road in the presence of heavy traffic.

One must remember that children learn not by doing but by observing. These children, after growing up, will also cross the roads without safety precautions and will drive on the wrong side of the road for they have been seeing this happen during their childhood. People, in general, are aware of the rules but they do not give any heed to them.

It is interesting to note that Pakistanis when living abroad abide by the rules to the letter. It is because the authorities penalize wrongdoers immediately. While our system has all the rules, the authorities need to follow their responsibilities by implanting the laws and penalizing those who do not obey them.

Every sector, including the authorities enforcing various laws, must remain honest with their duties, and conduct their task with due diligence. Only then we can move towards becoming a civilized nation.

Saudi Arabia-Pakistan partnership for mutual benefits

Khalid Taimur Akram



Defence cooperation is another important element in strengthening the bilateral relations between both countries. Being a nuclear power, Pakistan has been seen as a powerful partner to address the strategic concerns of Saudi Arabia

MANY vibrant and transactional features have marked Pakistan's significant and friendly relations with Saudi Arabia. In this regard, the most prominent features are economic and strategic ones. Moreover, there is also a qualitative dimension of the relationship between both Islamic states. Pakistan always has value its diplomatic, strategic, and economic ties with other Islamic countries, especially in the Middle East and Gulf region. Pakistan is the home of the world's second-largest Muslim population. A nuclear-armed and strategically strong nation is promoting peace and cooperation among Muslim countries. Therefore, Saudi Arabia is fundamentally associated with Pakistan in many dimensions. In this context, the article aims to highlight the important contours of the Saudi-Pakistan relationship. The study also provides a brief analysis of Pakistan's strategic partnership with the Saudi Kingdom and outcomes of the mutually beneficial partnership.

All-Weather Friends:

Saudi Arabia was among the first countries to acknowledge Pakistan's unique position in the Islamic world. Four years after the formation of Pakistan, both countries signed the Treaty of Friendship. Saudi Arabia's pivot to Pakistan was that it is a strategically powerful nation and inclined towards facilitating regional peace and security. The changing dynamics of regional affairs and the shared identity of a nation formed by an Islamic character result

ed as a primary base to accelerate both nations' relationships. Undoubtedly, both states enjoy warm relations rooted in the centuries-old religious, cultural, and commercial links. The partnership under the visionary leaderships has grown over time and has remained one of the strongest alliances in the Islamic world. It was rightly defined by the late King Abdullah bin Abdelaziz al Saud as 'brothers'. The intent to further strengthen the engagement is evident in the exceptional contemporary tenure of the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, His Excellency Muhammad bin Salman al Saud.

Since the 1960s, Pakistan has been collaborating in the security paradigm with Saudi Arabia and has pursued soft power diplomacy policy vis-à-vis promoting peace. Its support and facilitation for the Kingdom are vital because it had an experienced military and political class. Since the 1970s, the Saudi Kingdom has been experiencing economic stability aligned with its oil wealth that requires a large labour force. A large Pakistani diaspora has been residing in Saudi Arabia and helping the country fulfil its requirements of an efficient workforce.

Underpinning the Contours of Saudi - Pakistan Economic Ties:

From the 1970s, economic alignments between both states have exceptionally benefited them. The Kingdom has assisted Pakistan with significant investment and financial assistance. In present times, the partnership is contributing to the socio-economic development of these countries. Saudi Arabia is the biggest exporter of oil and petroleum products to Pakistan. For Pakistani goods and services, the Saudi market is one of the main markets. Pakistan's exports to Saudi Arabia have been increased in recent times. Despite the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, Pakistan's exports to the Saudi Kingdom saw a major rise of almost 34%. Furthermore, in 2020, the bilateral trade between both states increased to \$2.181 billion. According to the United Nations COMTRADE database on international trade, Pakistan's exports to Saudi Arabia were US\$432.3 million during 2020. In this aspect, it can be anticipated that there would be an increase in the ratio of exports in the near future.

The Substantial Dynamics of Strategic and Security Partnership:

Saudi Arabia advances its ambition of expanding the ideological reach by maintaining a deep strategic relationship with Pakistan. Defence cooperation is another important element in strengthening the bilateral relations between both countries. Being a nuclear power, Pakistan has been seen as a powerful partner to address the strategic concerns of Saudi Arabia. The joint military drills and activities have paved the way for future cooperation in this domain. In this aspect, some examples of joint strategic and defence cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan are mentioned below:

- In the 1960s, Pakistan helped form the Royal Saudi Air Force (RSAF) and trained its first jet fighter pilots.
- Under a bilateral security cooperation agreement in 1982, Pakistan helped Saudi Arabia with defence production and joint military exercises and training.
- Pakistani combat troops have been assisting the Saudi forces. The troops of both countries have frequently taken part in manoeuvres under collective drills and military training programs.
- The Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition

(IMCTC) serves as a platform for security cooperation, including providing training, equipment and troops, and the involvement of religious scholars to deal with extremism. In this regard, Pakistan is significantly playing its role. Thereby, the strategic alliance and cooperation between Saudi-Pakistan have been touching new heights.

Saudi Grand Vision 2030: An Overview

The Saudi Government has taken well-structured policy ramifications to modernize its internal structure and play an active role in the international arena. Therefore, the Kingdom has introduced grand vision 2030 for inclusive socio-economic and security development. This includes three broader pillars mentioned below:

- A Vibrant Society:** A vibrant society is important to achieve the targets. A great society paves the way for establishing a strong foundation for economic prosperity. In this aspect, Saudi aims to create a society where citizens enjoy a quality of life complemented by a higher living standard. Moreover, the society should be based on the indicators ensuring a secure environment. The citizens must access world-class health care and education system.
- A Thriving Economy:** A strong society lays essential parameters for an economy to grow. Therefore, under this pillar, opportunities are provided to build an integrated education system relevant to market needs. It provides the youth required skills for the jobs. It will also create inclusive economic opportunities for the small and large corporation and entrepreneurs.
- An Ambitious Nation:** It reflects the responsibilities of the nation to attain the targets of the 2030 vision, including building an effective, transparent, accountable nation with the help of a high-performing Government.

Opportunities for Pakistan Under Saudi Vision 2030:

Under this vision, Pakistan can work closely within Saudi Arabia's integrated framework. The two countries are enriched in natural and mineral resources. Therefore, investment and research in geophysics and other mining-related subjects will pay huge dividends in the long run. Moreover, the vision offers Pakistan an opportunity to enhance its manpower export to more skilled and professional levels. It will boost foreign remittances. The close partnership between Islamabad and Riyadh will foster cooperation within this grand vision.

Recent Visit of Prime Minister Imran Khan to Saudi Arabia: A Timely Boost to Exceptional Partnership

The three-day visit of Pakistani PM Imran Khan has been held in a time when the strategic partnership between two countries is being called on to deal with the important regional developments. The Saudi Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman and PM Imran Khan held a discussion. During the meeting,

expansion of economic activities and enhancing bilateral coordination in multiple sectors between the two brotherly countries were emphasized. The positive role of Pakistan and the Kingdom in resolving the issues facing by the Islamic nation and its endeavours for regional and international peace and security were also discussed. Moreover, two important Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) were signed including, combating drug trafficking and financing energy, upgrading infrastructure, transportation, water, and communications projects. Both countries have also agreed to establish a Higher Coordination Council that will help in assisting the programs and projects. The latest visit also paved the way for exploring various areas of cooperation in light of the Kingdom's vision 2030.

Both countries are also inclined towards making a viable political solution to the Yemen crisis. They have explicitly showed concern over the ballistic missiles and drone attacks by Houthi militias on Saudi Arabia, threatening the oil export's security and the stability of energy supplies. Furthermore, both countries have been stressing the strong efforts by the Islamic world to fight extremism, reject sectarianism, and strive to achieve international peace and security. In this aspect, collective efforts to combat terrorism and Islamophobia are vital.

Progressive Grounds for Future Cooperation:

The brotherly relation between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan has been strengthened by the latest visit of Pakistan's PM Imran Khan. The historic partnership between the two states, forward-looking spirit, peaceful initiatives, and cooperation in a vast range of fields have resulted in a win-win situation. It can be anticipated that all areas, including trade, economics, investment, energy, energy, defence cooperation, the welfare of the overseas Pakistani diaspora, and job opportunities, would reinvigorate existing exceptional bilateral relations between both countries.

— Khalid Taimur Akram is the Executive Director, Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad



Embracing the future

ES of development: Economy, Equity and Ecology mean that economic growth, social progress and environmental protection must go hand in hand for sustainable development. Trading off one 'E' with the other out of the three: Economy, Equity and Ecology invariably leads to devastating consequences for humanity, no matter how rosy it looks in the beginning. Cognizant of the fact, United Nations approved in 2015 a universal framework of 17 SDGs, Sustainable Development Goals, to be achieved by all 193 UN-member states by 2025. 04 out of the 17 SDGs: Clean Water and Sanitation, Climate Action, Life on Land, and Life Below Water cater to environmental protection or ecological balance; 08 of them: No Poverty, No Hunger, Good Health and Well-being, Quality Education, Gender Equality, Affordable and Clean Energy, Sustainable Cities and Communities, and Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions outline basic ingredients of social progress, 04 of the total; Decent Work and Economic Growth; Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure; Reduced Inequalities, and Responsible Consumption and Production devise parameters for the economic growth; and 01 out of the total 17 SDGs: Partnership for the Goals highlights importance of forging inter-institutional and inter-state partnerships for the realization of these goals.

However, in the modern market economies, economic growth rules the roost. So be it G7, G20 or regional blocks like EU, and ASEAN, all focus much on improving upon their GDP growth numbers or economies by producing more and more competitive goods and services. This never-ending quest for the fittest among peers have spurred their rapid transformation into technology-driven smart economic models from the erstwhile labor-intensive highly industrialized business operations. This trend has rendered many job skills irrelevant and obsolete, requiring lot of workers worldwide to reskill or upskill themselves for retention as a productive part of the whole demand-supply chain. The better part of the stats is that this technology-induced distortion of the labor market has been out paced by the

technology-driven job creation as the same time.

The World Economic Forum's 'The Future of Jobs Report 2020' supports this claim. It identifies Data Analysts, Big Data Specialists, Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning Specialists, Process Automation Specialists, and Digital Marketing and Strategy Specialists as the top five most demanding job roles by 2025. Besides this, Digital Transformation Specialists, Business Development Professionals, Information Security Analysts, Software and Applications Developers, and Internet of Things Specialists would also be high on demand in the job market by 2025.

The report also mentions the emerging skills/skill sets that would be highly sought-after by employers in their prospective employees by 2025. Top on the list would be skills relating to Problem Solving, Self-Management, Working with People, and Technology use and Development. They include Analytical Thinking and Innovation; Active Learning and Learning Strategies; Complex Problem Solving; Critical Thinking and Analysis; and Resilience, Stress Tolerance and Flexibility. Other rewarding skills five years down the timeline would also include Creativity, Originality and Initiative; Leadership and Social Influence; Reasoning, Problem Solving and Ideation; Emotional Intelligence; and Technology Design and Programming.

Government of Pakistan has rightly figured out this labor market distortion effected by the rapid technological transformation and advancements. It has, therefore, introduced, besides conventional technical and vocational trades, high-end technical trades like Artificial Intelligence, Robotics and Mechatronics for training under its Kamyab Jawan Programme.

The graduates of these training courses would not only fill the void for technology-driven job opportunities in the country but would also be able to pursue rewarding jobs in the international markets, especially in the developed regions of the world like the Middle East, European Union, US, UK, Canada and Australia. If we contextualize this job market analysis in the region, keeping the infrastructural development projects under China Pakistan Economic Cor-

ridor (CPEC) in the back drop; it can easily be ascertained that construction, information Communication Technology (ICT), transport, tourism, hoteling and hospitality would be high on demand in the coming years. So, far a highly-paid job in the local and regional labor market, training in the cutting-edge technologies in these fields is a must.

However, there is a flip side of the coin. Despite strenuous efforts being made to reskill and upskill the existing labor force, the world is and will be experiencing a massive shortage of the workforce that is not only tech-savvy but also aptly-trained in high-end technologies of the future. This demand and supply gap would further widen already-existing income disparities among the working classes, casting a serious blow to the scanty efforts being made by the Governments around the Globe for the equitable distribution of wealth in their communities. Hence, it is feared that the future economic growth of the world would result into a more lopsided social progress, further deepening the existing fissure between haves and have nots.

And very rightly said, 'The devil is in the details.' In this race of technological advancement, high productivity, competitive advantage, and enviable GDP growth, mankind is spoiling the Mother Nature. Massive industrialization and unscrupulous exploitation of natural resources has caused serious ecological imbalance, exacerbating the hazards of global warming and climate change.

With the aforesaid in mind, it can easily be assessed that the world has made a lethal tradeoff for economy with equity and ecology, making the dream of sustainable development a distant reality.

Therefore, in order to achieve UN-mandated Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), we should adopt appropriate measures for equitable distribution of wealth to eradicate poverty, hunger, gender inequalities, and to ensure quality education, health care and basic amenities of life for all. We should also protect our environment by taking care of our land, water and air to leave a better planet to live for the posterity.

— arshakir.pmo@gmail.com

Abdul Rashid Shakir



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Briefs

Medvedev retakes 2nd spot in ATP rankings

PARIS: Russian Daniil Medvedev reclaimed the world number two spot from Rafael Nadal in the latest ATP rankings released on Monday, with no Americans in the top 30 for the first time. Nadal was knocked out of the Madrid Open in the quarter-finals last week by eventual champion Alexander Zverev, raising questions about his form ahead of his bid for a record-extending 14th French Open title.

That would also see him break Roger Federer's all-time men's record with a 21st Grand Slam singles triumph.

German Zverev remains in sixth place despite his first Masters title in three years. Taylor Fritz is the highest-ranked American at 31st - the first time the US have not had a player in the top 30 since the ATP rankings were created in 1973. Madrid Open runner-up Matteo Berrettini jumped up one spot to world number nine. -APP

PSG draw leaves Lille closer to Ligue 1 title

PARIS: Neymar was on target the day after signing his contract extension but Paris Saint-Germain were held to a 1-1 draw at Rennes on Sunday that leaves Lille a step closer to a remarkable Ligue 1 title triumph. PSG led at half-time after Neymar converted a controversial penalty award, but they were pegged back in the second half as Serhou Guirassy headed in the equaliser.

Presnel Kimpembe was later sent off for Mauricio Pochettino's side, who could not get back to winning ways on their return to domestic action following their Champions League semi-final exit against Manchester City.

PSG are now three points adrift of Ligue 1 leaders Lille, who know they will be champions for the first time since 2011 if they take four points from their remaining two matches of the season. The Parisians have won the French title in seven of the last eight years but they have regularly wobbled this season and the decision to replace coach Thomas Tuchel with Pochettino during the winter break looks like it will not have the desired impact. Lille had opened up a provisional four-point lead by winning 3-0 at Lens on Friday, with Burak Yilmaz scoring twice. It appeared PSG might respond in kind, despite being without the suspended Kylian Mbappe or the injured Marco Verratti in Brittany. They were given the chance to take the lead in first-half stoppage time when referee Ruddy Buquet surprisingly awarded a penalty after reviewing footage of Rennes defender Nayef Aguerd blocking a Layvin Kurzawa shot and catching the PSG player in the process. -APP

Uzbekistan to stage AFC group matches

DNA

KUALA LUMPUR: The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) announced on Monday that the Uzbekistan Football Association (UFA) will host the centralized matches of the 2021 AFC Champions League (East) Groups H and I, which are scheduled to take place from June 25 to July 11, 2021. Uzbekistan will also host the play-off stage match between South Korea's Daegu FC and Chiangrai United of Thailand on June 23, 2021, with the winners securing their spot in Group I alongside last season's quarterfinalist Beijing FC from China, reigning J. League champions Kawasaki Frontale and this season's debutants United City FC from the Philippines. The group stage of this year's AFC Champions League was forced to take place in a centralized manner due to the COVID-19 pandemic. AFC has announced earlier that the three other matches of East Zone groups - Groups F, G, and J - will take place in Thailand from June 22 to July 11, 2021.



KABUL: Army Chief General Qamar Bajwa reviewing guard of honour given by Afghan armed forces. - DNA

Iran determined to resolve issues with Saudi Arabia

FOREIGN DESK

TEHRAN: Iran's foreign ministry has for the first time confirmed that talks have been held with regional rival Saudi Arabia in an effort to reduce tensions between the two countries and across the region. Foreign ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh told a virtual press conference on Monday that Iran has always welcomed talks with its regional peers and that policy has not changed. "But let us wait to see the results of these talks and judge based on results," he said.

This comes days after a Saudi foreign ministry official confirmed the talks, also saying it was premature to discuss definitive conclusions. Neither side has divulged details of the talks, but reports say that, in addition to bilateral ties, Tehran and Riyadh are talking about developments in Yemen and Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers that Saudi Arabia has opposed. A Saudi-led military coalition has been battling Yemen's Houthis for the past six years, causing the world's worst humanitarian crisis. The Houthis, which Saudi Arabia says are armed by



Iran, have recently stepped up their attacks on Saudi soil.

Meanwhile, multilateral talks in Vienna to restore Iran's nuclear deal - which the United States abandoned in 2018 - are now in their fourth round and del-

egates are working against the clock as a three-month deadline for a temporary agreement between Iran and the global nuclear watchdog approaches on May 21 and the country is due to hold a presidential election in June.

The potential for Iran-Saudi rapprochement comes as the US reduces its presence in the troubled region and has ended its support for the war in Yemen. Last month, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman said he wants good relations with Shia Iran even though his Sunni Muslim kingdom still finds problems with Tehran's "negative behaviour".

Tensions between Riyadh and Tehran have played out across the region in recent years as they have backed opposing sides in Lebanon and Syria. Iran supported Qatar when other Arab nations imposed a blockade

on it that was only lifted in January.

The possible thaw in relations comes amid a flurry of engagement in the region. Iran may be on the verge of improving ties with other Arab states as reports indicate Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif could visit the United Arab Emirates (UAE) soon. The foreign ministry's Khatibzadeh confirmed on Monday that a Zarif visit to the UAE "has been on the agenda" and will happen when conditions are right. Zarif last month went on a four-country tour of the region that took him to Qatar, Iraq, Kuwait, and Oman.



MADRID: Real Madrid's Karim Benzema vies with Sevilla's Jules Kounde during a Spanish league football match between Real Madrid and Sevilla CF in Madrid, Spain.

No rest in La Liga title race

SPORTS DESK

MADRID: FC Barcelona are back in action on Tuesday as the race for the La Liga title and to avoid relegation continues with a midweek round of matches. Ronald Koeman's men missed the chance to leapfrog Atletico Madrid in the title race when they were held to a 0-0 draw by the league leaders in the Camp Nou on Saturday and they travel to mid-table Levante two points off the top of the table, meaning anything other than a win will probably mean the end of their title hopes. Levante seem to have taken

their foot off the gas in recent weeks after an intense season saw them reach the semifinals of the Copa del Rey and they have just one win in their last seven league matches.

However, players such as Jose Luis Morales Jorge de Frutos and Roger Marti are still capable of causing Barca plenty of problems and with another round of matches next weekend Koeman will have to consider rotating his squad for the game.

Ronald Araujo is likely to come into the team in central defense, while Ousmane Dembele will probably give Antoine Griezmann a rest.

Naomi Osaka wants 'discussion' on Olympics amid virus surge in Japan

ROME: Japanese tennis star Naomi Osaka said Sunday she favoured a "discussion" taking place over the Olympic Games taking place as Tokyo reels from a new coronavirus surge.

A virus state of emergency in Japan's capital city and other parts of the country was extended on Friday, less than three months before the delayed Games are due to begin.

There has been increasing pressure from the Japanese public to cancel the Olympics, which have already been postponed once from its original dates last summer due to the pandemic.

"For me, I feel like if it's putting people at risk and if it's making people very uncomfortable, then it definitely should be a discussion, which I think it is as of right now," the four-time Grand Slam winner said ahead of the Rome WTA tourna-



ment. "Of course I would say I want the Olympics to happen, because I'm an athlete and that's sort of what I have been waiting for my entire life. "But I think that there is so much important stuff going on, and especially

IPL 'can't happen' in India: Ganguly

NEW DELHI: This year's suspended IPL cannot be completed in India while it battles a raging coronavirus crisis and could struggle to find a slot elsewhere, India's cricket chief Sourav Ganguly has said. The Indian Premier League was abruptly halted at the halfway stage last week after several players became infected. India is reporting nearly 4,000 deaths and about 400,000 new cases a day.

Ganguly, president of the Board of Control for Cricket in India, said there was no way for the lucrative tournament to resume before India play the final of the World Test Championship against New Zealand in England on June 18.

"Too early to say how we

can find a slot to complete the IPL," Ganguly told Sportstar magazine in India at the weekend.

"There are lots of organisational hazards like 14-day quarantine. It can't happen in India. This quarantine is tough to handle," he added. side have a complicated schedule in coming months. India will go to England in early June to prepare for the world Test final.

They are then scheduled to visit Sri Lanka in July before returning to England for five Tests in August and September.

Last year's IPL was moved to the United Arab Emirates because of the pandemic and a number of English counties have offered to host the remainder of this IPL. - APP

French soldiers warn of civil war in new letter

FOREIGN DESK

PARIS: A new open letter has been published in France warning of the threat of civil war and claiming to have more than 130,000 signatures from the public.

The message, published in a right-wing magazine, accuses the French government of granting "concessions" to Islamism.

"It is about the survival of our country," said the text, said to be issued anonymously by soldiers and appealing for public support. The French government condemned it, as well as a similar letter last month. Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin called the latest letter a "crude manoeuvre" and accused its anonymous signatories of lack-

ing "courage", AFP news agency reported.

The letter to the government last month came from semi-retired generals. The minister in charge of the armed forces, Florence Parly, said they would be punished for defying a law that forbids reservists or serving members of the military from expressing opinions in public on religion and politics. However, far-right leader Marine Le Pen, a candidate in next year's presidential election, spoke in support of the estimated 1,000 servicemen and women who backed the April letter.

The new text was published late on Sunday by Valeurs Actuelles, although the numbers and ranks of its original signatories - said to be active members of the military - remain unclear.

The authors of the letter describe themselves as part of a younger generation of soldiers who have served in Afghanistan, Mali and the Central African Republic, or joined domestic anti-terrorism operations. "They gave their skin to destroy the Islamism to which you are giving concessions on our soil," they wrote.

Because of their anonymity, it is impossible to gauge how far the writers of this new letter represent the rank-and-file of the armed forces. Online petitions where no-one has to give their name cannot be regarded as firm evidence of anything.

Nonetheless, it would come as no surprise if this kind of generalised pessimism about the state of France were indeed the commonplace of barrack-rooms and officers' messes the length and

breadth of the country. Most French civilians are also concerned about violence, drugs and Islamism, so for soldiers - by instinct more attached than most to tradition, law-and-order and authority - to share those views is hardly in itself of note.

What's contentious is the willingness to go public and blur the lines between the military and the political. And on that score there will be many in the armed forces who disagree with the letter-writers. The analysis - even the warnings of disintegration and civil war - may be widely shared.

But urging politicians to "act" to stop the rot, with an implicit "or else" if they don't: that is a step into the unknown that the people who count in the armed forces - the top brass - would certainly

not condone.

The new message criticised the French government's response to the "elders" who signed last month's letter: "Did they fight for you to allow France to become a failed state?" "If a civil war breaks out, the army will maintain order on its own soil," the letter went on to say.

"No one can want such a terrible situation - our elders no more than us - but yes, civil war is brewing in France and you know it perfectly well."

France has recently proposed a controversial bill to tackle what President Emmanuel Macron has described as "Islamist separatism". However, some critics in both France and abroad have accused the government of unfairly targeting Islam.

Babar Azam voted ICC player of the month for April 2021

LAHORE: Pakistan's cricket captain Babar Azam won the International Cricket Councils (ICC) Men's Player of the Month for April 2021, for his consistent and outstanding performances across all formats in the recently concluded series against South Africa and was chosen as the April winner by fans and the ICC voting academy.

The ICC on Monday announced the winners of the ICC Player of the Month Awards for April which recognize and celebrate the best performances from both male and female cricketers across all forms of international cricket throughout the year. Australian female player Alyssa Healy was named the ICC Women's Player of the Month for April 2021.

Babar's match-winning 82-ball 94 in the third ODI against South Africa helped him gain 13 rating points to reach a career-best 865 points. He also contributed 122 from 59 balls in Pakistan's successful chase in the third match of a T20I series against the same opposition. - APP

NZ: Man stabs 5 in knife attack

WEB DESK

AUCKLAND: New Zealand police say they have arrested a suspect after five people were stabbed at a supermarket in the city of Dunedin on Monday afternoon.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said police had assured her that the attack did not appear to be terror-related. Police said the attack took place at a Countdown supermarket in central Dunedin, on New Zealand's southern island, at about 2:30 p.m. local time (0230 GMT/UTC). Witnesses told local media a man carrying two knives had stabbed staff, as well as bystanders who tried to stop him and pin him down. People reported a chaotic scene as people began screaming and running toward the store exits. Health authorities said three of the wounded individuals had been admitted to intensive care, with one admitted to a general ward and the other discharged.

Eid: Taliban declare...

From Page 01

its last 2,500 troops from the violence-wracked country despite faltering efforts between the Taliban and Afghan government to end a decades-long war.

"Mujahideen of the Islamic Emirate are instructed to halt all offensive operations against the enemy countryside from the first till the third day of Eid," a statement released by the Taliban said.

"But if the enemy conducts any assault or attack against you during these days, stand ready to robustly protect and defend yourselves and your territory," it added.

Eid al-Fitr marks the end of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, and the holiday begins according to the sighting of the new moon. The Taliban declared similar ceasefires last year to mark Islamic holidays.

The government usually reciprocates with a truce, and Fraidon Khawzow - spokesman for chief negotiator Abdullah Abdullah - said early Monday: "We welcome the announcement...the Islamic republic is also ready and will announce soon." - Agencies

Ghani lauds Pak role in Afghan peace

From Page 01

Later, COAS also called on Chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation of Afghanistan Dr Abdullah Abdullah and discussed matters related to the Afghan peace process.

Violence has risen starkly in Afghanistan in recent weeks with the Taliban launching attacks throughout the country and a huge unclaimed attack taking place on a school in Kabul on Saturday that killed dozens of students.

Briefs

Man killed in shooting at Vancouver Int'l Airport

VANCOUVER: A man was killed in a shooting at Vancouver International Airport on Sunday, police said, with the suspects still at large after firing at police from their getaway vehicle. The shooting happened outside the departures terminal at about 3 pm (0800 GMT), Richmond police said on Twitter, adding that there was "one male victim".

Police intercepted the getaway vehicle but were shot at by the escaping suspects, though no officers were injured, the tweet continued. Local police were still investigating the "disturbing" incident, said Minister of Public Safety Bill Blair, though he also suggested the shooting was linked to armed gangs.

"My thoughts are with the communities in the lower mainland who have been impacted by gun and gang violence far too often," he said. Police said Vancouver airport was operating as normal again after the incident. "The airports is open and safe for airport workers and those who need to travel," the airport authority confirmed. — APP

Major US pipeline struggles to reopen after ransomware attack

WASHINGTON: The largest fuel pipeline system in the United States remained largely shut down on Sunday, two days after a major ransomware attack was detected, its operating company said. The Colonial Pipeline Company ships gasoline and jet fuel from the Gulf Coast of Texas to the populous East Coast through 5,500 miles (8,850 kilometers) of pipeline, serving 50 million consumers.

The company said it was the victim of a cybersecurity attack involving ransomware — attacks that encrypt computer systems and seek to extract payments from operators.

"While our mainlines remain offline, some smaller lateral lines between terminals and delivery points are now operational," Colonial said in a statement, adding it would "bring our full system back online only when we believe it is safe to do so."

"We have remained in contact with law enforcement and other federal agencies, including the Department of Energy who is leading the Federal Government response," it added.

"Maintaining the operational security of our pipeline, in addition to safely bringing our systems back online, remain our highest priorities," Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo told CBS on Sunday that authorities were working to try to prevent any disruption to supplies. Colonial, based in the southern state of Georgia, is the largest pipeline operator in the United States by volume, normally transporting 2.5 million barrels of gasoline, diesel fuel, jet fuel and other refined petroleum products per day. — APP

Mongolia's COVID-19 cases surpass 45,000

ULAN BATOR: Mongolia registered 639 new COVID-19 cases in the past 24 hours, bringing the national tally to 45,459, the country's National Center for Communicable Diseases (NCCD) said Monday. Meanwhile, eight more fatalities were reported, raising the death toll to 182, the center said, adding that 1,287 more recoveries were reported, bringing the nationwide count to 32,660.

The Asian country launched a COVID-19 vaccination campaign in late February, with the aim of vaccinating at least 60 percent of its population of 3.3 million. More than 1,590,600 people have so far received their first dose and over 622,740 have got both jabs, according to authorities. — APP



BAKU: President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev and first lady Mehriban Aliyeva have visited the tomb of the great son of the Azerbaijani people Heydar Aliyev in the Alley of Honors as May 10 marks the 98th anniversary of his birth.

Modi govt slammed for ignoring warnings of Covid

The editorial comes at a time when many Indians are struggling to find hospital beds and oxygen cylinders for COVID-19 patients who require critical care

ISLAMABAD: The government of Indian prime minister Narendra Modi is under fire with criticism pouring in from all over for ignoring the lethality of the ongoing wave of COVID-19 that has led to alarming death rate in the country. The medical journal The Lancet has severely criticised the Narendra Modi government for its handling of the COVID-19 crisis in India, saying it has given the impression of being more occupied with "removing criticism on Twitter than trying to control the pandemic".

The editorial of the world's oldest and best-known general medical journals minced no words, saying that India's top government officials prematurely declared victory over the pandemic — highlighting health minister Harsh Vardhan's comment that 'India is in the endgame', leading to "complacency and insufficient preparation".

"The modelling suggested falsely that India had reached herd immunity, encouraging complacency and insufficient preparation, but

a survey by the Indian Council of Medical Research in January suggested that only 21% of the population had antibodies against SARS-CoV-2," the editorial says. The editorial comes at a time when many Indians are struggling to find hospital beds and oxygen cylinders for COVID-19 patients who require critical care. On Saturday, India reported its highest death toll yet due to COVID-19, recording 4,187 fatalities. The country also reported 401,078 new infection, the third consecutive day with more than 0.4 mil-

lion new cases. The journal also criticised the government's decision — despite warnings — to allow religious and political congregations. These events are "conspicuous for their lack of COVID-19 mitigation measures", the editorial said.

"The message that COVID-19 was essentially over also slowed the start of India's COVID-19 vaccination campaign, which has vaccinated less than 2% of the population. At the federal level, India's vaccination plan soon fell apart.

The government abruptly shifted course without discussing the change in policy with states, expanding vaccination to everyone older than 18 years, draining supplies, and creating mass confusion and a market for vaccine doses in which states and hospital systems competed," The Lancet said.

The journal said that the country's "botched" vaccination campaign must immediately be rationalised and implemented with all due speed. It saw two immediate bottlenecks: increas-

ing vaccine supply (some of which should come from abroad) and setting up a distribution campaign that will also cover rural and poorer citizens, who "face a desperate scarcity of public health and primary care facilities".

"The government must work with local and primary health-care centres that know their communities and create an equitable distribution system for the vaccine," it suggested.

The Lancet asked the government to publish "accurate data in a timely manner".

Climate to ravage Kenya's tea production

PARIS: Climate change is set to devastate Kenya's tea production as the world's largest exporter faces rising temperatures, erratic rainfall and insect infestations, according to analysis released on Monday.

Tea is the world's most consumed drink after water and disruption in supply from the east African nation is predicted to have a global impact.

A report from the charity Christian Aid outlined the various threats Kenya faces to its key black tea crop, as well as the dangers that other countries are likely to encounter as the planet continues to warm.

Citing a peer-reviewed study, the report said that the quadruple threat of rising temperatures, erratic rainfall, droughts and new insect infestations are forecast to destroy 26.2 percent of the country's optimal tea growing areas by 2050.

And climate change is expected to reduce the areas with medium quality growing conditions by nearly 40 percent in the same time frame.

"For generations we have carefully cultivated our tea farms and we are proud that the tea that we grow here is the best in the world," said Richard Koskei, a tea farmer from Kenya's western highlands. — APP

Indoor seating could return in England

LONDON: The British government is to announce a timeline for lifting anti-virus restrictions in England on Monday including the reopening of indoor seating in pubs and restaurants and allowing hugs, Downing Street said late Sunday.

Johnson will hold a news conference on Monday afternoon set to announce a May 17 start for the third step in Britain's "roadmap" out of the crisis. The government said Johnson would agree the exact measures with colleague and advisors on Monday morning.

Canada, US, Australia in boycotting UN's racism conference

FOREIGN DESK

OTTAWA: Canada has joined the US and Australia in boycotting the 20th anniversary of the World Conference Against Racism in Durban, known as Durban IV, citing the event's tradition of criticizing Israel's occupation of Palestine.

"Canada opposes initiatives at the United Nations and in other multilateral forums that unfairly single out and target Israel for criticism," Global Affairs Canada spokesman Grantly Franklin said.

Calling the conference "a forum for anti-Semitism", the spokesman also equated the criticism of Zionism and Israel's policies to anti-Semitism.

"Canada is concerned that the Durban Process has and continues to be used to push for anti-Israel sentiment and as a forum for anti-Semitism. That is why we do not plan to attend or participate in events surrounding the 20th anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Program of Action," the spokesman added. His remarks came after Australia and the US announced their withdrawal from the conference. Similarly, in 2009 and 2011, Western countries, including Germany, the Netherlands and New Zealand boycotted

the conference, claiming the summit "unfairly" targets Israel.

However, the three white-settler countries are also worried about the growing calls for an apology over their role in colonialism, the enslavement of Africans and reparations to the colonized nations.

The conference, which will be held in New York in September, will mark the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action under the theme of "Reparations, racial justice and equality for People of African Descent."

The World Conference against Racism is a series of international events organized by UNESCO to promote and support the struggle against racist ideologies and policies across the world. Four conferences were held in 1978, 1983, 2001 and 2009.

The 2001 conference, also known as Durban I, witnessed walkouts by the US and Israeli delegates offended by the draft resolution which called Zionism's founding expansionist ideology of Zionism racist. The final draft of the resolution did not condemn Zionism but it recognized the self-determination rights of Palestinians and supported the independent state of Palestine.

Enhanced Pak-China B2B irrigation cooperation is needed

NEWS DESK

BEIJING: The irrigation solutions promoted by a Chinese company have proved a success in demonstration zones in Pakistan. But a lack of investments has made it hard to popularise the efficient irrigation solutions," said Li Huijuan, senior engineer at National Water-saving Irrigation Engineering and Technology Research Center (Xinjiang) and manager of the International Water-saving Department at Xinjiang Tianye Group.

This view is echoed by Dr Gong Shihong, Deputy-Director of Department of Irrigation and Drainage, China Institute of Water Resources and Hydropower Research (IWHR). A single company is too fragile to transform the entire sector. The Pakistani government should incentivise more companies to invest in the popularisation of efficient irrigation solutions, said Dr Gong, who led a delegation to hold training sessions on high efficient irrigation in Pakistan.

A second factor lies in the limited range of efficient irrigation solutions available in Pakistan, Ms Li told CEN. Although the government of Punjab has worked with World Bank to subsidise small-scale farmers to install sprinklers and drip irrigation systems, enormous farmers still refrain from adopting such efficient irrigation systems because of the high maintenance costs ensued.

Ms Li explained, Pakistani farmers tend to use irrigation accessories such as drip tapes and drippers from European countries, which is six times the cost of Chinese solutions and is beyond the price range of the farmers. Pipes need to be removed for ploughing and land preparing prior to each crop and this puts a heavy burden on the farmers who already struggle financially to install the irrigation system, Dr Gong further elaborated. In essence, there has been a lack of communication between Chinese and Pakistani enterprises in this regard.

Chinese textile company to train, employ Pakistani workers

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Chinese textile company Challenge signed an agreement with the Gilgit-Baltistan government to train 2,000 workers and provide them jobs in its factory in Lahore, according to Gwadar Pro.

Managing Director of the Chinese company Karen Chen and representatives of the government of Gilgit-Baltistan signed the agreement. Qamar Bobi, a businessman who played a vital role in bringing in Chinese investment in Pakistan, was also present. Speaking on the occasion, Karen Chen said that as per the agreement, 2,000 workers would be selected from Gilgit-Baltistan and after training, they would be given jobs in textile establishments in Lahore where the employees would be provided accommodation and food free of charge. Chen said the textile unit employs 3000 people. Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Khaid Khurshid thanked the Chinese company for providing employment opportunities to the people of the region.

وزیر اعظم پاکستان

عمران خان سے فون پر براہ راست بات کریں

11 مئی بروز منگل دوپہر ایک بج کر تیس منٹ پر

آپ کے سوالات اور وزیر اعظم کے جواب

رابطے کے لیے فون نمبر

051-9224900

وزیر اعظم سے آپ کی بات چیت

ٹیلیویژن، ریڈیو اور ڈیجیٹل میڈیا پر

براہ راست نشر کی جائے گی۔

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 ٹیلیفون لائنز دوپہر 30:1 بجے کھول دی جائیں گی

Briefs

India reports 366,161 new corona cases

NEW DELHI: India's COVID-19 tally rose to 22,662,575 on Monday, as 366,161 new cases were registered across the country in the past 24 hours, said the health ministry. Besides, as many as 3,754 deaths have taken place in the country since Sunday morning, taking the total death toll to 246,116, added the ministry. This is the first time after four consecutive days when the number of cases fell below 400,000 in 24 hours, and first time after two consecutive days when the number of deaths in a day fell below the 4,000-mark. There are still 3,745,237 active cases in the country, with an increase of 8,589 active cases through Sunday. A total of 18,671,222 people have been cured and discharged from hospitals so far across the country. The COVID-19 figures continue to peak in the country, as the federal government has ruled out a complete lockdown to contain the worsening situation though some states have imposed night curfews or partial lockdowns. Delhi has been put under a third successive lockdown till May 17. Some school exams have been cancelled or postponed in the wake of COVID-19 situation. The number of daily active cases has been on the rise over the past few weeks. In January the number of daily cases in the country had come down to below-10,000. - APP

Over 16,000 frontliners affected by Covid-19

DNA
ISLAMABAD: Seven more health professionals at the forefront of the country's fight against the Covid-19 pandemic have been afflicted with the coronavirus over the last 24 hours. According to a private television channel report, the number of healthcare workers affected by the virus nationwide since the pandemic began last year in February has reached 16,131. One health worker died over the previous 24 hours, they said. As of May 10, 9,631 doctors, 2,313 nurses, and 4,187 health staff had been affected by the virus, 156 of whom have succumbed to the disease. At present, a total of 521 health workers are in home isolation while 16 under treatment at various hospitals. 15,438 doctors and paramedical staff have recuperated from the disease thus far. Sindh accounts for 5,713 of the total cases among the healthcare professionals with 54 deaths from Covid-19. Whereas, Punjab reported 3,377 cases among frontliners with 28 fatalities, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 3,879 infections and 42 deaths, Islamabad 1,459 cases and 11 deaths and Balochistan 777 infections and nine deaths.

24 Covid-19 positive passengers go missing

STAFF REPORT
PESHAWAR: In a shocking incident, 24 passengers who were kept in isolation after testing positive for COVID-19, mysteriously gone missing from the Peshawar Police hospital. As per details, the passengers reached Peshawar from Sharjah via private airlines and were tested positive for the COVID-19. They were kept in a quarantine facility at the Peshawar Police hospital as a precautionary measure to stop the spread of the coronavirus. Reportedly the staff of the hospital allowed all the COVID positive passengers to leave the hospital. Getting the information of the matter, the National Command and Operations Centre (NCOC) directed the hospital administration to bring back the COVID-19 patients at the hospital. Acting on the directions, 21 passengers were brought back to the hospital, while the search for three others was underway, said MS Peshawar Police hospital Dr Niaz Muhammad.

PAYING RESPECTS TO HEYDAR ALIYEV



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Azerbaijan Ali Alizada and employees of the Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan in Pakistan paying respects to national leader Heydar Aliyev. Staff of the Embassy of the Republic of Azerbaijan to Pakistan put flowers in front of the bust of Heydar Aliyev, National Leader of Azerbaijan at the Embassy and commemorated him his birth anniversary. (More Pictures on Page 03) - DNA

1.2 million AstraZeneca doses due next month

ZUBAIR AHMAD
ISLAMABAD: Pakistan will receive another batch of over 1.2 million doses of Oxford-AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine under COVAX next month after receiving the first consignment two days back. According to sources privy to the matter, Pakistan has been informed regarding the arrival of the second batch and it would likely arrive by next month to help the government in its efforts to vaccinate the population. "The exact date will be conveyed soon to the authorities," they said. Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Health Dr. Faisal Sultan said on Sunday that the AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine will also be administered to people above 40 years of age in line with practices in many countries. Taking to Twitter, the SAPM welcomed the cooperation of the COVAX facility and all global partners including WHO, UNICEF and others for the provision of 1.2mn vaccine doses to Pakistan under the COVAX program. "1.2 million doses of AstraZeneca-Oxford received and 1.2 million expected soon will supplement vaccines purchased by the government," he said in a tweet. The Ministry of National Health has issued guidelines with regard to the use and storage of the AstraZeneca vaccine. According to the guidelines, AstraZeneca could be administered to a specific age group of men and women. The vaccine shot could be given to the male aged 18 years or above, and the women above 40 years of age.

Govt. committed to facilitate private sector, says PM

The prime minister further said that Board of Investment was being fully activated to provide facilities to the foreign and local investors

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan Monday stressed upon active participation of private sector in the development process of the country and said that government was fully committed to provide conducive environment to the private sector. He said keeping in view public requirements, private sector's participation was need of time. The prime minister chaired a meeting in which he was given a briefing over different ongoing, completed and nearing completed public-private partnership projects carried under Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP), PM office media wing said in a press release. The prime minister further said that Board of Investment was being fully activated to provide facilities to the foreign and local investors. The prime minister was apprised that that work on about 50 different public-private partnership model development projects worth Rs2000 billion under Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) was underway in different phases. A total of 35 others were in the

process of approval, it was further added. The meeting was attended by Minister for Planning Asad Umar, Minister for Finance Shaukat Tarin, relevant secretaries and senior officials. Chief Minister Punjab Sardar Usman Buzdar, provincial minister Hashim Jawan Bakht and other provincial officers attended the meeting via videolink. The meeting was informed that 14 other projects worth 978 billion rupees would get approval in the next three months. Whereas 18 projects costing 1016 billion rupees would be awarded in the year 2021-22. It was further apprised

that two important projects including Sialkot-Kharan motorway and Sukkar-Hyderabad motorway with a cost of Rs233 billion had been approved by the Public-Private Partnership Authority. Tender for Sialkot-Kharan motorway had been floated whereas for Sukkar-Hyderabad project, the tender would be released in June. The prime minister was apprised that six more projects worth 710 billion rupees would be approved by August in this year. These projects in the public-private partnership models included communication, health, science and technology, social

sector and other related sectors. Under PSDP plus strategy, conducive environment and other necessary assistance was being provided to ensure participation of the private sector. Under PSDP plus, 180 different venues had been identified with estimated worth of Rs5.5 trillion, it was further added. The prime minister directed Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provincial governments to submit progress details of federal and provincial development projects, including the future development projects and their distribution on the basis of different areas.

Sanjrani writes to world leaders on Palestine

KHAYAM ABBASI
ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani has written letters to leaders of world's parliaments, drawing attention of the international community towards recent Israeli aggression against innocent Palestinians, praying in Al-Aqsa Mosque. In his letters to heads, speakers, and presiding officers of the parliaments of various countries, including the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, he said Israeli actions are clear violation of international human rights and laws. He said no religion allows such kind of barbarism on worshippers. The Chairman said all the countries of the world must strongly condemn these atrocities against innocent Palestinians. He said the Palestine issue should be resolved so that Palestinian Muslims can take a sigh of relief. He urged all the countries to play their role to stop this cruelty and violence.

People paying horrible price due to PTI's policies: Bilawal

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Monday has said that Prime Minister (PM) Imran Khan is begging from the entire world. In a statement, the PPP leader said that the people of Pakistan are suffering from the horrible consequences of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) 'tab-deel' slogan. Today, foreign investors are not ready to come to Pakistan for business purpose, he added. Earlier, Bilawal had blamed the ineptitude and apathy of the puppet Prime Minister for the economic ruin. "Prime Minister Imran Khan, it is time to rouse from your slumber and apathy. Everyday, as many as



twenty people are committing suicide due to economic hardships this government has put them under," he added. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari asked how the federal government believed the common man would be able to make both ends meet with the annual rate of inflation exceeding 14%. "The cost of medicines has gone up a 100%, leaving people to choose between treatment and sustenance. The government rolls out

amnesty schemes for the elite, whitening their ill-gotten gains, while the poor are told to be content with langarkhanas that serve more as backdrops for the Prime Ministers PR machine," he went on to say. PPP Chairman said that the people of Pakistan are unwilling to tolerate such back-crushing inflation, and that the puppet Prime Ministers plans to raise Rs 90 billion by increasing electricity rates would be the proverbial straw that breaks the camel's back. "Imran Khan keeps blaming corruption, but he himself is patronising and promoting people accused of monumental corruption. His anti-people policies and ideology have brought the country to the brink of absolute economic ruin," he stated.

Vaccination centres closed on 2 Eid days

DNA

LAHORE: The vaccination centers across Pakistan will remain closed for first two days of Eidul Fitr, National Command Operation Center (NCOC) issues a circular on Monday. According to the notification, all vaccination centers across the country will have two holidays on Eid, while vaccination centers will open from 8 am to 8 pm after Ramadan. On the other hand, according to the latest figures issued by the NCOC on Monday, Pakistan reported 78 deaths in the last 24 hours by novel coronavirus as the number of positive cases has surged to 861,473. The nationwide tally of fatalities has jumped to 18,993.

More infectious British variant found in Lahore

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: A more easily spread coronavirus variant, first identified in England last year, has now become the dominant variant in Lahore, a study conducted at the University of Health Sciences (UHS) revealed on Monday. "The prevalence of variants of concern is increasing and it is now clear that the UK variant, known as B.1.1.7, has taken hold across the metropolis", said the UHS Immunology department's associate professor, Dr Shah Jehan, who is the principal investigator of the research. "Based on our most recent study, the B.1.1.7 variant is now the most common lineage circulating in Lahore," Dr Shah Jehan said, adding that out of a total of 100 samples, 89 had UK/Kent variant while only two had B.1.351, that is, the South African variant of COVID-19. Dr Shah Jehan further said that the study was conducted in collaboration with the UK's Quadram Institute Bioscience (formerly the Institute of Food Research). He said that the samples were collected from hospitals in Lahore and surrounding areas. The next-generation sequencing technique was then used to identify the types of coronavirus. He added that he was working with his fellow researcher and head of the Department of Immunology, Professor Nadeem Afzal, on whole-genome sequencing of 1,000 samples.

Court extends Javed Latif's physical remand

ABID RAZA
LAHORE: A Lahore court on Monday extended physical remand of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) MNA Mian Javed Latif for two more days in a case registered against him for allegedly delivering anti-state remarks. Duty Judicial Magistrate of Model Town Court heard the case against Javed Latif for delivering remarks against state institutions. Police produced him before the court on completion of his previous four-day physical remand and requested that his remand be extended for further investigation. A prosecutor stated before the court that it is yet to be investigated with whom Javed Latif hatched the conspiracy. On the other hand, the lawmaker's lawyer opposed the remand extension plea. After hearing arguments, the court reserved its verdict. Later, it extended the physical remand for two more days. The PML-N MNA himself presented his arguments and said everyone would have been happy if he had remained silent at the country's loss.

UAE bars travel from Pakistan, 3 other countries

Following the announcement, Airblue and Serene Air said they would continue their Eid flights from UAE to Pakistan since the restrictions did not apply to outbound flights. "We will continue our flights for Pakistan till Eid as per plan, but I am not sure about post-Eid operations from Pakistan to the UAE"

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The United Arab Emirates will bar entry for travellers from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka starting from May 12 (Wednesday) as part of measures to contain the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, the country's National Emergency Crisis and Disasters Management Authority said on its website on Monday. "Flights between the four countries will continue to allow the transport of passengers from the UAE to Bangladesh, Pakistan, Ne-

pal and Sri Lanka," it said. "This decision also includes extending the suspension of entry for travellers who were in these four countries in the 14-day period prior to arrival in the UAE," it added. The ban includes transit flights coming from those countries. Transit flights to those countries can continue. "Exempted travelers, including UAE citizens, those on diplomatic missions accredited by the four countries, official delegations, those travelling on business planes, and golden residence holders, will be subject to precautionary measures that

include a 10-day quarantine and PCR testing at the airport and on the fourth and eighth days after entering the country." The country also reduced the PCR testing period from 72 to 48 hours before travel. Following the announcement, Airblue and Serene Air said they would continue their Eid flights from UAE to Pakistan since the restrictions did not apply to outbound flights. "We will continue our flights for Pakistan till Eid as per plan, but I am not sure about post-Eid operations from Pakistan to the UAE," Serene Air's country manager in UAE, Sohail Sheikh, told Khaleej Times. Both the airlines said that passengers could rebook their tickets or ask for a refund, assuring they would be "facilitated as per standard policy without extra cost". The UAE announced last month a ban on entry from India to guard against the spread of the highly contagious Indian variant of the coronavirus. A growing number of countries have banned travel from India as the country is ravaged by the Covid-19 pandemic with hundreds of thousands of cases being reported each day. These include the Phil-

ippines, Italy, United States, and Australia. Australia also warned that people who tried to flout the travel ban could face jail and fines. Other countries, including Canada, United Kingdom and Iran have banned travel from both India and Pakistan. Over the last 24 hours, India reported 366,161 new infections and 3,754 deaths - off a little from recent peaks - taking India's tally to 22.6 million with 246,116 deaths. Meanwhile, Pakistan reported 3,447 new cases and 78 deaths, taking the country's tally of infections to 861,473 and the death toll to 18,993.