

PM URGES COUNTRY TO COMPLY WITH COVID SOPS; ASAD RULES OUT COMPLETE LOCKDOWN



PRIME Minister Imran Khan on Thursday urged the masses to strictly observe the government's mandated Covid-19 standard operating procedures (SOPs) on the occasion of Eid-ul-Adha to keep the virus at bay.

PM Imran warned the nation about the dangers of the Delta variant, which first emerged in India, and said that India, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, and Indonesia are currently suffering because of it.

"Given the current situation in countries like Afghanistan, where there is an acute shortage of oxygen, I would like to say a few things to the nation," the PM said. He said that so far, Allah has been very merciful towards Pakistan and even foreign publications like The Economist has listed Pakistan as one of the top three nations that were able to control the pandemic in an efficient way.

He lauded the government, particularly the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) for carrying out research and taking timely decisions to contain the virus from spreading.

He said that Pakistan was the only

Muslim country that kept mosques open for two consecutive Ramadans – thanks to the efforts, monitoring, and pre-emptive measures of the NCOC as well as the cooperative attitude of the nation.

"It was also because of the cooperation of the Pakistani nation that the government could save the country from getting into a catastrophic situation [like other countries]," the premier said.

The premier said that at present, however, the coronavirus cases in the country are suddenly rising again after plummeting because of the arrival of the Delta variant in the country.

He explained that masks should be worn at all times whenever someone is in a confined space with other people, including wedding functions, restaurants, and rooms, because the chances of the virus spreading within indoor environments are extremely high.

"If someone is out in the open, for example in a park, they can take their masks off, but when they are inside a bus or a car with other people, for instance, they must wear a mask," the premier explained while holding a mask

in his hands.

"It's a very easy job to wear a mask, and this simple step can save the country and our economy from disaster," he continued.

ASAD RULES OUT COMPLETE LOCKDOWN: Meanwhile, fearing the start of the fourth wave of coronavirus pandemic in current month, head of NCOC Asad Umar has said that the government would not impose complete lockdown during this wave.

Addressing the oath taking ceremony of newly appointed members of National Youth Council (NYC) on Thursday, Asad said that during the past waves of coronavirus, the government's strategy to handle the pandemic and overcome its after-effects had been very successful and the country was placed among the best three performing countries by the Economist's Normalcy Index for handling it.

The minister urged the people to keep on following the standard operating procedure (SOPs) and vaccinate themselves to cope with the fourth wave in an effective manner. He, however, added that in case the ratio of positive cases goes up, the government would opt for smart lockdown as was done during the past phases. The minister said that NCOC through a letter informed the Kashmir Election Commission about violation of coronavirus SOPs during ongoing election campaigns.

He appreciated the effort of Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Youth Affairs Usman Dar and congratulated the newly elected members of NYC. The minister said that it is very important to know the issues of youth from them, arguing that one can only understand problems of people by consulting those who face them and then come up with proper solutions. **NEWS DESK**

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Interior Ministry will register all foreigners residing in Pakistan: Rasheed

ISLAMABAD
STAFF REPORT

The government had decided to register all foreign nationals arriving and residing in Pakistan, announced Minister for Interior Sheikh Rasheed Ahmad on Thursday. Through the move, the Ministry of Interior wanted to track up to 50,000 people who entered the country in the 1970s — before and following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan — but whose whereabouts remained unknown.

About 2.5 million Afghan nationals, many of whom fled their homeland after it was invaded in 1979, live in Pakistan, home to the world's second-largest refugee population.

In May, the government decided to issue computerised identity cards to them. The Proof of Registration card is a legal identification document and includes enhanced security features, said a press statement issued at the time.

However, today, Rasheed, during a press talk, revealed that the government had recently arrested some refugees who were in possession of fake identity cards.

"Interior Ministry has decided to register all foreign nationals, who so ever he maybe," he said. "Approximately 40 to 50 thousand people en-

tered in Pakistan in last 70 years," and security agencies did not know about them "so we are going to register all foreign nationals and have made visa process online".

He further said the government had allowed foreign nationals to open bank accounts and get cellular phone connections by showing their "alien cards," issued under the National Alien Registration System to legally register, document immigrants and other foreign residents in the country.

The minister said that a strategy was being designed to rescue Pakistan nationals stranded at the Torkham border crossing with Afghanistan. The government had closed the crossing earlier this week amid a surge of Covid-19 cases in the war-battered country.

He said the issue of the proscription of the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan will be decided by the federal cabinet in its next meeting.

Referring to the general election in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Rasheed predicted that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf will form a government in the mountainous region.

He said he will accompany Prime Minister Imran Khan during the election campaign in Kashmir. He said that people will again vote for the ruling party in the next general election.

CORONAVIRUS IN PAKISTAN

CONFIRMED CASES:
967,633

LAST UPDATED AT 7:21 AM ON JULY 8, 2021

DAY'S DEATH TOLL:

24

NEW CASES:

1,683

RECOVERED:

910,609

DEATHS:

22,493

SINDH:

343,303

PUNJAB:

347,347

KPK:

138,855

BALUCHISTAN:

27,502

AJK/GB:

20,728/6,639

ISLAMABAD:

83,259

US says Pakistan is 'an important partner' on various fronts

At the State Department, its spokesperson Ned Price called Pakistan "an important partner" on various fronts and said that both countries shared interests for durable peace and stability in Afghanistan.

"Pakistan has been helpful in — recently when it comes to this shared interest. Our shared interests go well beyond that: broader counterterrorism interests as well, not to mention the people-to-people ties that unite our two countries," Price said in response to a question at the daily press briefing.

The United States, he said, was going to work very closely to ensure that Afghanistan's neighbours play a constructive role in promoting a peaceful settlement there.

In his remarks at the USIP, which was moderated by former US ambassador to Pakistan Richard Olson, the ambassador said that the "Extended Troika" declarations issued by Pakistan, China, Russia and the US could serve as a template for coordinated messaging by the key regional and international stakeholders on the need for a negotiated settlement in Afghanistan.

Peace in Afghanistan is



achievable and the process is a shared responsibility, he said.

Commenting on Islamabad's focus on geo-economics, he said the government wanted to leverage the country's location and connectivity infrastructure to promote regional integration and growth.

Khan said that the United States remained the largest market for Pakistan's exports, and underlined Islamabad's desire to enhance bilateral cooperation in energy, agriculture, and technology sectors. Pakistan, he said, is well-placed in the region to be an important part of the global supply chain.

On India-Pakistan ties, Khan said that Prime Minister Imran Khan desired a working relationship with India but the Bharatiya Janata Party government of Prime Minister Modi had pursued a radical and anti-Pakistan agenda that has made the normalisation of ties difficult for Pakistan. On Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir, he said that the dispute should be resolved as per the wishes of the people as promised to them by the international community through the United Nations Security Council resolutions. **NEWS DESK**

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Afghan forces retake provincial capital after Taliban incursion: defence ministry

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We must stay abreast of evolving regional situation, says Gen Qamar

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Bajwa urges Singaporean investors to tap opportunities in SEZs

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GREEN ECONOMY ROADMAP TO SAVE FUTURE GENERATIONS FROM CLIMATE THREAT: IMRAN

ISLAMABAD

STAFF REPORT

PRIME Minister Imran Khan on Thursday said his government was working on creating an eco-friendly roadmap to help make the transition to a green economy in order to save future generations from the threats of climate change and global warming.

“We will devise sustainable policies on environmental protection to materialize the vision of a clean and green Pakistan,” the prime minister said in his address at the launch of Pakistan’s first-ever locally manufactured electric motorcycle.

The launch was part of the government’s five-year Pakistan Electric Vehicles Policy 2020-2025 approved last year and envisages targeting a robust electric vehicle market with a 30 percent and 90 percent share in passenger vehicles and heavy-duty trucks by 2030 and 2040, respectively.

Imran said the governments in rich countries always designed long-term policies, instead of following election-to-election strategies to earn votes and promote “mafias”.

“We have to take action today to resolve the upcoming challenges,” he said, adding that deforestation and pollution were manmade problems that were leading to

horrendous effects on human lives.

He recalled that Lahore and Peshawar, once known as the cities of gardens, were witnessing high levels of airborne toxins which possessed the potential to affect the health of a person by reducing their average age by as much as 11 years.

The prime minister said the Electric Vehicle Policy would be export-orientated to encourage economic growth by using local raw materials in order to manufacture indigenous products.

Besides being helpful in reducing pollution, he said, the EVs would open up an entirely new segment in the country and generate employment opportunities.

He lauded Jolta Electric Executive Director Dr Muhammad Amjad and the team for promoting eco-friendly policies in the country.

The salient features of the policy include a phased transition of the automobile industry, as it will be covering two and three-wheelers and heavy commercial vehicles providing incentives to manufacturers.

On the occasion, Minister for Industries Khusro Bakhtiar said JE was the first to launch the initiative among three companies that were given licenses by the government to manufacture electric two-wheelers.

He expressed confidence that the sector

of electric vehicles would undergo a boost in near future and mentioned that 17 more companies had shown interest in such production.

He said a regulatory framework would be outlined to manage the area of electric automobiles and their charging infrastructure.

He said Africa, Central Asia and Afghanistan would be the target areas for Pakistan to sell its products in line with its auto-development and export policy.

Manufactured by Jolta Electric, the e-bike is a major step towards electrifying the domestic automobile industry.

The e-bike, to be available in various models including JE-70, JE-70 L, JE-70 D, JE-100 L, JE-125 L, JE-Scooty, JE-Sports Bike, is energy-efficient and can be charged overnight with other features such as no clutch and gear and low maintenance.

Various models of e-bikes have different speed specifications from 10 to 60 kilometres per hour and can cover a distance after full charge from 60 to 100 kilometres.

Chinese FM urges Pakistan, China to promote strategic communication

ISLAMABAD

MIAN ABRAR

Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi Thursday urged Pakistan and China to promote strategic communication and closer coordination between the two iron-friends on all issues of common interests. Addressing the participants of a conference titled, “Pakistan-China At 70: Vision for the Future” held here under the aegis of Pakistan-China Institute (PCI) held to commemorate 70 years of Pakistan-China relations, Wang Yi said that all countries should get together to defeat the pandemic and work against vaccine nationalism. While affirming commitment to Pakistan, Wang Yi said that no matter how the world or the region changes, China will always stand firmly with Pakistan.

The conference, which was packed to capacity, brought together Pakistan’s Parliamentarians, Foreign

Ambassadors, former Pakistani diplomats, academicians, government officials from China and Pakistan, media representatives, think tanks and civil society members under one roof. The conference featured four panelists including Chinese Ambassador Nong Rong, Syed Fakhar Imam, Minister of National Food Security and Research, Qasim Suri, Deputy Speaker National Assembly and Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed.

Chinese Ambassador Nong Rong announced that the long-awaited Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC) of the China, Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) would convene later this month in July. He mentioned how the two countries enjoy strong bilateral relationship in various sectors. He added that the military leaderships of both countries enjoy unique strategic partnership. Ambassador Nong Rong thanked the political leaders of Pakistan for sending congratulatory letters to CPC on its 100 years. He also appreciated the role of PCI as an important bridge to connect our two peoples.

Moreover, he said that CPEC has now moved from infrastructure, energy, and development to agriculture, industry, IT, science and technology. He also mentioned how the two countries especially deepened their cooperation during the pandemic. He also thanked Pakistan’s military for their strong support for protection of China’s core interests. He lauded the remarkable performance of Pakistan in handling COVID-19. He labeled urbanization, digitization, and modernization as the pre-requisites for rapid development in the years to come. Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed said that today is a historic day because on this day 50 years ago, Dr. Henry Kissinger flew to Beijing from Islamabad on a PIA, thanks to Pakistan being a bridge between China and the US a role we should continue to play’. Talking about the uniqueness of 70 years of bilateral relationship, Senator Mushahid Hussain said that Pakistan-China relations are not transactional, these relations are not tactical nor directed against any third country.

TTP TERRORISTS ISSUED PAKISTANI CNICS BY NDS: FIA

KARACHI: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has revealed that Afghan spy agency, National Directorate of Security (NDS), had issued Pakistani computerised national identity cards (CNICs) to the terrorists associated with outlawed Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) from the database of National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA). The revelation was made by FIA Director Sindh, Zone-I, Amir Farooqui in a press conference on Thursday, saying that computerised national identity cards (CNICs) for TTP terrorists had been made by using the NADRA database. Amir Farooqui added that the national identity cards were also issued to Al-Qaeda terrorists from NADRA, whereas, a suspect involved in Safoora carnage, Imran Ali, who was an Indian citizen, had also gotten a CNIC from the authority. The FIA director said that the investigation exposed the manipulation of suspects’ identifications who were involved in the armed attack on the Chinese consulate in Karachi as Allah Nazar and other terrorists managed to get CNICs from NADRA. Amir Farooqui said that several NADRA Sindh employees were involved in the crime to issue national identity cards to the terrorists of outlawed outfits. In May, Federal Minister for Interior Sheikh Rasheed had taken notice of the issuance of National Computerized Identity Cards (CNICs) to foreigners and removed DG RHO Karachi Mir Ajam Khan Durrani from the post. **TLTP**

Men accused of beating, stripping couple naked remanded in police custody

ISLAMABAD: Four men who were arrested after a video of them thrashing and stripping naked a young couple went viral on social media were remanded into police custody, Islamabad police said. According to the first information report of the incident, it took place within the limits of Golra police station at an apartment building in sector E-11/2. “The video clip of the incident went viral on social media. In the video, five to six men can be seen keeping the victims in custody under gunpoint. The accused also stripped the man and the woman naked while threatening them,” the FIR said, adding that the suspects were also performing “vulgar acts”. The main accused, Usman Mirza, and his two accomplices — Hafizur Rehman and Farhan Shaheen Awan — were arrested shortly after the video clip started trending on social media platforms. The fourth accused was arrested later in the day, according to an update posted by the Islamabad police on its Twitter account. The police, while rejecting as erroneous the reports of suspects being granted bails, asserted “any person no matter how influential was not above the law”. **STAFF REPORT**

President for utilising potential of youth for socio-economic development

NEWS DESK

President Dr Arif Alvi has underscored the need for utilizing the potential of youth for the socio-economic development of Pakistan. He said that youth constituted over 68% of the country’s population and they required to be imparted various skills to contribute to economic development. He said that the future of Pakistan was dependent on the youth and we needed to make them professionally efficient by providing

them different skills and making them productive members of the workforce for local and international markets. The President made these remarks while addressing the members of the 2nd National Youth Council, who called on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, today.

The President said that NAVTTC and TEVTA provided different skills and advised the youth to benefit from the skill development program under the PM Kamyab Jawan Program. Lauding the Kamyab Jawan

Program, the President said that it played a significant role in providing business loans to young entrepreneurs and skill-based trainings. He congratulated the National Youth Council on their selection and advised the Council to engage youth for making Pakistan a prosperous country by supporting the marginalized segments of the society. He also urged the Council to create awareness among the people about the financial loans under PM Kamyab Jawan Program. Billions have been allocated for the program but, unfortunately, the loans available for the women and the Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) are largely unutilized due to lack of information among them, he added.

Pakistan rejects Indian denial of involvement in June 23 terrorist attack

NEWS DESK

Pakistan has rejected Indian denial of involvement in June 23 terrorist attack in Lahore. “We reject Indian denial of involvement in the 23 June 2021 terrorist attack in Lahore. There is irrefutable evidence of India’s aiding, abetting and financing of this terrorist incident,” the Foreign Office said in a statement.

“We have pointed out in the past also Indian state sponsorship of terrorism in Pakistan,” it added.

“There is no doubt that the intelligence agency from across the border was involved in planning and executing terrorist attacks against Pakistan,” it further

said.

“Commander Kulbhushan Jadhav, who was caught red-handed in March 2016, is the most familiar and undeniable face of India’s state-sponsorship of terrorism against Pakistan,” the FO said.

“Use of terrorism as an instrument of state policy by India makes it culpable under international law, UN sanctions regime, and international counter-terrorism conventions,” it stated.

“It is the collective responsibility of the world community to hold India to account and take practical steps to proceed against the Indian nationals involved in patronage of terrorism against Pakistan,” it added.

UK to provide genomic sequencing to Pakistan to track new Covid variants

LONDON

REUTERS

Britain said on Wednesday it would provide genomic sequencing support to Pakistan, Brazil, Ethiopia, Kenya and Nigeria to help identify, assess and track new variants of the novel coronavirus.

The novel coronavirus, which has killed 4 million people globally since it emerged in China in late 2019, mutates around once every few weeks, slower than influenza or HIV, but enough to require tweaks to vaccines. Public Health England will extend support to Britain’s partners through the New Variant Assessment Platform Programme which tracks changes in the virus.

About a third of all SARS-CoV-2 sequences submitted to the international GISAID database on

influenza viruses have been from the United Kingdom.

“The UK is a science superpower and it is right we support the worldwide fight against Covid-19,” Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said.

“We are sharing the UK’s genomics expertise with Brazil, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Singapore, and the Africa Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, boosting disease surveillance and helping countries identify, track and respond to Covid-19 variants, which are of concern globally.”

British health officials said robust genomic surveillance was vital to identify new variants of the novel coronavirus and then counter them.

Public Health England has already sequenced samples from Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Albania, and the programme will be extended.

‘Puppet’ PM of Pakistan is ‘incompetent, ineligible’: Bilawal

HAVELI: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Thursday termed ‘puppet’ prime minister of Pakistan as incompetent and ineligible. Addressing a public gathering in Azad Jammu and Kashmir’s Haveli, the PPP leader said that ‘selected’ ministers have not fulfilled any promise made to the nation. The people of Kashmir will not elect the members of Pakistan Tehreek-e-e-Insaf (PTI) on July 25, he added. Bilawal said that no one can stop PPP from serving the country. Kashmiris have always supported us and we will continue to fight for their rights, he pledged. The PPP chief said that “we will not follow any dictation of the leaders living in Islamabad and Delhi but only give importance to whatever the people of Kashmir say”. **INP**

Maryam Nawaz kicks off election campaign in AJK

MUZAFFARABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz Vice President Maryam Nawaz on Thursday kicked off election campaign in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and said that the party’s leader Nawaz Sharif will “fight every fight” for Kashmiris. Maryam, while addressing a rally at Chattar Klas village in AJK to kick off the party’s campaign for the July 25 elections in the region, said that she is a Kashmiri with Kashmiri blood coursing through her veins. She said that Pakistan stands in solidarity with Kashmiris on both sides of the divide. “He (Nawaz) will fight for your rights and independence, and he will see to it that victory falls into your laps,” she said. Maryam went on to refer to a video, in which there were threats to “smash” her, and said her father (Nawaz) had called her and expressed his concern for her safety but at the same time he had advised her to go to Kashmir. “One has nothing to fear from Kashmiris.” She said and paid tribute to AJK Prime Minister Raja Farooq Haider and all the workers of the PML-N, who despite attempts to “steal the election”, have “stood tall in defiance like a mountain”. Rejecting the PTI government’s impression that the PML-N is struggling to find applicants for the election, she said that the party had received at least 10 and as many as 20 applications from each district. Referring to the two PML-N members, who had reportedly jumped ship to ally with the government, she said that if the ruling party is so confident and has a large number of contestants for the election, “why did it feel the need to turn two of ours?” Maryam also paid tribute to Raja Abdul Qayyum, who had continued to support the party and its cause despite having lost a party ticket to Raja Ibrar Hussain.

KP announces hike in penalties to curb traffic violations

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) traffic police announced on Thursday a hike in penalties to curb driving offences that often lead to fatal road accidents. Following the approval of the provincial cabinet, the police jacked up the traffic fines. According to the new fines, over-speeding and signal violation will attract a fine of Rs1,000 while a four-wheeler and a two wheeler without licence will be punishable with a fine of Rs1,000 and Rs500, respectively. The penalty for driving on the wrong side will be Rs600 for motorbike and Rs2,000 for a small car. Underage driving will attract Rs5,000 fine while not fastening seat belt will invite a fine of Rs1,000. **INP**

‘PUPPET’ PM OF PAKISTAN IS ‘INCOMPETENT, INELIGIBLE’: BILAWAL

HAVELI
INP

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Pakistan calls for building global community for social protection

NEW YORK
STAFF REPORT

Sania Nishtar, special assistant to the prime minister on social protection and poverty alleviation, has told a United Nations meeting that efforts must be made to build a global government-to-government community of practice on social protection.

“There is need for a Global Government-to-Government Community of Practice on Social Protection,” Nishtar said at “An Inflection Point on Social

Protection,” a virtual high-level side event on the sidelines of the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development Wednesday.

“Its global nature means that it would be open to any country around the world, hence opening the doors of learning to everyone, strengthening ongoing exchanges, and connecting countries facing similar quandaries,” said Nishtar.

“Governments would be at the centre of the initiative and be given the opportunity to directly tap knowledge and tap expertise in other fellow countries,

from frontline responders to higher-level policymakers,” she said.

This event is designed to promote the establishment of a platform to accelerate global social protection knowledge and practice, according to a press note issued by the mission to the UN, which hosted the event.

Nishtar represented Pakistan at the HLPF and highlighted the benefits reached to the masses through the country’s largest social protection program of Ehsaas.

“Investing in social protection is

both a response to current needs as well as preparedness and insurance against future crises. We are humbled that through Pakistan’s social protection program, Ehsaas, led by our prime minister, strong acceleration towards this goal is underway,” she told another in-person HLPF meeting on Wednesday.

The HLPF session held on July 5-16 has been convened by the UN Economic and Social Council under the presidency of Pakistan, and Islamabad’s permanent representative to the UN, Munir Akram, is the current president of the council.

Edhi remembered on 5th death anniversary

KARACHI: The 5th death anniversary of prominent philanthropist and humanitarian Abdul Sattar Edhi was observed on Thursday. Abdul Sattar Edhi was born on February 28, 1928, in Gujarat before partition of the sub-continent. He started welfare services in Pakistan in 1951. He established world’s largest volunteer ambulance network along with shelters for homeless people, animals and orphanages across the country. Many international and national awards, including Asian Noble, the Lenin Peace Prize and Nishan-e-Imtiaz were bestowed upon him in recognition of his services for humanity. Edhi’s foundation has provided relief in Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Iran, Lebanon, Sri Lanka, Croatia, Indonesia and the United States. He breathed his last on this day in 2016 at the age of 88 in Karachi. INP

Court orders case filing against CM’s aide over harassment

An additional district and sessions judge on Thursday issued directives for registration of a first information report (FIR) against Special Assistant to Punjab Chief Minister on Investment Sardar Tanveer Ilyas under charges of harassing a man through WhatsApp and sending him “sexually explicit videos”. Additional Sessions Judge Muhammad Ata Rabbani after hearing arguments of the complainant Khawaja Fahim counsel. While describing facts of the case before the court, counsel for the complainant Imran Feroz Malik apprised the court that his client met Sardar Ilyas at the Centaurus Mall in October 2019 during the launching ceremony of a private project. Subsequently, Sardar Ilyas — who according to the complainant is the owner of Centaurus Mall — invited him to his residence for Iftar dinner which Faheem accepted considering it a business meeting. Advocate Malik further said that following the meeting, the CM’s adviser sent a few messages along with “sexually explicit videos” to Faheem from his WhatsApp number, which the latter found disturbing, and which caused him “mental agony and trauma”. Advocate Malik contended that consequently, his client reported the matter to the FIA’s Cyber Crime Cell for taking action in the matter. The FIA submitted in its reply, saying the forensic analysis was conducted on the mobile phone of the petitioner and it transpired he had in fact received the video. Following submission of the forensic report by the FIA, the court has issued directives to the Agency to register an FIR “without further delay”. The court also mentioned in its order that if the complainant if he has levelled false allegations against Sardar Ilyas in the matter. TLTP

LHC review board issues order in Saad Rizvi detention case

LAHORE
NEWS DESK

A review board of the Lahore High Court (LHC) on Thursday issued its detailed verdict in a case related to the detention of proscribed Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) leader Saad Hussain Rizvi, Dawn News reported.

According to the report, the three-member board led by Justice Malik Shehzad observed that, if Saad is not required to the government in any other case, he should be “released forthwith”.

“The law officer or representatives of the government who appeared before the board did not produce any evidence that detenu was in contact with any person in the outside world during his detention,” the order read, adding that the government had presented one side of its claim regarding law and order which showed its malice.

The order further said, “We have noted the government of Punjab has concealed material facts in its reference because the number of police officers martyred or injured during the incident in question [has] been mentioned in it, but the number of TLP activists or a

number of persons from the public who died during the relevant period [has] not been mentioned in the reference.”

It stated that political parties like the PPP, PML-N and Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf had also held protest demonstrations in the past, but none of them were banned nor were their party leaders detained.

The board quoted the government as complaining that Saad sought the expulsion of the French ambassador from Pakistan, however, it said various parliamentarians did not face any proceedings for raising similar clamour.

It said the failure of police to not incorporate Saad’s arrest in the cases filed against the TLP leader reflected their “dishonesty”. It added that the government only wanted an extension in Saad’s detention on the basis of “fears”, while no supporting evidence was furnished to support this claim.

Saad, son of the late Khadim Hussain Rizvi, was taken into custody on April 12 over charges that he had incited his followers to take the law into their own hands as, according to him, the government had reneged on its promise to expel the French ambassador.

US says Pakistan is ‘an important partner’ on various fronts

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 01

Meanwhile, with the United States nearing the withdrawal of its forces from Afghanistan, an inclusive political approach in the war-battered country will best serve the shared interests of both Islamabad and Washington in the region, Pakistan’s Ambassador to the US Asad Majeed Khan has said.

Speaking at the United States Institute of Peace, where he was invited for a discussion on “The Next Chapter in Pakistan-US Relations” on Wednesday, Khan cited Afghanistan as an area of convergence between Islamabad and Washington as both sides wanted to see a peaceful settlement in the country.

“This is why it was important to invest in the Afghan peace process at this critical time,” Khan said.

Burhan Wani icon of resistance, relives in every Kashmiri heart, says Afridi

ISLAMABAD
MIAN ABRAR

Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Kashmir Shehryar Khan Afridi Thursday said that Burhan Muzaffar Wani is an icon of Kashmiri resistance as he relives in every Kashmiri heart which cements resolve of Kashmiris to fight for freedom.

He was addressing a seminar held here on the martyrdom day of Kashmiri freedom fighter Burhan Wani held here under the auspices of Kashmir Institute of International Relations (KIIR). All Parties Hurriyat Conference leader Syed Faiz Naqshbandi, Executive Director of KIIR

Altaf Wani, Abdul Hameed Lone and other Kashmiri activists were also present. He said that immediate restoration of article 370 and 35-A was the only way for India which may pave the way for peace in South Asia region.

Shehryar Khan Afridi said that the nations remember their martyrs as they cement the very foundations of those nations.

He said Burhan Wani had adopted an innvotaive and brave methodology to spread his message through social media. He said the sacrifices submitted by Burhan Wani and his comrades had set a new example for future resistance leaders. He said that the Kashmiris could no longer be

misguided and misled due to the campaign run by Burhan Wani and his comrades and India’s fascist face had been exposed to the world. He said that the new delimitation in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir was aimed at turning Muslim-majority areas into Hindu-majority areas. He said that Kahsmir is facing a serious threat in wake of demographic changes being made under the ideologic designs of the Hindutva regime. He said that Pakistan provides new energy to the Kashmiri freedom struggle and it would not shy away from providing all sorts of support to Kashmiris.

He said that Pakistan would not only keep fighting the case of Kashmir but also

CLERIC ESCAPES UNHURT IN ATTEMPTED KNIFE ATTACK

KARACHI
STAFF REPORT

Religious scholar Mufti Taqi Usmani escaped unharmd after a man pulled a knife on him at his Jamia Darul Uloom in the wee hours of Thursday. Usmani, who is the vice president of the seminary, while confirming the incident, said that the suspect approached him after Fajr prayer saying he wanted to speak to him separately, Dawn reported, citing an audio message from the cleric. The cleric said that he had just gotten up to meet with the suspect when he brandished the knife. “Those around me quickly caught him,” he said, adding that he was not harmed. “An investigation is underway to determine the facts and the suspect’s motive,” he said. However, reports citing eyewitnesses and sources said the suspect was intercepted by the cleric’s security on suspicion before he could approach him. An earlier statement issued by the Awami Colony police station said that the suspect, identified as one Asim Laik, came to the seminary during Fajr to meet the cleric “for a prayer”. When security detail searched him, they recovered a “dagger” from his possession, the police statement said. Senior Superintendent of Police Korangi Shah Jehan Khan said: “The suspect has been taken into custody, we are continuing with further investigation into the incident.” Following the incident, Minister for Interior Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed called Usmani to inquire after his health. In a tweet, Rasheed said he was “deeply concerned” over the “attack”. “Mufti Taqi Usmani is an eminent scholar and the pride of Islam. I pray for his life,” he said.

PM urges country to comply with Covid SOPs; Asad rules out complete lockdown

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 01

The minister expressed satisfaction that the NYC has representation from all federating units and without any gender discrimination. He said that a lot of work has been done in providing skills to youth; however, he highlighted the importance of engaging the youth to tap their potential. Separately, the NCOC directed the provinces to ensure strict implementation of the coronavirus SOPs on Eid-ul-Adha. The NCOC expressed its concern as the national tally of active Covid cases surged past the 34,000 mark on the back of more than 1,500 new cases registered during the last 24 hours, the highest single-day tally since June 20. The NCOC had confirmed the presence of different variants of the coronavirus, including the delta (Indian), beta (South African) and alpha (UK) variants, in Pakistan and detection of their cases in May and June. “We are sharing the UK’s genomics expertise with Pakistan, Brazil, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Singapore and the Africa Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, boosting disease surveillance and helping countries identify, track and respond to Covid variants, which are of concern globally.” The NCOC had already issued special instructions for Eid-ul-Adha, which will be celebrated in the third week of this month. The NCOC said that the national positivity ratio has also surged to 3.27 percent. Among the active cases, it said, 2,187 patients were admitted to various Covid-dedicated healthcare facilities of the country, including 1,941 in critical condition. It added that 197 patients were on ventilators.

would keep exposing India’s fascist Hindutva agenda to the world. He urged the Pakistani and Kashmiri youth to become followers of Burhan Wani and become voice of Kashmiri freedom struggle. He said that Kashmiri youth should use modren tools of social media to spread imagery and stories of Indian oppression in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

“India wants to gag Kashmiri media so as no tales of Kashmiri sufferings and imagery would not come out of Jammu and Kashmir. Youth should act as bloggers, vlogers, social media activists and expose brutal face of India in Jammu and Kashmir to the world,” he said. Shehryar Afridi said that civil, military leadership and all political parties stand united on the issue of Kashmir and all stand together to reassure their Kashmiri brethren that Pakistan stands by them in their quest for freedom.

FBR ISSUES 13M NOTICES TO NON-FILERS IN 3 YEARS

ISLAMABAD

STAFF REPORT

THE Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) served nearly 13 million tax notices to non-filers in three years whereas only 1.315 million people filed returns against these notices. Member Inland Revenue Operations Dr Ashfaq informed the Senate Standing Committee on Finance that from fiscal year 2018-19 (FY19) to 2020-21 (FY21), the FBR served 12.8 million tax notices to non-filers of income tax returns on the basis of merit.

He said FBR had raised Rs64.3 billion tax demand in these 12.8 million cases. However, it could recover just Rs2.6 billion.

Senator Talha Mehmood of the JUI-F, who was chairing the meeting expressed his reservations over the timing of issuing these notices, adding that it was merely an attempt to harass taxpayers and grab money from them. "The FBR maliciously sent wrong tax notices to the people before close of every fiscal year to

meet its annual tax targets," he said.

Committee members, especially Senator Azam Swati asked why the number of tax notices increased so much during FY20 and then suddenly decreased. "Only 39,000 sales tax filers out of a registered 186,000 are paying taxes. The purpose of issuing these notices is corruption," Swati claimed.

The meeting opined that the tax officers who sent wrong notices should be put behind the bars.

FBR Member Inland Revenue Service operations Mohammad Ashfaq said that the FBR had only served the tax notices but did not register cases against these people. In other countries, taxpayers are arrested when they do not discharge their obligations.

He said that of the 12.8 million tax notices served, a majority of them did not receive any response. Many people who were also not required under the law to file their income tax returns were also wrongly served with the tax notices, the FBR admitted.

The committee members observed that as compared to the first year of the PTI government, there

was significant surge in tax notices served to the people, indicating growing harassment in the hands of the taxmen.

The FBR tried justifying the action by saying that taxmen were not angels but action has been taken against corrupt people. However, Ashfaq went on to claim that there was not a single corruption scandal in the FBR in the last fiscal year.

"FBR is part of the same society. When the society will correct its course, we will also be on right path," he said. He said that no taxpayer has ever been sent to jail, whereas based on the e-stamp data received from the government of Punjab, the FBR served 10,000 tax notices.

Federal Minister for Railways Azam Swati proposed that those who send wrong notices along with tax evaders should be severely punished. "Notices are issued not for tax but for corruption."

Subsequently, the chairman Committee directed the FBR to enact legislation to send evaders and tax officers who send false notices to jail.

NTDC starts construction work of 500 kV transmission line

LAHORE

PRESS RELEASE

National Transmission and Despatch Company (NTDC) has started construction of 75-kilometer-long 500 kV double circuit transmission line for evacuation of power from 870 MW Sukki Kinari Hydropower Project. The transmission will be connected with 500 kV Neelum Jhelum Transmission Line. NTDC has completed basic works like Survey and soil investigation, route validation, demarcation of forest trees, approach and access roads etc. Managing Director NTDC Engr. Muhammad Ayub inaugurated the construction works for the first tower of the said transmission line at Garhihabibullah, KPK. He directed the NTDC teams and contractor to complete the project before its deadline. MD NTDC also planted a tree at power house of Suki Kinari hydropower plant as part of ongoing tree plantation campaign of NTDC. The project is funded by Asian Development Bank (ADB) with estimated cost of Rs 79,930 million under PSDP. The transmission line is expected to be completed by April, 2023.

China says measures applied to Ant Group to be imposed on other payment firms

BEIJING

AGENCIES

China's central bank said on Thursday that anti-monopoly measures applied to e-commerce giant Alibaba's financial technology affiliate Ant Group will also be imposed on other payment service companies.

China suspended the planned \$37 billion listing of Ant Group in November last year amid growing concerns over banks using third-party technology platforms like Ant for underwriting loans amid fears of rising defaults and a deterioration in asset quality.

Chinese regulators, led by the central bank, in April

imposed a sweeping restructuring on the fintech giant, forcing it to turn itself into a financial holding firm, and to cut links between its payments app Alipay and its other businesses. "Monopolistic behavior does not only exist in the Ant Group, but also in other institutions," said Fan Yifei, vice governor of the People's Bank of China (PBOC), told a media conference in Beijing.

Fan added that measures will be revealed soon, without further elaboration.

Fan said the speed of development of China's payment industry is "rapid" over the past few years, but at the same time, there are "monopoly and excessive capital expansions during (its) development".

EU fines Volkswagen, BMW \$1bn for emissions cartel

BRUSSELS

AGENCIES

The European Commission said on Thursday three German carmakers breached EU antitrust rules by restricting competition in emission

cleaning for new passenger diesel cars, fining BMW and Volkswagen Group a total of 875 million euros (\$1 billion). The EU executive said the trio had colluded on technical development in the area of nitrogen oxide cleaning, but Daimler was not fined because it revealed the existence of the cartel.

"The five car manufacturers Daimler, BMW, Volkswagen, Audi and Porsche possessed the technology to reduce harmful emissions beyond what was legally required under EU emission standards. But they avoided to compete on using this technology's full potential to clean better than what is required by law," said EU antitrust chief Margrethe Vestager.

"So today's decision is about how legitimate technical cooperation went wrong. And we do not tolerate it when companies collude."

Volkswagen said it was considering whether to take legal action

against the fine, saying the penalty over technical talks about emissions technology with other carmakers set a questionable precedent.

"The Commission is entering new judicial territory, because it is treating technical cooperation for the first time as an antitrust violation," the German carmaker said after being fined 502 million euros.

"Furthermore it is imposing fines, although the content of the talks was never implemented and no customers suffered any harm as a result," Volkswagen added in a statement. BMW agreed to the settlement proposed by the European Commission, paying a 373 million euro fine, saying it had been cleared of suspicion of using illegal 'defeat devices' to cheat emissions tests.

"This underlines that there has never been any allegation of unlawful manipulation of emission control systems by the BMW Group," the company said in a statement.

Telenor quits Myanmar operations

OSLO

AGENCIES

Norwegian telecoms firm Telenor has sold its Myanmar business, blaming the difficulties of operating under the military junta and dealing a blow to activists who say they relied on the only Western operator for communications.

Telenor, one of the biggest foreign investors in Myanmar, sold its Myanmar operations to Lebanese investment firm M1 Group for \$105 million, announcing its retreat from a country that slid into chaos after a military coup in February.

It was one of the few Western companies to bet on the South East Asian country after it emerged from military dictatorship a decade ago. Myanmar accounted for 7% of Telenor's earnings last year, read more

"There are three reasons why we think a sale is necessary: it is the safety of our employees, but also the regula-

tory conditions and also that there is good compliance," Telenor CEO Sigve Brekke told Reuters.

"When we wrote off the business in May, we felt we could still operate in the country, although it was challenging. But after that, it has worsened."

In May, Telenor booked a loss of 6.5 billion crowns (\$738 million) after seeing its mobile business in Myanmar severely restricted following the Feb. 1 military coup, read more

On March 15, the junta ordered a nationwide shutdown of mobile data, making it harder for pro-democracy activists to organise protests and circulate messages supporting the overthrown civilian government.

Violence since the Feb. 1 coup has driven more than 230,000 people from their homes. More than 880 people have been killed by security forces and 5,200 are in detention, the United Nations says.



Club House CEO signs MoU with Lahore Smart City

PRESS RELEASE

It's a privilege to announce that CEO CLUBS WORLDWIDE USA founded by Mr. Joseph Mancuso in 1977, has signed MOU with LAHORE SMART CITY on 2nd July, 2021 for establishing the CEO Club House & Executive Training Centre of CEO CLUBS WORLDWIDE-Pakistan Chapter. The MOU was signed by Mr. Muhammad Ijaz (President International Development - CEO Clubs Worldwide USA) & Mr. Zahid Rafiq (Chairman Lahore Smart City & Capital Smart City by HRL). We, CEO Clubs Worldwide really appreciate Mr. Zahid Rafiq and his team for their support to develop the country's leading business & recreational hub for the intellectual growth of C-Level and business growth of national & international organizations.



OPPO donates health supplies to General Hospital in Lahore

PRESS RELEASE

OPPO donates thousands of medical supplies and hundreds of OPPO Band Styles to the General hospital in recognition and appreciation of the health workers' continuous efforts during the ongoing pandemic. OPPO is an idealist who dreams of a better world for all and with this belief, the company continues to contribute in society for the greater good. The CEO of OPPO Pakistan, George Long shared a few words at the donation ceremony; "OPPO believes in technology for mankind and kindness for the world – and we hope that through this initiative we can overcome this difficult time together." The Head of Department for the General hospital Lahore, Prof Anwar Chudhary added "We at General hospital are incredibly thankful to OPPO for their generous donation and for recognizing all the hard work our Doctors have put in to save countless lives." He also praised the doctors for showing great strength and bravery during this period of difficulty and uncertainty. All care kits were distributed to the doctors by OPPO personnel. Meanwhile extra measures were taken and COVID SOPs were strictly followed to ensure the safety of everyone present. OPPO has always gone above and beyond to do what is right. Just last year, the company donated PKR6.2 Million to the Prime Minister's COVID relief fund. Putting humanity first for the greater good is the backbone of OPPO's business and so it will always be the grounding principle of their future strategy.

PUBLIC NOTICE

LOSE OF ALLOCATION LETTER

Allocation No. 9/OLO/005711 Letter of Plot 945, Sector D, Phase 9P, Measuring 1 Kanal issued by Defence Housing Authority, Lahore Cantt. In the Name of Lt Col (R) Abdul Waheed S/o Abdul Aziz R/O Flat No. 36, H Street No. 2, Main Rashid Minhas, Karachi has been lost. Finder may return the same to Secretary, Defence Housing Authority, Lahore Cantt. Otherwise after 7 days original Allocation Letter shall be treated as cancelled.

UAN: 042-111-342-547, Ext: 2826

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INVITATION TO BID

Oil & Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) is the largest Exploration & Production Company of Pakistan listed at London Stock Exchange and Pakistan Stock Exchange. Details about the company can be obtained from website <http://www.ogdcl.com>. Sealed Bid(s) is invited for the service/material given below under competitive bidding procedure, as per Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) rules:

SR #	TENDER ENQUIRY NO.	DESCRIPTION	BID SUBMISSION DATE & TIME	BID OPENING DATE & TIME
1	PROC-SERVICES/ CB/CSR-5088/ 2021	Hiring of Services for Supply of Potable Water at Various Villages around Nashpa Oil Field, District Karak, KPK.	27.07.2021 At 1030 Hrs.	27.07.2021 At 1100 Hrs.
2	PROC-SERVICES/ CB/P&P- 5076/2021	Hiring of Services for Execution of Annual Turn Around (Ata) 2021 of Uch-I Gas Plant	10.08.2021 At 1030 Hrs.	10.08.2021 At 1100 Hrs.
3	PROC-FB/CB/ PE&FD-5053/2021	Spares for Cat-3412 Diesel Engine for Tando Alam Field	10.08.2021 At 1100 Hrs.	10.08.2021 At 1130 Hrs.
4	PROC-FE/CB/ ECMP-4842-A/ 2021	20 Nos 4x4 Haulage Trucks	11.08.2021 At 1100 Hrs.	11.08.2021 At 1130 Hrs.
5	PROC-SERVICES/ CB/P&P-5083/ 2021	Hiring of Services for Installation of Filter Coalescer Vessel (FC-101) Including Fabrication, Welding, Cutting, Installation, Painting etc. of Associated Piping along with Relevant E&I Jobs at Gadipur Plant	12.08.2021 At 1030 Hrs.	12.08.2021 At 1100 Hrs.
6	PROC-FA/CB/ P&P-5066/2021	Motors for KPD Plant	12.08.2021 At 1100 Hrs.	12.08.2021 At 1130 Hrs.

2. Tender document(s), Annexure(s), SOR/TOR document can be viewed and downloaded from website www.ogdcl.com under the title bar of Tenders.

3. The bids will be delivered at the reception of OGDCL House, Jinnah Avenue, Blue Area, Islamabad, Pakistan on or before the date and time above and the same will be opened as per the schedule mentioned above.

4. OGDCL reserves the right to accept or reject any bid and to annul the bidding process and reject all the bids as per Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) Rule-33".

5. Bidders are requested to contact **Manager Supply Chain Management (SCM) Foreign** at Phone # +92-51-92002-3652 or **Manager Supply Chain Management (SCM) Services** at Phone # +92-51-92002-3795 for further queries / information.

General Manager (Supply Chain Management)
OIL & GAS DEVELOPMENT COMPANY LIMITED
OGDCL House, Jinnah Avenue, Blue Area, Islamabad - Pakistan
Phone No. +92-51-920023540, Fax No. +92-51-9244139

No.06/03

LARGEST TAX PAYER COMPANY OF THE NATION "SAY NO TO CORRUPTION" WE EXPLORE PROSPERITY

AG, CEC discuss electoral reforms

ISLAMABAD
TLTP

KARACHI
TLTP

TLTP

A total of 410 companies traded

The sectors propping up the index were technology & communication with 163 points, cement with 144 points, commercial banks with 107 points, fertilizer with 87 points and power generation &

On the other hand, the PSX on Thursday notified the listing of Citi Pharma Limited (CPHL) and trading of company shares will commence on Friday (today).

The opening price of the shares of the company will be Rs32 per share, as determined through the book building process when the company was going public. The PSX said that the share registrar of the company is FD Registrar Services (Pvt) Limited.

SHC rejects reports on Khurshid Shah's prolonged stay at NICVD

According to the SBP, it received \$1 billion as

Pakistan borrowed \$2.5 billion through Eurobonds on March 30, 2021 by offering lucrative interest rates to lenders aimed at building the foreign exchange reserves. **NEWS DESK**

The Sindh High Court (SHC) Sukkur bench on Thursday rejected reports of the Sindh government and National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD) on Pakistan Peoples Party MNA Syed Khurshid Shah's prolonged stay at the health facility in Sukkur. The court directed them to present complete reports on the next hearing with justification behind declaring an entire floor of the NICVD as a sub-jail. The case was adjourned until July 28. A Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Syed Tahir Shah filed a petition in the high court, questioning the nearly 18 months long stay of Khurshid Shah at the NICVD Sukkur. The petitioner requested the court to ask the Sindh health department about his illness and what was diagnosed during medical investigation and detail of the treatment he has received during his prolonged stay at the heart hospital. **NEWS DESK**

IPL: 6676

IPL: 6704

The amount of ad hoc relief allowance 2021 will be subject to income tax and admissible during leave and the entire period of LPR except during extra ordinary leave. The increase will not be treated as part of emoluments for the purpose of calculation of pension/gratuity and recovery of house rent. It will not be admissible to the employees during the tenure of their posting/deputation abroad; and will be admissible to the employees on their repatriation from posting/deputation abroad at the rate and amount which would have been admissible to them had they not been posted abroad. The finance ministry said that the term 'basic pay' for the purpose of ad hoc relief allowance 2021 will also include the amount of the personal pay granted on account of annual increment(s) beyond the maximum of the existing pay scales. **NEWS DESK**

NOTICE FOR PRE-QUALIFICATION OF FIRMS/CONTRACTORS

Public Health Engineering Division Sheikhpura intends to prequalify the technically and financially capable / sound contractors / firms who are enlisted / renewed with HUD & PHE Department for the year 2021-22 having renewal with PEC for 2021-22 and excellent experience/ reputation in the relevant category / field to undertake the following project reflected in ADP-2021-22 for expeditious completion.

Sr. No.	ADP No.	Name of Scheme	Estimated Cost	Category/PEC License Certificate	Field of specialization (PEC Code)
1.	2036	Construction of PCC/ Sewerage / Sullage Carrier from Adhian Road to Abbas Nagar & Adjoining Abadies Chak No 41 District Sheikhupura	Rs.100.000 Million	C4 and Above	CE01, CE09, CE10, ME06, EE04, EE11 (Solar).

Interested / filling contractors / firms for construction of work should obtain Prequalification Performa / Prequalification Criteria/ self marking sheet from the Head Clerk of office of the undersigned upto 26.07.2021 for Rs.5,000/- as documentation charges / processing fee in shape of CDR (non-refundable) in the name of undersigned. Application for prequalification along with dully filled/signed/stamped documents in shape of complete Booklet and dully filled/signed stamped Performa/markings sheet should reach up to 27.07.2021 during working hours in the office of the undersigned. Without filled Performa and CDR prequalification will not be entertained.

1. Name of firms / contractors, partnership deed / articles of association in case of company/ limited firm, complete address and telephone No. of persons with power of attorney in favour of persons authorized by the firms/ contractors.
2. Attested copies of enlistment / renewal for the year 2021-22 with HUDAPHEP valid registration of Pakistan Engineering Council for the year 2021 having relevant categories with specialization Categories as mentioned above.
3. i. Year of establishment of firm/ company with proof.
ii. List of Similar nature of completed works, (as per P&D Department criteria) cost of each work (equal or greater), scope of work with verification from concerned Executive Engineer (without verification no work will be entertained).
4. iii. Name of similar projects already completed during last three years with the completion certificates from the concerned office and number of projects presently in hand along with their magnitude and period and report about quality & pace of work from the concerned Department.
5. 4. Proof of financial standing duly supported with documentary proof / bank certificate. (Balance sheet duly certified by the concerned bank officer be provided which clearly shows sound financial position to execute the said project).
6. 5. Proof of registration with the Income Tax Department along with a certificate of payment of taxes for the last three years to date (which can be inspected on one day notice by the consultant).
7. 6. Particulars of specified construction equipments/ machinery available with the firms/ contractors with verified ownership documents. Especially mention equipment with the application intends to deploy for the works. Application should also include the yearly increased in T&P in the last three years.
8. 7. List of equipment with its Registration No./make/model/condition and location along with proof of its ownership.
9. 8. i. Permanent business management, financial management and technical staff.
ii. List of Graduate Engineers, Sub Engineers, Surveyors, and Draftsmen on the roll of firm (with proof of salary transaction through bank) along with their experience and standing with the company/ firm and appointment letter, proof of payment of salary of technical/non technical, clerical staff.
10. iii. Engineers, Technical Employees of the firm/ company will have to present before the prequalification committee on given date & time with proof that they are employee of the firm.
11. 9. i. The application must establish its financial soundness and a certificate from Chartered Accounts firm. Copy of upto date balance sheet should also be part of the application.
ii. Bank certificate and bank statement clearly indicating financial strength of the firms/ contractors for last 3-years.
iii. Bank documents to establish financial bid capacity.
12. 10. Details of any Arbitration/ Litigation or similar proceedings against any Government or Semi Government Department, showing extent and result.
13. 11. Undertaking on judicial paper that the firm was never black listed by any of the Government or Semi Government organization. Any firm responsible / involved in lapse of funds during last 3 years due to slow progress will not be considered for pre-qualification

RULES AND REGULATION.

- 1 Pre-qualification will be carried out in accordance with PPRA Rules 2014 and PEC guidelines.
2 Any fake documents & concealment about the information / details mentioned above, if found at any stage, will result in disqualification & black
3 listing of the firm.
4 In case of incomplete information, application will not be considered for pre-qualification.
5 No cost proceeding against the pre-qualification committee will be allowed and the decision of the pre-qualification committee will be final.
6 However the firm can apply in Grievance Redressal Committee under Rules 67 of PPRA Rules 2014 against the decision of Prequalification
7 Committee.
8 Each page of document provided duly numbered, signed and attested by the applicant, documents attached according to the Serial No as mentioned
9 above an index with Page No. be provided. Failing which application will be considered for prequalification.
10 Information to firm regarding pre-qualification will be initiated after approval from the Pre-qualification Evaluation Committee constituted by the
11 Chief Engineer (North) Punjab Public Health Engineering Department 2-Lake Road Lahore, and only prequalified contractors will be allowed to
12 participate in the tendering process.

Executive Engineer
Public Health Engineering Division
Sheikhupura

IPL: 6713

Movement on Balochistan

► The willingness to change is what counts

THE federal government has moved with a blitzkrieg-like swiftness on the need to reconcile the Baloch separatists. The move started Monday, when Prime Minister Imran Khan said he was considering holding talks with the ‘angry Baloch’. It continued on Tuesday with COAS Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa declaring Army support. On Wednesday, a new governor was appointed in Quetta, Zahoor Agha replacing Amanullah Yasinzai, accompanied by the appointment of Nawabzada Shahzain Bugti, one of Nawab Akbar Bugti’s grandsons, and an MNA, as SAPM for Reconciliation. The last appointment is particularly important, not just because Mr Bugti is expected to negotiate with the Baloch nationalists, but because it was the killing of his grandfather in 2006 which had set off the current wave of nationalist unrest.

Of some significance is the statement of Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry the same day, at his post-Cabinet press conference, that a distinction would be drawn between nationalists linked to India, and those who were not. It is as if the Army is invested because it wants a settlement with the Baloch nationalists before the US withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan; India using Afghanistan to launch the nationalists from there. There is also the aspect that CPEC projects will not enjoy security as long as Bakuch nationalists are operating.

However, all the movement and reshuffling will go for nothing if the deepest concerns of the Baluch nationalists are not addressed. These grievances are not limited to development alone, but extend to the share in power of the Baloch. Also, bricks-and-mortar development alone, itself limited in a province of sparse population, has been seen not to benefit the Baloch people, but interlopers. This must be addressed. Then there is the issue of forced disappearances. Unless it is addressed not just in terms of returning all persons, but of punishing those responsible, it will remain a festering sore. There will also have to a careful consideration of the terms of any amnesty that might be given. It is unfortunate but still true that there have been settlements in the past, but they were forgotten at the next outbreak. The present government must ensure that it negotiates not only sincerely but wisely, with an eye to a lasting peace, rather than just papering over the cracks for some immediate and temporary advantage.

The passing of Dilip Kumar

► The actor’s legacy left a large imprint on subcontinental cinema

THE death of legendary Bollywood actor Dilip Kumar does not leave a vacuum in the Indian film industry considering he had not acted in a movie for nearly three decades, nor starred in one for much longer. At the age of 98, the days of his prime had been long past him, with a new crop of heroes like Amitabh Bachchan and Jeetendra politely but firmly edging Kumar out by the beginning of the 1970s.

But during his day, Dilip Kumar was the top pick of Bollywood and as recognisable a Bollywood name as any to this day. Born Muhammad Yusuf Khan to a trading family in Peshawar’s Qissa Khwani Bazaar, Kumar moved with his family in his adolescence to Mumbai where his father had business. Here, he would be introduced to the world of show-business, where he would first change his name to Dilip Kumar to hide his newfound trade from his family.

Mr Kumar belonged to a crop of actors that would come to shape Indian cinema after Partition. After 1947, with the film industry mostly based in Mumbai, Mr Kumar decided to stay in India and permanently hitch his wagon to Bollywood. Here, throughout the 1950s and the 1960s, he was not only every director’s first choice for leading man, but took on what would become some of the most iconic roles in the history of Indian cinema. He played Prince Saleem in the 1960 classic *Mughal-e-Azam*, which is often considered to have the same stature in Indian cinema as *Casablanca* in Hollywood. However, it was his titular role in the 1955 film *Devdas* that truly propelled him into not just stardom, but legendary status.

Acting in a small capacity up until the 1990s, in retirement Dilip Kumar enjoyed both the love and adoration of the Indian Subcontinent across borders, as well as a short lived political career as a Congress lawmaker in the Lok Sabha. During his time in politics, he was a strong voice for Indo-Pak peace, and his passing was personally mourned by Prime Minister Imran Khan, whom he helped in his quest to raise funds for the Shaukat Khanum Memorial Trust Hospital.

PAKISTANTODAY

Dedicated to the legacy of the late Hameed Nizami

Arif Nizami
Editor

Yousaf Nizami Managing Editor	Aziz-ud-Din Ahmad Joint Editor	Umar Aziz Executive Editor
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Lahore – Ph: 042-36300938, 042-36375965

As the world turns bipolar

At Penpoint

M A NIAZI

WHILE Prime Minister Imran Khan said the Chinese system was better than Western democracy, he was perhaps conscious that he was making an expression of choice, but he seemed to once again be haring off after some system that would give him an assurance of power. What he also did not seem to see is that the dichotomy had created was perhaps false, in that the Chinese system is a kind of ‘Western democracy’.

Both Western democracy (capitalism) and the Chinese system (communism) were developments of the 18th century Enlightenment. Communism is best seen as a critique of capitalism as it manifested itself. The philosopher of Communism, Karl Marx, was an economist, but his contribution to philosophy was dialectical materialism. That made the communists materialists. That was behind the cry of ‘godless communism’ that bedevilled Soviet communism throughout its existence. Imran’s position of wanting the Riasat-i-Madina does not gell with this.

Perhaps he is more interested in the fact that the Communist Party rules unchallenged. Before seeing the PTI in that role, he might remember that the Communist Party of China was initially helped by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, which at that time was the only party to have established a state, the USSR. It collapsed in 1992. Going by that timeline, China should have collapsed or be approaching collapse, instead it is emerging as the main challenger to the USSR.

To a certain extent, this is just the result of the 1911 Revolution in China, which toppled its monarchy and allowed the Chinese people to unleash their energy.

It should be noted that the CPC has played an important role in this, but it should not be forgotten that this was done at the cost of imposing uniformity on Chinese society. It was also done in the context of a one-party state. There was no competition from any other party.

Another point should be noted: the CPC did not have any competition from the military. The CPC was able to build the Peoples’ Liberation Army from its cadres, and enforced the institution of the political commissar, a party official in uniform, who approved every order made by the commander, thus ensuring that any attempt at a coup would have to be made without the political commissar signing off on it. Besides, the commander would be a party member, for it was impossible to progress beyond a certain rank without being a member of the party.

While Pakistan observes the convention where government servants are not members of any political party, in China the reverse is true. Indeed, that ensures that the bureaucracy is totally aligned with the party, not any particular government. Most importantly, the

civil service does not develop an individual ethos, as in Pakistan. Of course, the civil service ethos here is because of it roots in the pre-Partition ICS.

Compared to the CPC, the PTI does not really have much ideology/ However, the CPC, because it is composed of so many people, has used precisely this ideological depth to shift course. One reason for the transformation has indeed been visionary leadership, spread over more than one generation, but also because there was mass support for the change from a state-controlled economy to the quasi-capitalist one of present, called euphemistically ‘socialism with Chinese characteristics.’

So if you remove both ideology and cadres, what remains of this vanguard role? Monopoly over power? This is something that Imran sought even in his playing days: he brooked no interference over team selection, what to speak of tactics on the field. However, building an instrument like the CPC takes decades, and at no time was it a political platform for any individual. However, Imran may find attractive the concentration of power in the hands of the CPC, and the fact that elections are not allowed to interrupt the country’s progress.

Has Imran perhaps got it wildly wrong? Is the cause of Chinese stability, and the permanence of the CPC, the prosperity that it provided the Chinese people? This would imply that Imran’s government would need to deliver in order to survive. That seems to be the case, with the CPC first fulfilling certain prerequisites before the great push forward. Food security was ensured. Imran has only taken notice of the harsh punishments for corruption, but did not notice that this was part of the general movement to establishing security and the writ of the state. Poverty was also alleviated.

These were perhaps more crucial steps in China’s rise. He should also remember that Pakistan may not become a world power even if the Chinese model is followed sedulously. Is he forgetting that one reason China can exert itself is because it has such a huge population, and thus the state is able to generate large surpluses.

Imran should also look at the ages of Chinese leaders, and when they came to power. He might find that there is not so much promise for him, precisely because the CPC is no one’s handmaiden. He became

PM at 65, and can take heart from the examples of Deng Xiaoping and Zhao Ziyang, who were older than him, at 74 and 78 respectively. However, Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, the present leader’s two predecessors, were respectively 63 and 62, while the present incumbent, Xi Jinping, was 59.

Deng was the first to retire, after 11 years in control. The present incumbent is suspected of working to buck the pattern of about a decade in power, and then retirement. He has passed on, but all three of his successors are still around. However, Xi has had the term limit on the Presidency removed.

It should not be forgotten that Imran’s statement will play a role in the US-China jostling now going on. Pakistan is not alone in the world in wishing to stay out. It is perhaps a sign of China’s rise that so many countries feel China is an alternative to the USA, that they wish to remain friends with both.

Pakistan has been counted as in the US camp for long, and has been a sort of free-enterprise economy always. China never attempted to impose its system on Pakistan, much as the USSR did not in India (where socialism was tried under Nehru, who had learned his Fabian socialism in the UK). It has also been accounted a firm friend of China, more because both have an antipathy to China, than because of any systemic affinities.

One current issue is the US need to have bases in Pakistan. Imran has ruled them out, and it would seem

that at present, China would also prefer that it got no other foothold in the region. Pakistan cannot afford to be blacklisted by FATF, or forced off the IMF package. Therefore, its establishment will need Chinese money, perhaps through the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

It is a little surprising that, for all his talk of Riasat-i-Madina, Imran has not done anything to build support for a revolutionary system based on Islam, involving debt repudiation. However, such a system might not guarantee him office. It is as if he is forgetting that he came to office by election, not while leading a Chinese resolution. And the talk is just that. Talk.

The writer is a member of staff.

The alarming rise in child abuse

► Not only must awareness be spread, but children encouraged to speak

SAJJAD HUSSAIN NEKOKARA

CHILD abuse is an unreported but alarming issue in every civilized society. Half of the children across the world exposed to violence and survivors’ trauma, along with its consequences, are commonly obscured from the public view. In this era of globalization, there is a need for designating time to educate and empower the most vulnerable segments of society, children against abuse from strangers and their teachers and relatives. Decades of research shows how negative childhood events such as abuse or neglect can have a detrimental impact on a person’s long term physical and mental health. It has been linked to rapid ageing, chronic diseases and even premature deaths. Pakistan has its history of reacting to problems ex post facto. Child abuse is classical example of poor anticipation of Pakistan of different social evils. Child abuse is widely prevalent but rarely recognized as a social problem in Pakistan.

According to the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse (ISPCAN), overall 41.69 percent respondents were sexually abused in one form or another. Experience of child abuse is reported more frequently by boys than girls. According to Sahil’s report, the total number of reported child abuse cases across the country jumped to 2960 in 2020 from 2486 cases in 2019, showing an increase of four percent. More than eight children were abused daily on average in 2020, according to data compiled by Sahil on child sexual abuse cases reported in newspapers across the country. What is more, according to a recently published retrospective study by Abbas and Jabeen (2020) on the prevalence of child abuse in Pakistan conducted with equal number of male and female respondents 41 percent (44 percent males and 39 percent females) of respondents reported facing at least one form of sexual abuse during childhood.

There are numerous reasons for this. The most pertinent is a poor parent-child relationship. We live in a

society where fear and cultural taboos make it difficult to uncover cases of abuse. Parents’ unwillingness to subject their children to the medico-legal process is also a deterrent. A lack of support from family members, friends and neighbours or the community leads to the isolation of the victim, making him hesitant to share his experience about his abuser. Besides other factors responsible for child abuse are socio-economic stresses; unemployment, low self-confidence and feelings of incompetence, loneliness, and psychological unrest are the leading factors behind the prevalence of child abuse in the society.

Even before Zainab case, child sexual abuse was widely prevalent but rarely reported. The Zainab case accentuated the need to cure the menace of child abuse. After the 18th Amendment to the Constitution and completion of the devolution process in 2011, the provinces are responsible. The Zainab Alert Response and Recovery Agency (ZARRA) was to be established on the pattern of Amber Alert to inform public and enforcement agencies to recover a missing child through One Window operations. Recently, the Punjab Police launched an app through Pukkar 15 calls at the police station and service centres, which is a remarkable steps to curb the issue of child abuse.

Although the above mentioned steps are important strides in the right direction, yet more is needed. Some target-oriented and sharply focused steps for the eradication of child abuse are extremely impor-

tant. One of the most important ways of stopping child abuse is to trace it in the first place. Children tend to suffer in silence, hence it is necessary to ask them to open up and share. There is a dire need to give the child freedom to express his or her feelings without any fear. There is a need to educate children about the good touch and the bad touch. The media should play its pivotal role to spread awareness and sensitize the people about this evil. National and

provincial legislatures need to review existing child protection laws while reforming the existing apparatus. The government must recognize seminars and workshops in education institutions to sensitize the children and parents about it. This Ministry of Human Rights should play its vital role to revamp the national child protection center to identify, prevent and report issue of child abuse.

Every child deserves a safe childhood and this is an achievable goal. It is high time to save the children from this scourge of abuse. It is hoped that the government will translate its vision of providing children with safe childhood into action.

It is the need of the hour that the policymakers of Pakistan put their utmost focus on curbing this menace and providing security

and peace to the children of Pakistan. The existing apparatus require reforms for safeguarding the permanent value of chastity enshrined in the Holy Quran. Let us hope for the better future of children in Pakistan.

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Tajikistan is flourishing



DR. MUHAMMAD AKRAM ZAHEER

HUMAN development is the process of enlarging people's opportunities and improving their well-being. The concept of human development was developed by Mehboob ul Haq, the famous economist of Pakistan. He argued that the current measures for human progress have failed to account for the purpose of development to improve human lives. The basic capabilities valued virtually by everyone include good health, easy access to knowledge, and a decent standard of living, which many believe are the basic blocks of well-being and opportunity. These core capabilities are largely valued around the globe.

According to the CIA World Factbook, Tajikistan is a landlocked state in Central Asia with an economy dependent on "mineral extraction, metal processing, agriculture", and labour migrants. The positive dynamics of economic growth are fundamental to its socio-economic status. Its mid-term macroeconomic policy focused on reducing inflation and maintaining a decent living standard. To give impetus to economic growth and sustainable human development, the Tajikistan government has consistently made efforts to organize sectoral and regional programmes and then shape the National Development Strategy in 2015. In many respects, the people and government have attained remarkable achievement in meeting the challenges of human development.

A few decades ago, the people were not only substantially less healthy but also less educated. The newly independent states blamed the USSR for the decline of health, education, nutrition, and jobs. The main growth of the economy is based on education, health, opportunities for business, and quality labor provision. Research shows that the investment in human development programmes is more effective for a country's progress and prosperity. Therefore, the developing countries have to ensure that all children are being nourished better and going to school to become productive citizens in an increasingly competitive and integrative global economy.

For this, Tajikistan also has worked to alleviate the poverty rate from 80 percent to 30 percent of the population between 2000 to 2017. A World Bank report said 17 percent of children under five are stunted and only one child in ten aged three to six years benefits from an early learning programme. Today, the human capital index of the World Bank shows that a child born in Tajikistan is expected to be 53% as productive, as they are growing up with full health and complete education. The country manager of the World Bank for Tajikistan has said, "Improving

school readiness, educational outcome and physical and mental health will lead to more productive and healthy adolescents and adults". Further, "we are satisfied by Tajikistan's effort to take a holistic approach to Early Childhood Development, benefitting today's children and tomorrow's workforce."

According to a report from the World Health Organization, the pace of health reforms in many aspects of the health system has been slow because Tajikistan has spent little per capita on health. The public financing depends upon local and regional establishments, thus regional inequalities undermine the range of health system goals, financial protection, equity, efficiency and quality. Quality of care is another challenge, due to insufficient and inadequate training, lack of clinical guidelines, underuse of generic medicines, poor equipment and infrastructure and preserved financial encouragement for doctors.

The primary objective of health reforms is to strengthen health care, but it is suffering from low priority and underinvestment in Tajikistan. Although a package for primary healthcare has been introduced, it has not rolled out all over the country. The National Health Strategy (2010-2020) envisages reforms in health financing, a capitation-based payment for primary health and doubling health expenditure.

The strategy is to facilitate and support the healthcare sector. The government has begun modernizing its resources, financing system, and clinical base as well the organization of healthcare and services. Due to economic growth and constant government attention, positive impact has been witnessed in the development of the health sector. Therefore, the rate of maternal and child mortality has decreased in the last decade. The strategy and efforts for healthcare development resulted in a reduction of the rate of morbidity of communicable diseases, especially in vaccine-preventable diseases. The training of doctors and nurses has become a priority. More effective measures have been taken to provide healthcare and services, network facilities, and increasing bed capacity. The supervision of pharmaceutical and medical performance has been improved in the last decade. Today, provision of health facilities to the population has taken a strategic turn towards a primary healthcare model.

The healthcare system is influenced by the Soviet legacy. Its rank is 129 as the human development index of 188 countries in 2016. In the post-Soviet regime, the healthcare facilities have decreased due to poor quality of nutrition, insufficient water supply, and a weak system. The efficiency of the healthcare system and mechanisms are also weak. Reforms are being made to strengthen the healthcare system but it is still running slowly.

Post-Soviet life expectancy fell to 66 for men and 73 for women in Tajikistan. The fertility rate, which was 6.9 children per woman during 1960-1980, decreased to 3.4 by 2016. The mortality rate in children is falling fast and the nutrition of children is rising in Tajikistan and under-nutrition in health has become a challenge in rural and remote areas. Unbalanced nutrition leads to poor mental health. Poor maternal nutrition during pregnancy threatens the chance of safe delivery and healthy babies. Malnutrition, dietary factors, and lack of awareness about healthcare cause high prevalence of diseases and directly impact the economy. The lack of healthcare of the masses is a key bottleneck to a country's development and progress.

According to a 2017 health survey, 18 percent of under-five children are suffering from stunting and nutritional deprivation, six percent

are wasted, and more than eight percent are underweight. Children under two are lost in wasting and underweight while stunting is prevalent among children aged 24-35 months. Forty percent of children are anemic and only 36 percent mothers breastfeed for the first six months. That's why 37 percent of children suffering Vitamin A deficiency and 12 percent Vitamin D.

According to an EU-funded project report, the country has shown excitement over moving towards the education space. Tajikistan's institutional diversity along with several dimensions fuels the creation of new programmes and reflects the needs of an emerging knowledge-based economy to meet market needs. The special focus given to structures of education in Tajikistan is initiated by a global programme related to industries and technology.

The government has set education as a tool for human capital formation to economic growth. The National Strategy for Education Development 2020 aims at modernizing education with profession and skill to satisfy the needs of labour and to build the capacity of the country. The government has aimed at reforming educational standards with the curricula through modernization and with the participation of employers.

Since the USSR disintegrated, de-urbanization and deindustrialization remained the key phenomena of Tajikistan's economy. The structural changes in the economy took place since 1991 and small industries lost their ground. Deindustrialization reduced job opportunities and increased unemployment, particularly in rural areas. Today, the state has taken some measures to develop the economy but there is still much room for further improvement.

The low level of aluminum processing and agricultural production has hampered the growth of employment in these sectors. An ill-conceived privatization of certain industries and companies liquidated jobs. No comprehensive policy for labor productivity and security is present in the rural areas, which produce two-thirds of the country's labour force. According to a World Bank report, women are under-represented in the labour force and the trend is not encouraging. Employed women like the public sector but are also involved in unpaid family businesses.

Another World Bank report said that although Tajikistan's economy has not produced sufficient jobs for its rapidly growing workforce, particularly its burgeoning youth population, the government has set out a new National Development Strategy. It aims to create new jobs in the formal and private sectors, improving the quality of existing jobs, and providing access to better opportunities, including low to higher quality jobs, with a focus on vulnerable workers. With the promotion of the private sector, and with the help of entrepreneurs and investment, new opportunities for business and sustainable jobs are expanding.

The National Development Strategy of the country is also improving productivity, earning, and access to formal jobs by strengthening local value, small producers, and rural SMEs. Therefore, Tajikistan can attract and connect people to jobs through empowering the population by a set of quality nutrition, good health, valuable education and trained and skilled labour. It seems Tajikistan will soon overcome the challenges of human development and will create innovation through improvisation and will be a startup nation.

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Cleaning Karachi

AS the National Disaster Management Authority steps in to clean Karachi's storm drains, the humiliating picture of the metropolis's collapsing and depleted infrastructure is unsurfaced. There is no secret in the fact years of misrule, corruption and neglect has left Karachi in ruins and tatters and the condition in which the megacity now lies is synonymous to a state of man-made disaster. As the NDMA personnel in collaboration with FWO embarked towards cleaning Gujjar Nullah, one of leading storm drains in the city, the sight of tonnes of sludge blocking the free flow of water was despicable. Such blockage has attributed to horrendous urban flooding and standing water stagnation that invites mosquitoes, filth and obstruction in movement.

Even though the federal government has stepped in to clean the drains in Karachi in the face of forecasted heavy rainfall, such an urgency to provide relief to inhabitants of Karachi from another rain-related misery is worth applauding. As the country's largest metropolitan city is in doldrums due to a barely functioning local government, welcoming this ad hoc move is a viable way forward. It is because players have used Karachi has a political playground to checkmate one another. As a result, the water, sewage and solid waste management departments have malfunctioned to such an extent that they largely remain inactive in using whatever powers remain with them. Moreover, coming with swashbuckling solutions once the rain-related misery has inflicted the people of Karachi and has paralyzed them with every possible impediments are not tenable approaches. Therefore at the end of the day, whether it is the federal decision or the Sindh government stepping in to unveil grandiose foreign-funded civic projects to mend the depleting physical infrastructure of Karachi, all these attempts will fail unless the local government is empowered and fulfils its constitutional duty to clean and maintain the city of Karachi.

**HADIA MUKHTAR
KARACHI**

Kashmir's oppression

EXACTLY one year ago, Kashmir's semi-autonomous status was scrapped by the presidential order and still today, the situation in the valley remains a powder keg of repression and fury. The boastful claim of the BJP-Led RSS inspired government in India that revocation of Article 370 and 35A will bring peace, prosperity and development in the region has turned on its head as the region continues to remain ravaged by daunting military presence and complete lockdown that has severely hampered, detained and obscured freedom of speech and movement. In other words, all kinds of dissent is brutally crushed. As the brutally by the Indian forces refuse to move an inch, so has the spirits of the Kashmiris as they stand defiant in this uphill battle against India for freedom and liberation.

No prizes for guessing that the real motive of BJP-led government headed by Modi was to bring the demographic change in the Kashmir Valley and make the Muslim majority chunk a minority in their own land. As the revocation of these two prime Articles in Indian Constitution has proved to be precursor for the passing of two controversial bills such as CAA and NRC, the largest democracy in the world has paved way for its own demise. As the rhetoric of the BJP government Although the government in India and plaint media continue to rant that all is well in the Kashmir valley with the return of normalcy, the very claim is juxtaposed by the fact that the Kashmiri leaders even the pro-Indian ones remain incarcerated, freedom of speech remains null and void and draconian steps such as total communication blackout is routinely employed to clamp down on resistance. To add with, gross human rights violation of despicable nature is commonplace feature of the oppressed valley. There is no denying of the fact that the occupied Kashmir now stands at the crossroads of economic, political and demographic disaster. With livelihood of the residents of the valley is severely curtailed due to the influx of outsiders who make a strain on employment opportunities and curfew, the Covid-19 situation has made matters worse than before.

**HADIA MUKHTAR
KARACHI**

Unpaid teachers

THE schools in the Sindh have been closed since after the first case reported in the country of coronavirus. But there are many teachers like me who are working in private schools, and are still waiting for their salaries. The school's management has declined to pay the salaries for the month of March and giving the excuses like- the students didn't pay them the fees of the month of March and will release the salaries the moment they think they are in a position to do so. Through the column of your esteemed newspaper, I want the education department authorities to look into the issue and all the private schools teachers should be paid on time.

**RABIA KHAN
KARACHI**

Child marriages

CHILD marriages have been one of the serious issues, especially in developing countries. Pakistan also facing this problem, children under eighteen are forcefully contract into marriage by their family elders in rural areas. specially girls are going through this issue. The girls of the extremely poverty-ridden families in the slums of the towns and cities of villages are found to be married before 15. According to research every year at least 12 million girls marry before the age of 18. It's due to poverty and illiteracy. The parents of their families can't afford to send their girls to high schools and can't provide them with job.

This later causes different types of health issues such as obstetric fistula, cervical cancer and many other sexually transmitted infectious diseases like HIV. There is a high chance of death during childbirth. Human Rights and many other organizations are working against child marriages by doing awareness programs, sessions etc, But still there are no such fruitful results. Child marriage is still in practice and situation is becoming worst day by day. Government should make strong law against child marriages, and also develop educational institutes in backward areas because illiteracy and poverty is the main reason of child marriage.

**JAVERIYA KHAN
KARACHI**

BIDEN IS ALREADY FUMBLING THE AFGHANISTAN WITHDRAWAL



POLITICO MAGAZINE
RICH LOWRY

BARELY a day passes without additional news of Taliban gains in Afghanistan. Perhaps the Afghan government and its forces will prove more resilient than many expect, but if the country continues its slide toward chaos or, worse, the Taliban rapidly take Kabul, President Joe Biden’s decision to withdraw a residual U.S. force will look like an amateurish, unforced error by a man who prides himself on his foreign policy experience and acumen.

With his top military leadership opposed and credible warnings that Kabul could fall within months after a withdrawal, Biden went ahead with it anyway on the basis of what an aide has called “his gut.”

PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN’S DECISION TO WITHDRAW A RESIDUAL US FORCE COULD LOOK LIKE AN AMATEURISH, UNFORCED ERROR IF AN EXPECTED TALIBAN RESURGENCE MATERIALIZES

So far, indications are that the president would have been better off heeding his military advisers than his viscera.

The Afghan war has, of course, stretched on for two decades and become a holding action satisfying to no one. But the cost to the U.S. of sustaining 3,500 troops in the country without losing anyone in combat for more than a year hasn’t been high compared with the entirely plausible downside of Islamist extremists allied with al-Qaeda sweeping to power again in Afghanistan.

The desire to pull out of Afghanistan has been an area of rare Biden-Trump agreement. Then-President Donald Trump’s foolhardy cease-fire deal with the Taliban in February 2020 set the predicate for Biden’s withdrawal. It would have taken some determination for Biden to reverse the U.S. promise in that deal to withdraw its forces by May 2021, although the Taliban’s transparent bad faith provided plenty of occasion for it. Biden says not to worry. The U.S. will continue to provide “over the horizon” support, i.e., from a distance, for the Afghan government.

This is likely a pipe dream, and nothing about Biden’s poorly thought-out drawdown lends any more credibility to it. The U.S. withdrawal has gone quickly, and thankfully,

been carried out without casualties. Otherwise, it has the hallmarks of a fiasco. The CIA has been struggling to figure out what to do to try to maintain intelligence-gathering capabilities in Afghanistan. The agency has been very active in the country over the years, hitting terrorist targets in Afghanistan and Pakistan. There is no doubt that its operations will now be significantly curtailed. There will be no targets to strike from “over the horizon” if we don’t have the assets on the ground to find them.

Ideally, the U.S. would locate some other base next door to Afghanistan, but there are no good options in the neighborhood. Pakistan, which can’t be trusted and supports the Taliban, is inherently problematic. Vladimir Putin won’t look kindly on our using the former Soviet republics.

Conducting operations from bases in the Persian Gulf eight hours away clearly isn’t the same as doing it from Bagram. In congressional testimony, Gen. Kenneth McKenzie, the head of Central Command, said the long-distance missions would be “extremely difficult to do,” but “not impossible.” This isn’t a ringing endorsement. The U.S. withdrawal has had other troubling loose ends.

The contractors who have worked with

the Afghan Air Force to maintain its planes are leaving, too, potentially stripping Afghan forces of air support. One official told The New York Times that Afghans wouldn’t be capable of maintaining their own Black Hawks until the mid-2030s. The administration has been considering various kludgy alternatives for the contractor issue, including having them help maintain aircraft remotely.

The fate of the Afghans who have assisted U.S. forces—and of their families—is uncertain, although under political pressure here at home, Biden has committed to getting them out.

Biden wants to provide \$3 billion in security assistance to the Afghans, but who will do the training with that money?

The allies are leaving, with the administration anxious to get the Turks to stay to secure Kabul International Airport, crucial to the U.S. maintaining its embassy and aid groups gaining access to the country.

As the bad news in Afghanistan has piled up in recent weeks—the website The Long War Journal tracks the drumbeat of Taliban gains—the Biden administration has tried to provide reassuring signals. One expedient is keeping our top commander in Afghanistan, Gen. Austin Miller, in the

country a few more weeks. But are the Afghans, and the Taliban, not supposed to notice that nearly all his forces have already withdrawn?

When Miller leaves, The New York Times reports, General Kenneth McKenzie will assume the authority to carry out airstrikes against al-Qaeda and the Islamic State from Tampa, Florida, “at least through August,” and have the authority to move an additional 300 troops into Afghanistan in case of emergency “at least through September.”

How’s that for the long view? One justification for leaving Afghanistan is that it will free up resources for us to concentrate on the growing threat from China. It’s not as though the 3,000 ground troops are going to relocate to East Asia, though, and make a difference in the balance of power there. To the contrary, to the extent that striking al-Qaeda targets going forward has to be done from the Persian Gulf, involving longer, more taxing flights for U.S. aircraft, or requires keeping an aircraft carrier in the vicinity of Afghanistan, it will draw on the kind of resources we need to check China. On top of this, if there is an unraveling in Afghanistan, controlling the fallout will become a consuming issue for the U.S. military. Biden has gotten his drawdown. Now, he may reap the whirlwind.

Rich Lowry is editor of National Review and a contributing editor with Politico Magazine.

Parliament lags judiciary in providing a harassment-free workplace

WOMEN WORKING IN PARLIAMENT HAVE A RIGHT TO SAFE WORKPLACES IN THE SAME WAY AS WOMEN EMPLOYED ELSEWHERE. THAT CANNOT BE ASSURED UNLESS A PROPER INVESTIGATION IS CONDUCTED



SYDNEY MORNING HERALD
JOSH BORNSTEIN

THE contrast could not be more stark. The outcome of a year-long investigation into allegations of sexual harassment against a judge of the Federal Circuit Court is yet another reminder that the struggle for gender equality has a long way to go. The investigation found that the judge had engaged in unwelcome sexualised conduct towards two women, one employed at the Federal Circuit Court in Sydney and the other a former law student.

It comes just days after the airing of allegations of sexual harassment against an unidentified cabinet minister in the Morrison government by former Liberal Party politician, Julia Banks. To date, no action has been announced to address these allegations.

The revelations of repeated sexual harassment by Dyson Heydon during his tenure as a High Court judge had a profound effect on the legal profession. One of the most powerful lawyers in the country, a judge who administered the law in the highest court in the land, betrayed his oath by mistreating young associates. The legal profession has been forced to confront the reality that its deeply hierarchical structure and culture of patronage render courts and tribunals as high risk environments for bullying and sexual harassment. The courts are leading the charge for change with a range of measures to make their workplaces safer including further judicial education and new policies and processes.

In June 2020, I wrote to the Federal Circuit Court on behalf of my client to detail her complaint of sexual harassment by a judge.

The response was swift and decisive. Chief Justice Alstergren determined that the complaint was serious and constituted a committee made up of three former judges to investigate it. The committee commenced its investigation promptly. Its final report, delivered in April, upheld many of the allegations made by both my client and another complainant finding that the judge had engaged in inappropriate sexualised conduct which could amount to sexual harassment.

In the interests of transparency, the Committee also recommended that the Court release a public statement about the investigation and its outcome. The Federal Circuit Court has also established a further investigation to determine whether there has been any other inappropriate conduct by the judge.

In complete contrast to the handling of the sexual harassment allegations against judges by both the High Court and now the Federal Circuit Court, the Morrison government is committed to doing nothing about Julia Banks’ allegations. The government continues to inhabit another dimension: an alternative reality that favours secrecy over transparency and obfuscation over accountability. The revelations by Julia Banks of her experience of sexual harassment merit a similarly decisive response from Prime Minister. He should constitute an independent investigation and if Julia Bank’s allegations are upheld, invite any other women with similar complaints to come forward. The outcome of the investigation should be made public.

In the wake of recent scandals about the mistreatment of women in Parliament House, the Prime Minister agreed that Parliament should be “setting the standard”, adding unequivocally that sexual assault is “not only immoral and despicable and even criminal, but ... it denies Australians, especially women, not just their personal security but their economic security by not being safe at work.”

But with the emergence of another allegation of sexual misconduct against one of his colleagues, the Prime Minister has reverted to type: ducking for cover behind a spokesperson’s statement that “Any such behaviour is completely inappropriate” and referring journalists to a new protocol for investigating allegations of sexual harassment that does not apply retrospectively and will therefore not address Julia Banks’ allegations.

As more women come forward and share their experiences in the workplace, we are learning that perpetrators of sexual harassment often have multiple victims. The secrecy and shame that often shrouds sexual harassment means that women who have been harmed can be unaware that there are others working alongside them who share their predicament. That secrecy also allows the perpetrators to repeat their conduct with impunity. Julia Banks MP revealed this week that a current cabinet minister groped her leg at a function in the Prime Minister’s office.

It was only towards the end of the committee’s deliberations that my client and I became aware there was another woman who had also made allegations against the Judge. This replicates the experience of the investigation into Dyson Heydon. Initially there were 2 women who made complaints against Heydon but that number grew to 6 as the investigation progressed.

Julia Banks is clearly worried that she was not the only woman in Canberra targeted in this way, observing that if the senior Minister ‘was prepared to do that to me - a 50-something corporate lawyer MP...what must he do to women he has real power over?’. She has confirmed that the man in question remains in parliament.

Women working in Parliament have a right to safe workplaces in the same way as women employed elsewhere. That cannot be assured unless a proper investigation is conducted.

Without such an investigation, the community will be left with an overwhelmingly cynical assessment. The Morrison government demands accountability from others but shields its own from the same standards. The Morrison government appeals to the rule of law except if it’s politically inconvenient to do so.

We should be thankful that the judge’s resignation has eliminated the need for the federal parliament to consider whether to remove him from office under the Judicial Misbehaviour and Incapacity Act. Given the lamentable record of the Morrison government on the mistreatment of women, it is not in a position to be sitting in judgment on anyone accused of sexual harassment.

Josh Bornstein is an employment lawyer. He represents a number of women who allege sexual harassment by judges in several courts across Australia.

G20 must rise to the challenge of global crises

THE RICH WORLD MUST GAIN EMERGING COUNTRIES’ TRUST TO ADVANCE ON PANDEMIC AND CLIMATE

FINANCIAL TIMES
EDITORIAL BOARD

WHEN finance ministers and central bankers from the world’s 20 largest economies meet in Venice this week, they must seize this crucial opportunity to make headway on the world’s biggest challenges: ending the pandemic worldwide, rallying a global effort to contain climate change and securing a solid economic recovery everywhere on the planet. On all three counts, time is running out. The failure to commit to a plan to end the pandemic by vaccinating all the world’s adults, such as the one costed at \$50bn by the IMF, is unconscionable but also self-defeating. As long as the pandemic is uncontained anywhere, new and potentially vaccine-resistance virus mutations are a risk everywhere. Strong recoveries are under way in many countries but they, too, are vulnerable to economic troubles elsewhere. Big build-ups in debt, necessary to safeguard jobs and businesses during lockdowns, leave behind fragile financial systems and balance sheets. Rich-country policy normalisation, meanwhile, poses risks to emerging economies (and if premature, to rich countries themselves). As for climate change, policy is still playing catch-up with the scale of the carbon transition most leaders now fortunately admit is required. If speed is of the essence, so is co-operation between rich and poor countries, without which none of these problems can be addressed adequately. Even if the leaders of the G7 largest high-income countries had made serious commitments to face up to these challenges — which they have not — it would not suffice on its own. On vaccination, climate change and recovery, the emerging world has its own role to play. Hence the importance of a common approach at G20 level. The biggest political problem to overcome is a lack of trust between the rich and emerging worlds. This has good reasons: while it is understandable that rich countries’ leaders look after their own people first, they show little sign of appreciating just how yawning the gap between rich and poor countries really is. More than half of adults in most high-income countries are partly or fully vaccinated; many poor countries remain in the single-digits. Rich countries are belatedly forging ahead with ambitious climate plans — including potential punitive trade measures for those that do not follow suit — but have not made good on a decade-old promise of \$100bn a year to fund poor countries’ climate transitions. And poor and middling countries cannot afford the sort of generous rescues rich countries have put in place for their economies. Restoring trust requires all sides to come together, but rich countries can catalyse this process by putting real money behind their promises to build back better. It will not cost them much. The IMF’s estimated cost of ending the pandemic outright is a mere one-thousandth of rich countries’ annual economic output. The promised climate funding for poor countries is of the same minuscule order of magnitude. There is no reason to delay either; nor to resist any longer the proposal to issue new special drawing rights, the international reserve asset. To do any good, new SDRs must be made available to poorer countries remain in the single-digits. Not allocated to each country by economic weight as is the norm. This would not cost rich countries a penny, involving as it would the creation of new reserves. The G20 was forged to co-ordinate the global response to the Asian and global financial crises. Today’s triple challenge is deeper than both. The forum — the closest we have to a world government — must prove its mettle again.

CORPORATE CORNER

K-Electric advises caution ahead of monsoon season

KARACHI: Ahead of the monsoon season, K-Electric reiterated the importance of safety during and beyond the expected rains. The power utility urged its valued customers to adopt necessary precautionary measures to avoid any safety hazards. Karachi was among the most affected cities of Pakistan in the 2020 monsoon season, with many areas immobilized due to urban flooding and waterlogging. Cognizant of the safety hazards that can be created by inclement weather, KE advised citizens to maintain a safe distance from the power infrastructure including poles, stay wires which are used to support the pole, transformers, and also substations. At the same time, the utility encouraged consumers to identify safety hazards for immediate redress by KE's teams, especially in cases and areas where kundas were being used to illegally acquire electricity. Consumers are further advised to avoid standing under transformers or billboards during heavy rainfall and windy circumstances. As the monsoon season will also overlap with Eid-ul-Azha, consumers are advised not to use electricity infrastructure such as poles and stay wires to tie their sacrificial animals. The utility also advises citizens to utilize the time before the rains to conduct internal wiring assessments and insulate the circuits and switches which could be affected by water. Appliances like water motors which are exposed to the rains should especially be protected with proper insulation of their electricity switches. During rains, it is imperative to avoid using such appliances, and keep children away from them as well. The utility advised that if standing water created similar circumstances this year, power supply to affected areas would have to be suspended out of an abundance of caution and would only be restored after the water has receded to safe levels. With the same emphasis on safety, power supply to kunda-infested areas may also be suspended to protect citizens from falling illegal wires due to heavy winds and rain. KE's 118 call center, 8119 SMS service, KE Live App, and social media channels are available and active 24/7 to support customers with their queries and complaints as well. **PRESS RELEASE**

JS Bank, PMRC join hands to make house financing accessible to all income groups

KARACHI: JS Bank and Pakistan Mortgage Refinance Company (PMRC) have worked in unison to further the objective of the government and initiatives of SBP in provision of low-cost and affordable house financing to all residents of the country. Via this agreement, PMRC is to provide concessional funds with a 10-year fixed rate to JS Bank clients specifically the low- and middle-income groups as well as those in informal segments. Through this collaboration, the aim is to make house financing easier and more accessible for all segments bringing about financial inclusion as well as supporting growth in the housing sector. This partnership also includes refinancing facilities and credit guarantee which will assist the bank in effectively managing its asset liability gap arising from mortgages whilst aiding the government by creating a growth trajectory in the housing and construction sector leading to economic and social development. **PRESS RELEASE**

PAKISTAN, AFGHANISTAN EXTEND APTTA FOR ANOTHER SIX MONTHS

ISLAMABAD

GHULAM ABBAS

WITH differences over revised draft of transit trade agreement between Pakistan and Afghanistan remaining un-addressed even after the passage of months, the two countries have signed a protocol for extending the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA), 2010 by another six months.

Advisor to the Prime Minister on Commerce and Investment, Abdul Razak Dawood, and Minister of Industry and Commerce, Nisar Ahmad Ghoriyani, signed the extension. The ceremony was held over video-link on Thursday.

According to details, the two neighbouring countries are not on the same page over the revised draft

of the transit trade agreement, leading to delay in signing of the pact. However, officials at the Ministry of Commerce claimed that the agreement would be signed by next month.

Earlier, the two countries had extended the agreement by three months following its expiry on February 11. In this regard, the Ministry of Commerce had taken up the matter in a Cabinet meeting in May.

Speaking on occasion, Dawood said that his vision for trade and economic relations with Afghanistan and Central Asian Republics (CARs) makes Pakistan a hub for trade, transit and transshipment. "Our trade must be based on secure, open, consistent, reliable and legal movement of goods at the Afghan border along with enhanced connectivity with Afghanistan and CARs," he said.

"This is a long-term vision and through our current engagement with Afghanistan and Uzbekistan,

we are laying the foundation for its implementation. This will ensure that Pakistan leverages its geo-economic location in the region to enhance its international trade," he said. Both sides expressed satisfaction with an extension of the agreement and decided that the technical teams of the two countries will conclude the revised agreement soon.

According to sources, the agreement on a revised draft was being delayed due to differences and disagreements for which more interactions at the policy level would be needed.

Once finalised and signed, the agreement will come into force one month after the exchange of instruments of ratification, which will also take time.

It has been estimated that 30 per cent of ATT goods passed through Pakistan and the remaining via Iran, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Under the agreement, Pakistan's exports to Central Asia go through Afghanistan.

Bank profits up 43pc in CY20 despite Covid: SBP

Despite pandemic the profits of the banking sector surged by 42.92 per cent in calendar year 2020, the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) said on Wednesday.

According to a report by Dawn that analysed the SBP's Financial Stability Review CY20, a drastic cut in policy rate during March to June 2020 transmitted into lower funding costs on deposits due to immediate re-pricing of saving deposits.

On the other hand, interest earnings were supported by increase in the volume of investments in government securities.

Banks investments shot up by 33.51pc to Rs12 trillion during CY20 (12.96pc rise in CY19) predominantly driven by investments in government securities. Weak financing demand, abundant liquidity, and high government budgetary borrowing needs accelerated banks' investments.

"Despite pandemic driven stress, banking sector's assets grew by 14.24pc during CY20—higher than 11.73pc growth observed in the previous year," said the report.

The report says that the performance of Islamic banking institutions (IBIs) was notable as their asset base expanded by 30pc during CY20 due to decent growth in financing and a surge in investments.

More than 50pc rise in NPLs during CY20 was observed in agribusiness, energy, and sugar sectors. The flow of NPLs in the agribusiness amounted to Rs17bn against Rs6bn in CY19.

The SBP provided a comparative study of global financial crisis (GFC) of 2008-09 and ongoing impact of Covid-19. The global output loss was 0.6pc in 2008-09 while Covid related estimated global output loss is 3.3pc. **MONITORING REPORT**

IHC reinstates NBP president, BoD chairman

An Islamabad High Court (IHC) division bench on Thursday suspended a single bench's June 28 verdict that set aside appointments of president of the National Bank of Pakistan (NBP) Arif Usmani and board of directors (BoD) Chairman, Zubair Soomro. The order was passed by a two-judge bench comprising Chief Justice Athar Minallah and Justice Aamir Farooq after taking up separate appeals filed by the Ministry of Finance and the NBP challenging the IHC single bench verdict. On June 28, Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kayani set aside the appointments of NBP president Arif Usmani and chairman of its board of directors Zubair Soomro. On June 30, the Ministry of Finance had sought portfolios of four officials within the bank to replace Usmani and Soomro. It is worth mentioning here that former employees of the bank including Syed Jahangir, Javed Iqbal, Fazal Raheem and Latif Quershi had challenged the appointments of Usmani and Soomro. They contended that the appointments had been made in violation of the constitutional rights that called for equal opportunity for every citizen. **MONITORING REPORT**

Exporters suggest streamlining system of checking meat containers

LAHORE

SHAHAB OMER

Exporters of halal meat, fruits and vegetables have suggested the government to streamline the system of checking meat containers and abolish turnover tax on poultry and cattle feed, Profit learnt here on Thursday.

A special meeting was arranged by the Punjab Board of Investment and Trade (PBIT) to address the impediments being faced by the exporters of fresh fruits, vegetables and halal meat in this regard.

The meeting was chaired by the Punjab Minister for Industries and Commerce Mian Aslam Iqbal, while PBIT Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Dr Erfa Iqbal, Agri-food and halal meat exporters and senior representation from the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), Customs, PIA, Trade Development Authority Pakistan (TDAP), Animal Husbandry and Quarantine Department, Local Government and Community Development Department, Livestock and Dairy and Plant Protection Department were present on the occasion.

It is pertinent to mention here that PBIT arranged this meeting in continuation of a larger dialogue conducted earlier in March, to address the impediments faced by exporters across sectors.

The meeting held detailed discussions on numerous issues faced by exporters of fruits, vegetables and halal meat with their concerned government departments and suggested a number of proposals for their amicable resolution.

Exporters said that a dry port should be set up in Sargodha and a 24/7 helpline should be set up to provide the services of the customs department. They



also raised other issues, including the provision of cold storage and chiller facilities at airports.

They demanded uniformity in the procedure for value assessment in G.D form, along with highlighting the problems being faced for acquiring offload shipment e-form and variations in weighing. Halal meat exporters demanded strict implementation on rules regarding slaughtering of useful animals, removal of quarantine fee, control on all disease, provision of free medicines to farmers and reduction in the time of shipment.

Mian Aslam while assuring a solution to their exporters said that the recommendations would be sent to the prime minister and the Punjab Chief Minister's Office.

"Exporters earn billions of dollars in foreign exchange for the country and it is the government's re-

sponsibility to solve their problems. Officials of the concerned agencies should not spare any effort to address the grievances of the exporters. All the problems of exporters would be solved and the federal government would also be contacted to resolve issues related to the federation. PBIT is not simply acting as a facilitator, rather it is working with an approach of bringing all the stakeholders within and outside of the government together to streamline and boost the national income by promoting a business friendly environment," he said.

Taking all stakeholders into confidence, Iqbal stated that the government was fully aware of the problems being faced by them and is making all out sincere efforts for early amicable solution to these problems.

Later, speaking to the media in the Chief Minister's House, the provincial minister said that Pakistan is an agricultural country but unfortunately 90 per cent of food items have to be imported.

"Agriculture and livestock are pivotal pillars of strong economic growth for any nation while Pakistan is rich in both, it certainly has lacked the capacity to exploit the abundance of these resources. When commodity prices rise in the international market, it has an effect here as well. As an agricultural country, the previous governments did not formulate a policy that would allow imported food items to be grown in the country. The Punjab government is giving a subsidy of Rs80 billion annually on the supply of cheap flour and now a targeted subsidy programme is being formulated under which deprived sections will be given health card style cards through which they will be able to buy discounted items," he concluded.

CCP launches inquiry against Foodpanda

ISLAMABAD

STAFF REPORT

The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has initiated an inquiry against the online food delivery service, Foodpanda, to investigate its alleged abuse of dominant position and entering into a prohibited agreement in violation of the Competition Act, according to a statement issued by the CCP. Foodpanda is also accused of increasing its commission rates for delivering food during the pandemic period, which has also been seen as exploitative by the restaurants. The CCP said that after receiving complaints, its Cartel and Trade Abuse Department conducted a preliminary fact-finding exercise and found that "Foodpanda seems to have a dominant position in the market of online food delivery platforms". The company receives about 100,000 food orders every day from different restaurants, outlets and food chains across Pakistan. As per the details, the enquiry committee will also review and place before the commission its findings, whether the exemption granted for loyalty agreements to Foodpanda in April 2019 for three years is impeding competition in any manner in light of the concerns highlighted by various market players. The CCP has initiated the inquiry on formal complaints filed by Cheetay Logistics Pakistan Limited on May 4, and the All Pakistan Restaurant Association (APRA) on June 10. Formerly, a complaint was also filed by another online food aggregator, Careem Networks Pakistan (Private) Limited, pertaining to the exemption granted to the same aggregator in 2019. The complaints are against alleged abuse of dominant position, charging exorbitant commissions, offering fidelity rebates, discriminatory practices, setting out various discounts to exploit participants, and entering into exclusivity with parties through loyalty agreements. These concerns stretch the scope of abuse to being a barrier for new entrants in the market of online food delivery platforms, said the CCP. There is also allegation that Foodpanda charges exploitative commissions. Foodpanda is accused of charging exploitative commissions in the face of Covid-19. They increased the rates without any prior consultation with the stakeholders as the reliance on the app surged during the pandemic. The inquiry committee has already been working on the case, consulting all the concerned parties, and seeking relevant information for deliberating the matter objectively. Findings of the enquiry upon conclusion will be placed before the commission for its decision.



KARACHI: Omni Motorsport Pvt. Ltd. and Z2C Limited have signed a motorsports marketing, media, sponsorship and branding agreement. This exclusive three year appointment comes as the state-of-the-art Omni Karting Circuit is nearing completion and gearing up to usher in a new era for motorsports in the country. The multipurpose and multidisciplinary motorsport facility it is the first and only international standard karting circuit in the country built to CIK-FIA standards and intended to be the hub of all motorsport activities in Pakistan. This partnership will lay the foundation for a professional, sustained, and international standard platform for the promotion and development of motorsports in Pakistan aiming to place Pakistan on the international motorsport map. **PR**

SERIES OF ATTACKS TARGET US PERSONNEL IN IRAQ AND SYRIA

BAGHDAD/AMMAN
REUTERS

US diplomats and troops in Iraq and Syria were targeted in three rocket and drone attacks in the past 24 hours, US and Iraq officials said on Wednesday, including at least 14 rockets hitting an Iraqi air base hosting US forces, wounding two American service members.

While there were no immediate claims of responsibility for the attacks — part of a wave targeting US troops or areas where they are based in Iraq and Syria — analysts believed they were part of a campaign by ‘Iranian-backed militias’.

Iraqi militia groups allegedly aligned with Iran vowed to retaliate after US strikes on the Iraqi-Syrian border killed four of their members last month.

Two people were slightly wounded in the rocket attack on the Ain al-Asad air base in western Iraq, said coalition spokesman US Army Colonel Wayne Marotto. The rockets landed on the base and its perimeter. He said earlier that three people were wounded.

US officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the two personnel injured were US service members. One suffered a concussion and the other had minor cuts, one of the officials added.

Two rockets were fired at the US Embassy inside Baghdad’s Green Zone early on Thursday, Iraqi security sources told Reuters.

The embassy’s anti-rocket system diverted one of the rockets, said one of the sources — a security official whose office is inside the Green Zone. The second rocket fell near the zone’s perimeter, security officials said.

Sirens blared from the embassy compound inside the zone, which houses government buildings and foreign missions, the sources said.

In Syria, the US-backed Syrian Demo-

cratic Forces said no damage was done by a drone attack on the Al Omar oil field in an eastern area bordering Iraq where US forces came under rocket fire but escaped injury on June 28.

The Pentagon said a drone had been brought down in eastern Syria and that no US service members had been injured and there had not been any damage.

Iraqi army officials said the pace of recent attacks against bases hosting US forces with rockets and explosive-laden drones was unprecedented.

Iraqi military sources said a rocket launcher fixed on the back of a truck was used in Wednesday’s attack and was found on nearby farmland set on fire.

On Tuesday, a drone attacked Erbil airport in northern Iraq, targeting a US base on the airport grounds, Kurdish security sources said. Three rockets also landed on Ain al-Asad on Monday without causing casualties. **ESCALATION:** The United States has been holding indirect talks with Iran aimed at bringing both nations back into compliance with the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, which was abandoned by then-President Donald Trump. No date has been set for a next round of the talks, which adjourned on June 20.

Hamdi Malik, an associate fellow at the Washington Institute and a specialist on Iraq’s militias, said the attacks were part of a coordinated escalation by ‘Iranian-backed militias’ in Iraq.

The attempt to strike in eastern Syria appeared to be the first example of operations being carried out simultaneously in both countries.

“It seems to me they have the green light from Iran to escalate, especially given that the nuclear negotiations are not going well. But at the same time, they do not want to escalate beyond a certain point — they are more vulnerable to US air strikes than they used to be — and they don’t want to over-complicate the negotiations Iran is holding with the West.”



The United States told the UN Security Council last week that it targeted ‘Iranian-backed militia’ in Syria and Iraq with air

strikes to deter them and Tehran from conducting or supporting further attacks on US personnel or facilities.

Iran denied supporting attacks on US forces in Iraq and Syria and condemned US air strikes on ‘Iranian-backed groups’.

Fiery explosion erupts on ship at major global port in Dubai, tremors felt across city

DUBAI
AP

A fiery explosion erupted on a container ship anchored in Dubai at one of the world’s largest ports late on Wednesday, authorities said, sending tremors across the commercial hub of the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The blaze sent up giant orange flames on a vessel at the crucial Jebel Ali Port, the busiest in the Middle East that sits on the eastern side of the Arabian Peninsula.

The combustion unleashed a shock wave through the skyscraper-studded city of Dubai, causing walls and windows to shake in neighbourhoods as far as 25 kilometres away from the port. Panicked residents filmed from their high-rises as a fiery ball illuminated the night sky. The blast was powerful enough to be seen from

space by satellite.

There were no immediate reports of casualties at the port, which is also the busiest port of call for American warships outside the US.

Some two and a half hours after the blast, Dubai’s civil defence teams said they had brought the fire under control and started the “cooling process”.

Authorities posted footage on social media of firefighters dousing giant shipping containers. The glow of the blaze remained visible in the background as civil defence crews worked to contain the fire.

The extent of damage caused to the sprawling port and surrounding cargo was not immediately clear. Footage shared on social media of the aftermath showed charred containers, ashes and littered debris.

The sheer force and visibility of the explosion suggested the presence of a

highly combustible substance.

Dubai authorities told the Saudi-owned Al-Arabiya TV that the crew had evacuated in time and that the fire appeared to have started in one of the containers holding “flammable material,” without elaborating.

Seeking to downplay the explosion, Mona al-Marri, director general of Dubai Media Office, told Al-Arabiya the incident “could happen anywhere in the world” and that authorities were investigating the cause.

The Jebel Ali Port at the northern end of Dubai is the largest man-made deep-water harbor in the world and serves cargo from the Indian subcontinent, Africa and Asia. The port is not only a critical global cargo hub, but a lifeline for Dubai and surrounding emirates, serving as the point of entry for essential imports.

Dubai authorities did not identify

the stricken ship beyond saying it was a small vessel with a capacity of 130 containers. Ship tracker MarineTraffic showed a fleet of small support vessels surrounding a docked container ship called the Ocean Trader flagged in Comoros. Footage from the scene re-broadcast by the UAE’s state-run WAM news agency showed firefighters hosing down a vessel bearing paint and logo that corresponds to the Ocean Trader, operated by the Dubai-based Inzu Ship Charter.

The Ocean Trader docked at Jebel Ali Port at midday on Wednesday. Ship tracking data showed the vessel had been sailing up and down the coast of the UAE since April. The United Nations ship database identified the vessel’s owners as Sash Shipping corporation. Sash and Inzu Ship Charter did not immediately respond to request for comment.

GOVERNMENT OF THE PUNJAB IRRIGATION DEPARTMENT SHAHPUR DIVISION LJC, SARGODHA INVITATION OF BIDS

- The Punjab Irrigation Department invites sealed bids of the following work on items rates from approved constructions / firms who are registered / renewed for the year 2021-22 with PEC in the Category C-4 and above and who have experience of related work as per specification ME-05 of Pakistan Engineering Council. Renewed registration with Punjab Irrigation Department for the work of “Manufacturing Pitching Stone and Spawl at Sikhanwala Quarry during the period 01-07-2021 to 30-06-2024. The Quarry is situated at a distance of 02- Kilometers from Nishtarabad Railway Station in Sargodha District also linked with Pull No.111 on Sargodha Chiniot Road through pacca road.
- Bidders may obtain further information, inspect and acquire the Bidding Documents from the office of the Executive Engineer, Shahpur Division LJC Sargodha.
- The bidding documents will be issued to bidders from the date of up loading of bids on PPRA website up to **26.07.2021 at 15.00 hours.**
- A complete set of bidding documents may be purchased by an interested bidder on submission of a written application to the above office and upon payment of a non-refundable fee as per rule 25(7) of PPRA rules 2014. A committee comprising of officers/officials of this Division is constituted separately for examination of bidder's documents and sale of bid documents for ensuring transparency.
- All bids must be accompanied by earnest money (2% quoted rate) as per contract Agreement clause 14 and must be delivered to the Office of the **Executive Engineer, Shahpur Division LJC Sargodha**, at or before **12:30 hour on 27.07.2021** bids will be opened at **13:00 hours on the same date**, in the presence of bidders or their representatives who choose to attend at the same address.
- In case the total tendered amount is less than 5% of the approved estimated (DNIT) amount, the lowest bidder will have to deposit additional performance security subsequent %age below the estimated cost from the scheduled bank as per clause 26-A of Contract agreement & F.D notification No RD (Tech) FD-1-2/83, VI (P) dated 24.01.2006.
- The Irrigation Department will not be responsible for any cost or expenses incurred by Bidders in connection with the preparation or delivery of bids.
- The procuring agency may reject all bids or proposals at any time prior to the acceptance of a bid or proposal as per contract Agreement clause 27.
- The payment will be made after verification of work by the competent authority monitoring / inspection teams / consultants constituted by the Government and subject to availability of funds.
- Conditional Tender will not be accepted.
- Work order will be issued to successful bidder subject to renewal of lease of quarry from D.G Mines & Mineral Department Lahore.
- The Contractor is only allowed to manufacture and stacking of stone and Spawl from Sikhanwala Quarry within in the jurisdiction of Irrigation Department Lia 282.50 Acres.
- The Bidders must submit original documents and PEC Certificate for verification purpose.
- The potential Bidders can lodge there complaint regarding transparency and fairness of all Bidding process on toll free help line 0800-11333, by e-mail: pmiugd@yahoo.com or by direct application. PMIU Irrigation Secretariat, Old Anarkali, Lahore.

Sr No.	Name of Work	Estimated Cost in (Rs in Million)	Tender Fee (Rs)
1	Manufacturing and stacking of Pitching Stone and Spawl at Sikhanwala Quarry during the period 01.07.2021 to 30.06.2024 T.S Vide SE LJC No.2985 dt 08.05.2021	146.664	5000/-

Executive Engineer
Shahpur Division LJC Sargodha

IPL-6718

WASHINGTON
REUTERS

The Biden administration is considering offering an expedited visa path for “vulnerable” Afghans including women politicians, journalists, and activists who may become targets of the Taliban, US officials say. Rights groups have been asking the State Department and White House to add up to 2,000 visas specifically for vulnerable women and women’s advocates to a developing policy plan to evacuate thousands of Afghans after the US military pullout this month.

The current plan includes translators who worked with foreign forces. One of the officials said the administration is looking not only at women who are under threat, but also men and minorities in high-risk professions. Women who made gains during the two-decade US occupation, and their supporters and advocates, should be part of any expedited list, rights groups have

argued to the White House and State Department. “Lives are at risk,” said Teresa Casale, advocacy director for Mina’s List, which advocates for women’s representation in governments around the world. “Women leaders are being actively targeted and killed by Taliban forces. They receive threats against their lives and safety every day.”

The group and others are recommending these visas be added to an expedited activation process for Afghan people most at risk, by creating a fast track program in State Department, and that US officials actively pursue diplomacy to other countries as well to secure them. The White House declined to comment on the push to secure more visas for Afghan women’s rights advocates. President Joe Biden will speak Thursday afternoon about the US military’s withdrawal and is expected to mention women’s rights. Women police officers, media workers, judges and medical workers have been assassinated in Afghanistan as the foreign military left the country.

CORRIGENDUM

A Tender Notice for Installation of New Lift and Lift Well at Majsid Block, Awan-e-Adal Lahore and Installation of New Lift & Lift Well at Senior Civil Judge Block Awan-e-Adal Lahore has been published in the daily Newspapers Khabrain, Nawa-i-Waqt and Abbaseen etc; IPL No. 6093 dated 22.06.2021 to 23.06.2021. The same may be read as “Only specialized firms of lifts who should be an authorized dealer in Pakistan (Sole distribution of Pakistan Region) of known International Brands of Doppler (Greece), Mitsubishi (Japan) Schindler (Western Europe/ USA/ Switzerland) Orona (Spain) IMEM (Spain) OTIS (USA) Express (UK) IGV (Italian) Sodimas (France) Kone (Finland) and Thyson (Germany) or equivalent as approved in accordance with PPRA Rules 2014 with upto date amendments, presenting copy of dealership certificate from manufacturer for the year 2020-21” instead of “Only specialized firms of lifts who should be an authorized dealer in Pakistan (Sole distribution of Pakistan Region) of known International Brands of Doppler (Greece), Mitsubishi (Japan) Schindler (Western Europe/ USA/ Switzerland) Orona (Spain) IMEM (Spain) OTIS (USA) Express (UK) IGV (Italian) Sodimas (France) Kone (Finland) and Thyson (Germany) presenting copy of dealership certificate from manufacturer for the year 2020-21” as already published.

Rest of the conditions will remain the same.

Executive Engineer
4th Buildings Division Lahore

IPL-6654



Japan announces virus emergency throughout Olympics

TOKYO
AFP

Japan's government on Thursday announced a new virus state of emergency stretching throughout the Olympics, as reports said organisers could bar fans from almost all events at the Games. With just two weeks until the July 23 opening ceremony, coronavirus infections are rising in the capital, and the spread of the more infectious Delta variant has spooked officials. The rising cases threaten to derail plans to let up to 10,000 local fans into Olympic venues, and could mean Tokyo 2020 is the first ever Games held behind closed doors. Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga said the emergency measures -- which are far looser than the harsh lockdowns seen in other parts of the world -- will be in place until August 22. But the government could lift the emergency earlier "if the effect of vaccines becomes clear and an improvement is seen in the situation of hospital beds", Suga said. Earlier in the day, Japan's minister in charge of the virus response Yasutoshi Nishimura warned that new Covid-19 cases were rising in the capital. "As the movement of people increases, the more infectious Delta variant now accounts for around 30 percent of cases. This is expected to expand further," he added. Under the virus emergency, alcohol will be banned at bars and restaurants, which will have to close by 8pm, Nishimura said. Events such as concerts and conferences will have to end by 9pm. And crucially, spectators at events will be capped at 5,000 people or 50 percent venue capacity, whichever is less. The decision puts pressure on Olympic organisers who are scrambling to make a final ruling on how many local fans, if any, will be in the stands at the Games. Several Japanese media outlets said organisers were now likely to bar spectators from all competition venues in Tokyo and three surrounding areas. Tokyo 2020 organisers are expected to meet with local and national government officials and the International Olympic and Paralympic Committees as early as Thursday evening to make the key decision. While Japan has so far experienced a relatively small virus outbreak, with around 14,900 deaths despite avoiding harsh lockdowns, its vaccination programme has moved comparatively slowly. Just over 15 percent of the population is fully vaccinated so far, and there are concerns that the Delta variant could produce a new wave that might quickly overwhelm local medical resources. Overseas fans have already been barred from attending the Olympics, and organisers last month said they would limit local spectators to 10,000 people or 50 percent venue capacity. But they have acknowledged that the figure might be further reduced, saying the Games could even be held behind closed doors if the virus situation worsened and tougher restrictions were imposed in Tokyo.

ENGLAND THRASH PAKISTAN IN ODI OPENER

CARDIFF
REUTERS

ENGLAND'S makeshift one-day international team put the Covid-19 issues that hit the previous squad behind them to bowl out Pakistan for 141 runs before cruising to a clinical nine-wicket win in the series opener in Cardiff on Thursday.

Stand-in skipper Ben Stokes led an entirely fresh England XI, including five debutants, after a Covid-19 outbreak in the squad during the recent series win over Sri Lanka meant all 16 players initially selected had to self-isolate.

But the revamped hosts were on the front foot from the start, with paceman Saqib Mahmood marking his return to the side with four wickets for 42 to help bowl out Pakistan with just under 15 overs to spare.

Chasing 142 for a 1-0 lead in the three-match series, England lost Phil Salt in the fifth over before fellow opener Dawid Malan and Zak Crawley steadied the ship.

Malan (68 not out) brought up his second fifty in his fourth ODI appearance and Crawley (58 not out) also scored a half-century on his ODI debut as England cruised home in 21.5 overs.

England made a rousing start with the ball in hand on a sunny afternoon as Mahmood trapped Pakistan opener Imam-ul-Haq leg-before with the first delivery of the match. Two balls later, Mahmood picked up his second wicket when Pakistan skipper Babar Azam — the top-ranked ODI bats-



man — departed for a duck after edging to Crawley at second slip.

Mohammad Rizwan was next to be dismissed for 13 before Mahmood trapped Saud Shakeel in front of the stumps to leave Pakistan teetering at 26-4.

Opener Fakhar Zaman, who was mak-

ing a return to the ground where he made a fifty in Pakistan's 2017 Champions Trophy semi-final win over England, offered stiff resistance with Sohaib Maqsood as they added 53 runs for the fifth wicket.

The partnership, however, ended with a farcical run out when Fakhar called Maq-

sood for a single and then left him stranded as James Vince flicked the bails.

Pakistan's hopes of posting a competitive total ended with Zaman (47) miscuing a square-cut straight to point off leg-spinner Matt Parkinson. The teams now head to the Lord's for the second ODI on Saturday.

England sense destiny after beating Denmark to reach Euro 2020 final

LONDON
AFP

England fed off the energy of a passionate Wembley crowd to beat Denmark 2-1 in extra time in the Euro 2020 semifinals on Wednesday and now stands just 90 minutes away from ending their 55-year trophy drought.

Gareth Southgate's men will face Italy on Sunday — again on home turf — infused with belief they can win a first major international tournament since the 1966 World Cup.

For Euro 92 champion Denmark, defeat spells the end of a fairytale run to the last four after the trauma of witnessing star man Christian Eriksen collapse in their first match.

England emerged on a cool evening at Wembley after the crowd of almost 65,000 had whipped themselves into a frenzy with rousing renditions of "Sweet Caroline" and "Football's Coming Home."

But Denmark ripped up the home script on the half-hour when Mikkel Damsgaard punished Luke Shaw for a foul on Andreas Christensen, smashing a free-kick past the despairing dive of Jordan Pickford.

That was the first goal England had conceded in the entire tournament and



thousands of British-based Danes celebrated wildly.

The crowd went flat but England was level within 10 minutes when Denmark captain Simon Kjær could only bundle the ball into his own net after a searching cross from Bukayo Saka.

Neither side could find a goal in the second period despite intense pressure from the home side as normal time drew to a close.

The volume in the stadium increased in extra time as England put Denmark under intense pressure and they finally got their reward when Raheem Sterling was fouled in the box by Joakim Maehle.

Harry Kane's penalty was saved by Kasper Schmeichel but he converted the rebound to give England the advantage and they held Denmark at bay to seal the win.

The final whistle sparked scenes of

delirium in the stands and on the pitch as the players partied with the crowd.

"When you've waited as long as we have to get through a semifinal, the players — considering the limited international experience some of them have — have done an incredible job," Southgate told ITV.

"The most pleasing thing is we've given the fans and nation a fantastic night and the journey carries on for another four days.

"We suffered in Moscow (2018 World Cup semi-final) on a night like this and we've managed to put that right."

The match was attended by British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Prince William, who is president of the English Football Association.

"Tonight @England played their hearts out," tweeted Johnson. "What a fantastic performance from Gareth Southgate's squad. Now to the final. Let's bring it home."

Geoff Hurst, who scored a hat-trick when England beat West Germany to win the 1966 World Cup final, tweeted: "Wow! We're in the final. Brilliant game. Well done England. Fantastic."

Italy, who failed even to qualify for the 2018 World Cup, lies in wait for England at Wembley this weekend after beating Spain 4-2 on penalties at the same stadium following a gripping 1-1 draw on Tuesday.

Unbeaten Mahmudullah hits Test career-best 150 for Bangladesh

HARARE
AFP

Mahmudullah Riyad scored a Test career-best 150 not out on Thursday as Bangladesh made 468 in the first innings of a one-off Test against Zimbabwe at Harare Sports Club.

In reply, Zimbabwe were 114-1 at the close of play on the second day with opening bat Milton Shumba making 41 and captain Brendan Taylor unbeaten on 37.

Batting at number eight, 35-year-old Mahmudullah added 96 runs to his overnight 54 as the tourists took control after losing two early wickets on Wednesday with just eight runs on the scoreboard.

Mahmudullah bettered his 146 for the Bangladeshi Tigers against New Zealand two years ago by pulling a good length ball from Blessing Muzarabani to deep mid-wicket for four in the 126th over.

He added one more run with a stroke to deep square leg before the innings closed when 10th-wicket partner

Ebadot Hossain was trapped leg before by Muzarabani for a duck.

Mahmudullah reached his century off the third ball of the 100th over as he cut to deep point for four a ball bowled short of a length by Roy Kaia.

Mahmudullah and Taskin Ahmed, who made 75 before being bowled by Shumba, put on 191 runs for the ninth wicket.

Taskin struck 11 fours off 134 balls as Bangladesh sought a second victory in five Tests this year under captain Mominul Haque.

On the opening day, Mominul stabilised a creaking innings with a 70, then Liton Das fired a career-best Test score of 95.

Muzarabani returned the best bowling figures for Zimbabwe, but his four wickets came at a heavy price as he conceded 94 runs in 29 overs.

Zimbabwe put on 61 runs before Shumba was out leg before trying to sweep a Shakib al Hasan delivery from wide of the crease.



Shumba faced 83 balls and struck seven fours while Taylor, standing in as skipper for unavailable Sean Williams, hit six fours off 46 deliveries.

Apart from the Test, Bangladesh will play three one-day and three Twenty20 internationals during a 21-day first tour to the southern Africa nation since 2013.

AFGHAN FORCES RETAKE PROVINCIAL CAPITAL AFTER TALIBAN INCURSION: DEFENCE MINISTRY

KABUL
REUTERS

AFGHAN government forces on Thursday wrested back control of a western provincial capital stormed by the Taliban a day earlier and hundreds of fresh troops have been deployed to the region, the defence ministry said.

It said some fighting was continuing on the fringes of Qala-e-Naw, the capital of Badghis province, which borders the central Asian country of Turkmenistan.

Insurgents had on Wednesday seized key government buildings in the city including police headquarters as part of a dramatic Taliban advance unfolding as foreign forces withdraw from Afghanistan after a 20-year-long intervention.

“The city is fully (back) under our



control and we are conducting operations against the Taliban on the outskirts of the city,” Defence Ministry spokesman Fawad Aman said.

The ministry said 69 Taliban fighters had been killed in fresh operations on the edge of Qala-e-Naw — the first major provincial capital entered by the Islamist

insurgents in their latest offensive.

A large quantity of Taliban arms and ammunition was also seized by government forces, the ministry said on Twitter.

The rest of Badghis province is in Taliban hands. Western security officials say the Taliban have captured

more than 100 districts in Afghanistan; the Taliban say they hold over 200 districts in 34 provinces comprising over half the country. Main cities and provincial capitals remain under government control.

The insurgents have been gaining territory for weeks but accelerated their thrust as the United States vacated its main Afghan base, effectively ending an intervention that began with the ousting of the radical Islamist Taliban government in 2001.

Taliban advances have been especially dramatic in northern provinces where they had long been kept at bay. Stop-start peace talks between the government and insurgents remain inconclusive.

Later on Thursday, US President Joe Biden is scheduled to comment on the US withdrawal, which has raised fears of an outbreak of civil war there and drawn criticism.



Bajwa urges Singaporean investors to tap opportunities in SEZs

Chairman China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Authority Asim Saleem Bajwa has urged the investors from Singapore to tap the huge opportunities in the newly established Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in Pakistan. Speaking at a webinar on Investment Opportunities in CPEC-related SEZs, organised jointly by Pakistan High Commission and the Embassy of China in Singapore, on Thursday, Bajwa said that Singapore investors can benefit from Pakistan’s potential. “I invite you to come in here for the win-win opportunity as we have a huge young human resource and cheaper labour force,” he said. Bajwa said, “We are hungry for industrialisation and development,” he added. The chairman CPEC Authority said that Singapore could be a role model for economic development for Pakistan and the Pakistan government wants to get expertise of Singapore investors especially in industrialisation. Speaking about the importance and achievements of the mega project, the chairman CPEC Authority pointed out that CPEC is a lifeline for Pakistan. The first phase, he said, is almost complete which was largely meant to bridge the energy and infrastructure gaps in the country. “We are now moving towards the second phase of CPEC with a range of sectors including industrialisation, tourism, science technology, and agriculture”, he added. He said some 37 Special Economic Zones have been identified in Pakistan out of which 9 were prioritised and 4 were shortlisted as the most important ones. Rashakai Economic Zone with a land cover of over 1000 acres of land has already been launched where a Chinese company Century Steel has established its industry which is likely to start production within a year, he said, adding 25 more companies are also lined up to set up their factories in the zone. Furthermore, he said the Allama Iqbal Zone in Faisalabad is also functional where a number of new industries are being constructed. Bajwa said the foreign investors could tap the potential especially in textile and garments here, besides pharmaceutical industry was also very much suitable here. Similarly, he said, another SEZ near the port city of Karachi was also being launched soon. Gwadar Free Zone Phase-I, comprising 60 acres, was also completed and about 46 investors invested in these zones. He said there are about 12 factories in these free zones and out of the total, construction work on 03 factories has been completed so far. The free zone phase-II, with a land cover of about 2,200 acres, would be completed by September this year and it would help to attract more foreign as well as local investment, he added. He said that the free zones project under CPEC would be completed in four phases and the project would be fully materialised by 2030, which would play a vital role in economic development of the country. He said the prime minister has recently ground broken the second phase. He said Gwadar is very fast connecting with the north side of the country as construction work on the Western Route of CPEC is in progress. Bajwa said Boston SEZ is another prioritised zone which is located near Quetta. Quetta is the epicentre of mines and minerals and investors of this sector could get the opportunity to set up their plants here. He informed that the Iran border is very near to the Gwadar Port city and formal trade of Iran through Gwadar port would start soon. **NEWS DESK**

Covid variants ‘winning the race against vaccines,’ warns WHO

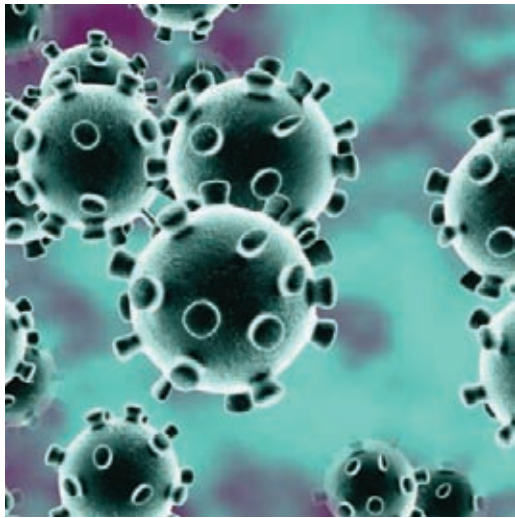
Pinning the blame squarely on a lack of equitable vaccine production and distribution, the World Health Organisation (WHO) chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has said that variants like delta are “currently winning the race against vaccines.”

He added that passing the four millionth recorded death worldwide from Covid-19 was a “tragic milestone” which “likely underestimates the overall toll” of the deadly virus.

Tedros warned that far too many countries are seeing “sharp spikes in cases and hospitalization”, while rich nations with high inoculation rates, were dropping public health measures “as though the pandemic is already over.”

The situation is leading to an acute shortage of oxygen and treatments, and driving a ‘wave of death’ in parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America. “At this stage in the pandemic, the fact that millions of health and care workers have still not been vaccinated is abhorrent”, he added.

Tedros reminded that ‘vaccine nationalism’, where a handful of nations have taken the lion’s share, is ‘morally indefensible’ and an ineffective public health strategy against a respiratory virus that is mutating quickly and becoming increasingly successful at infect-



ing new hosts.

“Variants are currently winning the race against vaccines because of inequitable vaccine production and distribution... It didn’t have to be this way and it doesn’t have to be this way going forward”, he un-

derscored. He said the spread of variants would also threaten the global economic recovery, noting that from a “moral, epidemiological or economic” standpoint, now is the time for the world to come together.

Tedros called on leaders of the G20 economies, set to meet later this week, to take urgent steps to end the acute stage of the pandemic, providing the necessary funding to scale up equitable manufacturing and distribution of health tools.

Executive Director of the WHO Health Emergencies Programme, Dr. Mike Ryan, told journalists that while it has been good to see a drop in hospitalizations in countries with high levels of vaccination, this still should be “a moment for extreme caution for countries right now”.

“[Almost] all the regions had an increase in cases in the last week...this is not a flat curve; this is an increasing curve. Making assumptions that transmission is not going to increase because of vaccines is a false assumption.

“Transmission will increase when you open up because we don’t have vaccines (for all) and we are still not sure to what extent vaccination protects against the ability to be infected or have onward transmission”, he explained. **NEWS DESK**

We must stay abreast of evolving regional situation, says Gen Qamar

Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa on Thursday visited the Corps Headquarters Mangla and was briefed about operational preparedness, training and administrative matters.

The army chief was also apprised of the ongoing ‘Corps War Games’ aimed at evaluating operational plans in wake of the emerging battlefield challenges, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement. Gen Qamar lauded the performance and dedication of the Strike Corps for-

mations for undertaking innovative futuristic training.

Addressing the garrison officers, Gen Qamar highlighted the regional environment and its implications on Pakistan’s security. “We must stay abreast of the evolving situation and never lower our guard whatsoever,” he was quoted as saying by the ISPR.

Speaking about Pakistan’s consistent support to the Afghan peace process, the COAS underscored the need for better management of the western zone with due focus on border security.

Referring to the national effort against the coronavirus pandemic, the army chief commended all ranks for their all-out support to civil administration in ensuring public safety and well-being. “However, we must continue to exercise max caution and follow relevant SOPs until the pandemic is completely over,” Gen Qamar remarked.

Upon arrival, the COAS was received by Commander Mangla Corps Lieutenant General Shaheen Mazher Mehmood. **NEWS DESK**

As US leaves Afghanistan, new regional ‘Great Game’ looms

As United States troops quietly quit their last key bases in Afghanistan last weekend, Russian-backed Syrian forces were stepping up their bombardment and siege of Idlib and preparing for a possible closure of the last humanitarian crossing from Syria to Turkey.

It was a reminder of just how much the Middle East and South Asia have changed since Nato forces began their attempts to stabilise Afghanistan 20 years ago. As late as the Libya intervention in 2011 and against Islamic State as recently as 2019, the United States was still the key intervening power in conflicts, at least when it wished to be.

On rare occasions, that might remain the case even with the number of troops reduced to a few hundred in Iraq and Syria, plus now a similar sized detachment guarding the US embassy in Kabul. US air and naval forces remain significantly more powerful than any other player. On the ground where it counts, however, other players are now dominant, facing off for influence in a way that has already redefined the wars in Libya and Syria.

Indeed, whether America itself really knows what role it wants to play remains unclear. Institutionally, the US military and many agencies of the US government have

been embroiled in the Mideast and Afghanistan for so long they may inevitably wish to remain engaged. The domestic and other drivers to pull back, however, are becoming ever stronger.

Going forward in Afghanistan, the ongoing presence of US and British troops guarding their respective embassies is largely dependent on a Turkish deal to retain control of Kabul airport, now likely to become the only other significant international presence in the country.

As in multiple other conflicts, Turkey is looking to position itself as a key international player but Russia, China and other states also see opportunities to increase influence and mitigate risks.

CHINA IN PAKISTAN, RUSSIA IN TAJIKISTAN: For China, that means deepening discussions with long-term partner Pakistan and the authorities in Kabul, reportedly including a potential motorway from the Afghan capital to Peshawar in Pakistan’s Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. That could revolutionise the region and significantly antagonise India but would require a very different security situation.

Russia’s closest central Asian ally, Tajik-

istan, on Wednesday requested Moscow’s support to secure its mountainous border with Afghanistan. Moscow has its own history in Afghanistan, but as in the Middle East, it is unlikely to pass up an opportunity to supplant the United States and has stepped up diplomatic and military outreach across Central Asia.

According to local media reports, some of Afghanistan’s most significant roads now pass through Taliban control and 15 of Afghanistan’s 34 regional capitals are now largely encircled by the militants, including the key northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif. US intelligence estimates cited by US media predict the Afghan government itself could fall in six months to a year although with Afghan troops already said to be melting away in some areas, any unravelling could come faster.

In Libya, Syria, Iraq and Yemen, Washington remains involved to various degrees but other nations are now often more influential. That has particularly benefited Russia, which now has a significant presence in Syria and Libya supporting its much more assertive naval forces in the eastern Mediterranean. Regional dynamics are more complex still, benefiting smaller powers.

LARGELY UNREPORTED WARS: In Libya, where Washington and its Nato allies marshalled an ad hoc coalition to oust Muammar Gaddafi in 2011, the war is now a complex fight between elements backed by foreign powers including Russia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, France and others, in part driven by a desire for oil and gas reserves.

In Syria, where the United States retains a modest military presence in some oil-rich Kurdish areas, the primary drivers of the conflict now include a much broader confrontation between the Russian-backed regime of Bashar al-Assad and Turkey, which controls some areas along the border with its own troops and Turkish-backed militias.

As well as shaping the war on the ground with troops and air power since its intervention began in 2015, Russia has also used its veto at the United Nations to control diplomatic actions on Syria, including the latest potential border closure.

In contrast to 2011, developments in these conflicts are now barely covered by international media. Activities of US forces are also much more unreported with little clarity, for example, over reported explosions at a

US base in Syria this week.

Indeed, many of the key developments in US-Mideast relations such as the visit to Washington this week of Saudi Deputy Defence Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman go largely unreported or at least officially unannounced. The same goes for an uptick in US strikes against Iranian-backed forces in Iraq earlier this month, one country where the United States remains more involved than expected after withdrawal of combat troops but has also seen its power fade.

What happens next in Afghanistan may go similarly largely ignored. Most coverage so far has focused on what the United States and Britain might do next, not what is happening on the ground. Whether Turkey can control the international airport may come down to whether it is able to strike a deal with a dramatically resurgent Taliban but the details of that and whether or not it truly happens may also barely be reported.

That doesn’t mean multiple countries will not be paying attention. The West might wish Afghanistan had ceased to exist once its troops are no longer there, but in many ways the 21st-century “Great Game” for influence there is only just beginning. **REUTERS**