

News in Brief

Overseas Pak-istanis deposit over \$1 billion funds via Roshan Digital Account



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan announced on Saturday that overseas Pakistanis have deposited funds more than \$1 billion in Roshan Digital Account.

"Alhamdulillah, funds received through #RoshanDigitalAccount have crossed \$1b," tweeted PM Imran.

The premier thanked "overseas Pakistanis for their overwhelming response". He also appreciated the central bank of Pakistan and commercial banks for achieving the "significant milestone in such a short period". The Roshan Digital Account was launched by the PTI government last year, to enable overseas Pakistanis to operate digital accounts in their motherland while sitting abroad. The aim was to attract investment from the diaspora to bolster foreign exchange reserves from this initiative.

The Prime Minister's Office said that the initiative by the central bank will work with commercial banks operating in Pakistan. "For the first time in the country's history, Non-Returning Pakistanis (NRP) will be able to remotely open an account through an entirely digital and online process without any need to visit a bank branch, embassy, or consulate," it had said. "The customer can choose either foreign currency or rupee dominated account, or both. Funds in these accounts will be fully repatriable, without the need for any regulatory approval," the statement read. As per SBP Governor Dr Reza Baqir, the new facility allows nine million non-resident Pakistanis to invest money in local stock markets, buy government bonds and securities, and avail basic banking services.

The SBP boss had added that at present, at least eight Pakistani banks will facilitate the Roshan Digital Accounts and allow overseas Pakistanis to deposit funds.

Iran bans passenger flights from India, Pakistan



TEHRAN: As coronavirus cases rise in both India and Pakistan, Iran's Ministry of Aviation banned passenger flights from the two countries in an attempt to stem the spread of the infection.

The decision was made by Iran's Health Ministry and has been effective from Saturday midnight. There are no routine flights between Iran and India, and flights are operated occasionally. International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) spokesperson told the Iranian agency. However, connecting flights between the countries have also been prohibited, he added.

Saudi Arabia, Canada, and the United Kingdom had earlier banned the arrival of passengers from Pakistan given the worsening situation of Covid-19 in both countries.

Canada's government said it would temporarily bar passenger flights from India and Pakistan for 30 days starting on Thursday as part of stricter measures to combat the spread of the coronavirus. Meanwhile, the UK has added Pakistan to its Red List of travel ban countries. Saudi Arabia on the other hand has decided to resume international flights from May 17 except for the 20 countries, including Pakistan.

April 29 by-polls: Who was named favourite leader by NA-249 voters ?



ISLAMABAD: Ahead of the April 29 by-elections, Prime Minister Imran Khan has been named by voters of Karachi's NA-249 constituency as their favourite political leader, maintaining an edge over PMLN's Nawaz Sharif.

In two out of three polls conducted, PM Imran Khan was named as the favourite, while in the third, Nawaz Sharif was declared the most popular. Ipsos, Pulse Consultant, and Gallup Pakistan released survey findings based on the opinion of 1,200 to 1,400 registered voters of the constituency.

All the three surveys took place between April 10 and April 20, 2021. In the survey carried out by Ipsos, PM Imran Khan was the most popular leader in the constituency with 20pc of the respondents choosing him.

Of the remaining, 16pc said Nawaz Sharif, 16pc said Mustafa Kamal, 5pc said Khadim Hussain Rizvi, 4pc said Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, 4pc said Maryam Nawaz Sharif, 3pc said Maulana Fazlur Rehman, 3pc said Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, 1pc said Sirajul Haq, 1pc said Asif Ali Zardari, 1pc said Shahbaz Sharif was their preferred choice.

Interestingly, 18pc said that none of the above-mentioned leaders was their favourite. In the poll by Pulse Consultant, on the question of preferred leader answered by constituency voters, 18pc said that they preferred Prime Minister Imran Khan, after which 16pc declared Pak Sarzameen Party leader Mustafa Kamal as their favourite, 10pc chose Nawaz Sharif, 7pc said Khadim Hussain Rizvi, 6pc said Benazir Bhutto, 5pc said Farooq Sattar, 4pc said Perviz Musharraf, 3pc said Maryam Nawaz and 2pc said Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui was their favourite.

In contrast to the two polls, in a Gallup Pakistan

poll, 20pc of voters in the constituency favoured PMLN chief Nawaz Sharif. Among others, 19pc declared PM Imran Khan as their favorite, 8pc said PPP chairperson Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, 5pc said Perviz Musharraf, 3pc said Mustafa Kamal, 3pc said Fazlur Rehman, 2pc said Maryam Nawaz, 1pc said Shahbaz Sharif, 1pc said Asif Ali Zardari, 1pc said Sirajul Haq, and 1pc said Benazir Bhutto was their favorite leader. The remaining 22pc said no leader among those mentioned qualifies as their favourite. Not only did PM Imran Khan got elected by respondents of two out of three surveys as their favourite political leader, PTI was chosen as the preferred political party. Of the respondents to the Ipsos Pakistan survey, 15pc indicated PTI as their first choice, whereas 19pc of those responding

to the Pulse Consultant survey chose PTI as their preferred party.

Among the respondents to the Gallup Pakistan survey, however, 19pc chose PMLN as their party of choice while 16 percent seemed to vote for PTI, 11 percent to MQM Pakistan, 10 percent to PPP, 8 percent to PSP, 5 percent for banned-outfit TLP, one percent for JUIF and one percent for independent candidates, while 22 percent voters said they did not decide whom to vote. Gallup Pakistan and Ipsos surveys revealed that contrary to 2018 general elections, the number of voters has been decreased for PTI and PMLN. The PTI has lost most, as in 2018, 27 percent agreed to vote for the party but in the recent survey the number decreased by 11 percent and only 16 percent seemed to be casting vote for the ruling PTI in the same constituency.

Although, the PMLN has also lost four percent but reached at the top of the survey with 19 percent voters and became the most famous party in the constituency. In Ipsos 2018 survey, 31 percent agreed to vote for PTI but with 16 percent decrease, only 15 percent voters are ready to vote for the PTI and the PMLN with one percent decrease, became the second top in the constituency after PTI with 14 percent voters.

Replying to a question about their second choice for vote, 16 percent said they were ready to vote for PMLN, 13 percent for PPP, 7 percent for banned TLP, 7 percent for PSP, 6 percent for MQM Pakistan, 5 percent for PTI, 3 percent for JUIF and one percent for independent candidates, while 24 percent refused to answer about their second choice for voting.

Strong academia-industry linkages imperative for jobs creation: Shibli Faraz

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Science and Technology, Shibli Faraz on Monday emphasized the importance of creating strong linkages between the universities and industry to create job opportunities for the youth.

Talking to media after visiting National University of Science and Technology (NUST), the minister appreciated the global and national contribution of NUST and said the university was rendering valuable contribution in high education sector of the country, creating significant impact through prioritizing quality education.

He further said the universities were not supposed to only give degrees but also to impart skills, adding, "We have to see how much impact our universities are creating on the lives of the people".

Shibli Faraz observed

that the government's job was not just to provide jobs but to create an enabling environment that provided employment opportunities for the people. While, he said, the universities should also contribute to the development of the country and take steps for enhancing employability skills among youth.

To a question regarding availability and production of ventilators, the federal minister said they did not have sufficient oxygen and other necessary stock in our country for dealing with any emergency situation related to COVID-19.

He said Ministry of Science and Technology acted as facilitator and they did not have their own ventilators yet.

However, National Radio and Telecommunication Corporation (NRTC) and private firms were manufacturing ven-

tilators in the country. There were 16 functions of ventilators but the ventilators being made at local level have only four functions, he said.

Responding to another question regarding activating Pakistan Steel Mills' (PSM) Oxygen Plant, he said the ministry of industries and production was looking into the PSM Oxygen Plant and he had also spoken to the minister of industries and production in this regard.

However, he said that what he thought was that PSM Oxygen Plant might not be made operational in emergency due to some problem.

About supporting India during worsening COVID-19 situation, Shibli Faraz said "Pakistan will extend support to India as much it can. This is the issue of humanity and our sympathies are with India". NNI

Sindh closes all educational institutions, intercity public transport: CM Murad

KARACHI: Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah on Monday announced COVID restrictions in the province in wake of rising virus cases, closing down schools, colleges and imposing limits on restaurants, attendance at public and private offices besides also banning inter-city transport.

Addressing a press conference at Sindh Assembly building alongside provincial ministers, the chief minister said that they have restricted attendance at government offices to 20 percent and the remaining staff would work from home.

"They will be given their tasks and will remain in touch during duty hours on phone," he said.

In private offices, 50 percent of staff will be ensured and in case of violation, the workplace will be sealed, the chief minister said. He said that schools, colleges and universities will remain completely closed in the province.

"Outdoor dining will be banned at restaurants and only takeaways and delivery will be allowed," Murad Ali Shah said adding that each shop will ensure 50 percent customers, with everyone wearing masks and any violation will lead to its sealing.

The Sindh Chief Minister said that the inter-city public transport will be banned from Thursday and appealed to the people to avoid movement during

Eid days. "Stay where you are during Eid to avoid virus transmission," the chief minister said while demanding the federal government to ban inter-city transport and international flights.

"Globally, borders are being managed to avoid virus transmission," he said besides announcing that goods transport will continue as usual to keep the industry running in the country.

Sindh CM said that the positivity ratio in the Sindh province is still far below the other provinces, however, the trend of the rising cases has made them worry regarding the ongoing situation. Murad Ali Shah said that they tried to purchase.

Pakistan steadfastly supports Palestinians' inalienable right to self-determination

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has condemned violent acts and alarming developments in the Occupied Palestinian Territories being carried out by the Israeli Occupation forces. In a statement on

Monday, Foreign Office Spokesperson Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri said Islamabad views it with serious concern and urges the international community for prompt action to protect Palestinians.

"Pakistan views the recent alarming developments in the Occupied Palestinian Territories with serious concern," the Foreign Office said.

He said these illegal acts include harassment

Nation to be taken on board if Pak-India talks take place: FM



ISLAMABAD: Amid media reports of secret, backdoor talks with India and Pakistan's continued denial of such talks, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi on Sunday said that in the event talks do take place, the nation will be taken into confidence.

Speaking to Geo News on programme "Naya Pakistan", the foreign minister said there was "no question" of not taking the nation into confidence. "But there is an appropriate time for everything," he said.

The minister said that he "admits" there are "intelligence level" talks between the countries and that they have "always existed". "Even when you are in a state of war, such talks always do take place," he explained.

Qureshi, explaining further the nature of talks at the "intelligence level" and how these are differ-

SC accepts review petitions in Justice Isa presidential review verdict

The Supreme Court on Monday accepted all review petitions challenging the court's judgement in the presidential reference against Justice Qazi Faez Isa except the one filed by the judge himself.

A 10-member bench, headed by Justice Umar Ata Bandial, was hearing review petitions filed against the court's June 19, 2020, judgement on the presidential reference in which the court had empowered the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to conduct an inquiry into offshore assets of his spouse.

The court's short order stated that "directions contained in paras 4 to 11 in the impugned short order dated 19.06.2020 ... along with supporting detailed reasons given in the majority judgement of the same date are recalled and set aside."

"All the subsequent proceedings, actions, orders, information and reports in pursuance of the directions contained in the short order dated 19.6.2020 and the detailed reasons thereof, are declared to be illegal and without any legal effect."

The judgement added that "resultantly, any such proceedings, actions, orders or reports cannot be considered or acted upon or pursued any further by any forum or authority including the Supreme Judicial Council."

The top court accepted the review petitions by a majority of 6-4. Justice Maqbool Baqar, Justice Manzoor Ahmad Malik, Justice Mazhar Alam Khan Miankhal and Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah dissented from the majority judgement. They were of the opinion that the SC registrar should take measures for live streaming of the matters of public interest.

During today's hearing, Justice Isa alleged that new evidence was being made part of the proceedings. Sarina Isa said that Justice Bandial and Justice Akhtar were making efforts for accountability which was why they should make their assets and the assets of their wives public.



review petition was accepted by five judges and dismissed by five judges. Justice Afridi accepted all similar petitions but dismissed Justice Isa's petition most likely on the basis of the point he had maintained throughout the hearings — a judge cannot be a petitioner himself.

The court declared legal actions taken by the FBR and all other forums related to the assets of Justice Isa's wife and children as "illegal".

On April 13, the apex court had dismissed the judge's application seeking live telecast of the proceedings on his review petition against the verdict in presidential reference case. The application was dismissed by a 6-4 majority of a larger bench of 10 judges headed by Justice Umar Ata Bandial. Justice Maqbool Baqar, Justice Manzoor Ahmad Malik, Justice Mazhar Alam Khan Miankhal and Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah dissented from the majority judgement. They were of the opinion that the SC registrar should take measures for live streaming of the matters of public interest.

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82 killed in Iraqi Covid-19 hospital fire

BAGHDAD: More than 80 people died on Sunday in a fire that ripped through an Iraqi COVID-19 hospital, sparking anger and prompting the suspension of top officials in a country with long-dilapidated health infrastructure.

Many of the victims were on respirators and were suffocated or burned in the smoke and flames when the blaze, at eastern Baghdad's Ibn al-Khatib hospital, started with an explosion caused by "a fault in the storage of oxygen cylinders", medical sources said. The health ministry said 82 people were killed and 110 wounded, while the Iraqi Human Rights Commission said 28 of the victims were patients who had to be taken off ventilators to escape the flames.

The blaze spread quickly across multiple floors in the middle of the night, as dozens of relatives were at the bedsides of the 30 patients in the hospital's intensive care unit where the most severe Covid-19 cases are treated, a medical source said.

Bakr Qazem, son of one of the victims, said he was at the hospital when he felt "a strong explosion". "We saw a fire and were not able to save the patients," he told AFP, tears in his eyes, from Najaf, south of Baghdad, where he had taken his father's body for burial on Sunday.

Throughout the day, funeral processions for the victims filled the holy shrine city, where the vast majority of Iraq's Shiites are buried. According to Iraq's civil defence services, "the hospital had no fire protection system and false ceilings allowed the flames to spread to highly flammable products."

It added there had been a delay in firefighters reaching the hospital, located in the remote, agricultural outskirts of Baghdad. Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhemi suspended Health Minister Hassan al-Tamimi — who is backed by the powerful Shiite leader Moqtada Sadr — as part of a probe that also includes the governor of Baghdad.

The fire triggered outrage on social media, with a hashtag demanding the health minister be sacked trending on Twitter. Kadhemi also declared three days of national mourning, while parliament said it would devote its Monday session to the tragedy.

Witnesses said the evacuation of the hospital was slow and chaotic, with patients and their relatives crammed into stairwells as they scrambled for exits. Residents from the surrounding area rushed to the scene to help. "It was the people (civilians) who got the wounded out," Amir, 35, told AFP, saying he saved his hospitalised brothers "by the skin of his teeth".

Iraq's hospitals have been worn down by decades of conflict and poor investment, with shortages of medicines and hospital beds. But many also said negligence and endemic corruption were to blame for the deadly inferno.

"The tragedy at Ibn al-Khatib is the result of years of erosion of state institutions by corruption and mismanagement," President Barham Saleh tweeted. The Iraqi Human Rights Commission denounced a "crime against patients exhausted by Covid-19 who put their lives in the hands of the health ministry and its institutions."

"Instead of being treated, (they) perished in flames," it added. Witnesses and doctors told AFP many bodies had yet to be identified, the remains too charred by the intense flames.

One of the victims, Ali Ibrahim, 52, had been treated for coronavirus at the Ibn al-Khatib hospital and was buried by his family on Sunday at Zafaraniya, a neighbourhood near the hospital. "He had spent 12 days in hospital and was due to be discharged."

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27 April, 2021

Lax Civil Administration

With 157 deaths reported in the last 24 hours, Pakistan has crossed the threshold of the highest number of fatalities ever reported due to the virus. More than the various strains, a serious lack of compliance with protective protocols is to blame for this uncontrollable third wave. As a fix, PM Imran Khan instructed the army to aid the police in strict enforcement with the hopes that it will force the public to be more responsible and limit the transmission of the virus.

As army personnel weave through markets, checking whether preventative measures are being taken to restrict the spread of the virus, the question of why the police force wasn't sufficient enough for the task comes up. The PM's decision has exposed systemic issues.

The problem lies not in the lack of human resources but in the failure to enforce conformity. Civilian authorities, much like the army, should be able to ensure that markets comply with protocols, people wear masks and those who violate rules are penalised through fines. Relying on the army is not a solution that can be employed every time or for every occasion, the government must put its own administrative house in order. If it takes a tougher hand to get people to comply, then so be it; we cannot allow for more lives to be lost.

Warnings have been issued that the provision of oxygen will run out if the status quo remains unchanged. Hospitals across the countries are at full capacity and each day, thousands of active cases are reported. We are not in a position to let matters get worse; all efforts must be pooled to achieve the singular objective of remaining ahead of the coronavirus.

Amanat Ali Chaudhry

Amanat Ali Chaudhry

No other event in recent memory has been as consequential as the videotaped killing of 46-year-old George Floyd in May 2020 that spotlighted the predicament of the members of the black community. The killing reignited a debate on police highhandedness while dealing with people from the black community, and brought America's perennial racial problem to the heart of the mainstream conversation.

The mass-scale protests that erupted in the wake of the reprehensible Floyd incident provided a fresh impetus to the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, literally roping everyone in. The movement created a dynamic of its own and led to international outrage and shock.

The picture of Minneapolis police officer, Derek Chauvin, pinning George Floyd to the pavement with the unrelenting force of his knee emerged as symptomatic of the larger malaise that afflicts race relations in the US. It touched people and caught their imagination like no other event in recent history. The feelings of pain, anguish and agony that the incident fostered refused to subside over the past year.

The momentum so generated by the mass mobilization that at times turned violent did not allow the gloss to be taken off the overwhelming demand for justice and accountability. The heart-rending words "I can't breathe" uttered by George as he struggled to catch some air became a symbol of the systemic oppression of the Black community.

The verdict passed by the 12-member jury last week that found Derek Chauvin guilty on all three counts was met with a mixture of emotions; an expression of relief here, and thunderous applause there. The crowds waiting for the jury to hand down the judgment at the George Floyd Square burst into celebration and motorists honked as soon as the word 'guilty' was uttered by the judge.

The sentence that will come into effect after eight weeks will land Derek in prison for a total of 40 years. The guilty verdict calmed frayed nerves and precluded the possibility of violent protests. The reaction also speaks to the rarity of law-enforcement person-

nel being held to account for the violation of the law, a practice that has seen many police officers walk away unpunished from such incidents.

This aspect of the police enjoying impunity was alluded to by the statement issued by the Floyd family that described the verdict as "painfully earned justice." It further stated: "This case is a turning point in American history for accountability of law enforcement and sends a clear message we hope is heard clearly in every city and every state."

President Joe Biden and Vice-President Kamala Harris made televised statements after the verdict in which the American president called the conviction "a giant step forward in the march towards justice in America." He urged the lawmakers to honour the memory of George Floyd by passing a police reform bill, the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, to acknowledge and confront "head-on systemic racism and the racial disparities that exist in policing."

The American president and vice-president also gave a congratulatory telephone call to the Floyd family in which they promised to "get a lot more done." The verdict made instant international headlines as the British and Canadian prime ministers, Boris Johnson and Justin Trudeau, welcomed it in their tweets — with the latter acknowledging that "systemic racism" is not just confined to the US.

A close examination of the trial makes it abundantly clear that several factors combined to create conditions for the passage of the extraordinary judgment. The following is instructive in this regard:

First, the massive social mobilization under the broad rubric of Black Lives Matter kept the case alive. BLM used the incident to highlight the presence of more organized injustices and disparities faced by the African-American community. At no point did the movement waver in its purpose or lose sight of the need for continued vigilance in making the Floyd incident a turning point in the racial disparities. It adopted a variety of tools and methods, some of them unsavory, to keep the movement going.

The takeaway from the

Maleeha Lodhi

THE postponement of the US-orchestrated Afghan peace conference marks an early setback for renewed efforts to expedite talks on a political settlement of the conflict. It leaves the nascent peace process in disarray at least for now. The conference co-hosted by the UN, Turkey and Qatar was scheduled for April 24-May 4 in Istanbul. Announcing its postponement until after the end of Ramadan, Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu said that in view of the Taliban's non-participation it was "meaningless" to press ahead especially as there was "no clarity about the formation of delegations and participation".

The conference was being calibrated by Washington with its plans to completely withdraw from Afghanistan. Announcing this in his much-anticipated address on April 14 President Joe Biden boldly acknowledged that nothing more could be achieved by retaining US troops in the country and all would be pulled out by Sept 11. He said once Al Qaeda had been degraded and Osama bin Laden eliminated a decade earlier, the US goal was achieved but its presence in Afghanistan continued for another decade for increasingly unclear reasons. Rejecting the Pentagon's preference for a conditions-based drawdown, Biden said: "We cannot continue the cycle of extending or expanding our military presence in Afghanistan hoping to create the ideal conditions for our withdrawal, expecting a different result."

Read: Ending the 'forever war' Under the Doha agreement between the US and Taliban, forged in

February 2020, American forces were to fully withdraw by May 1 in exchange for the Taliban commitment to prevent Afghanistan's soil from being used by terrorists and agreeing to intra-Afghan talks. Even before Biden's announcement the Taliban had declared they would not participate in the Istanbul talks and threatened "consequences" if the withdrawal deadline was shifted. Washington probably hoped that by giving a final and unconditional deadline for its departure the Taliban would accept the decision. But the Taliban maintained a tough posture and responded to Biden's speech by reiterating their position that delay in the pullout was a breach of the Doha agreement for which "necessary counter-measures" would be taken. They refused to attend the Turkey conference and said that creating expectations this would yield a peace deal was an effort "to push the Taliban willingly or unwillingly, to a rushed decision which was needed by America".

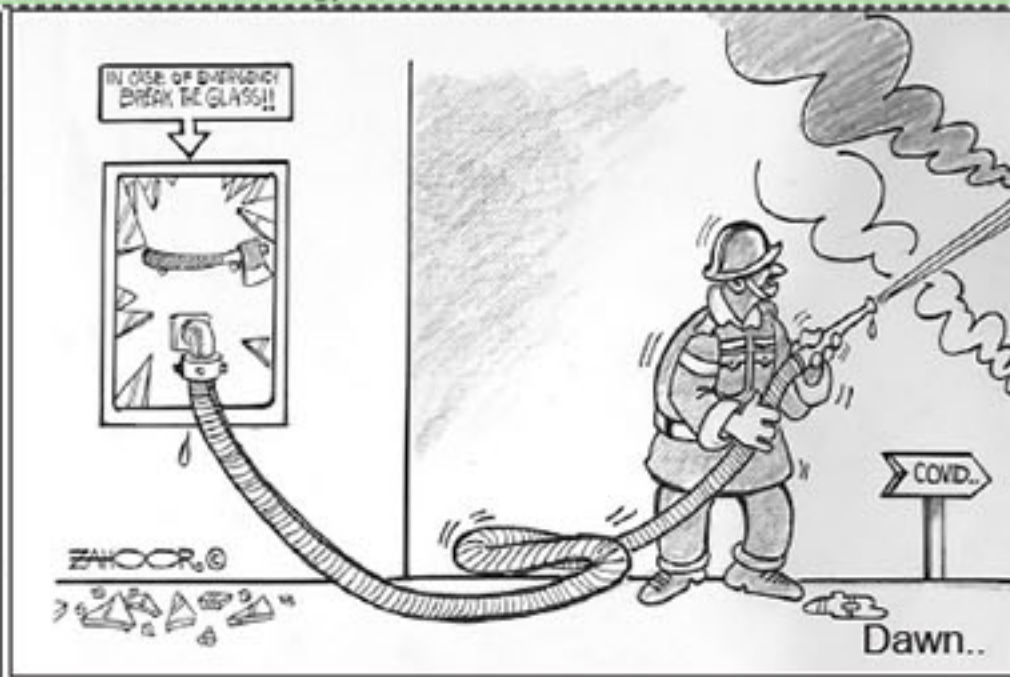
Plans for the 'Istanbul Conference on the Afghan Peace Process' had been set in train by the US weeks before its withdrawal announcement. A leaked letter from US Secretary of State Antony Blinken to President Ashraf Ghani laid out key elements of the American proposal. They included a UN-led peace conference in Turkey attended by regional and other 'partners' to mobilise a consensus to support the peace plan followed by a meeting between the Afghan parties to finalise a peace deal. A joint statement by the UN, Turkey and Qatar cast the aim of the conference in ambitious terms: "The Conference will focus on

helping the negotiating parties reach a set of shared, foundational principles that reflect an agreed vision for a future Afghanistan, a roadmap to a future political settlement and an end to the conflict."

All stakeholders know if the path of negotiation is abandoned the country will descend into chaos.

Driving this effort with a sense of urgency was, of course, the US in the hope of accelerating the peace talks into making significant progress ahead of its withdrawal deadline. Intense shuttle diplomacy by its special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad in the region was aimed at persuading the Afghan parties to attend the Istanbul Conference and give an impetus to the peace process. The postponement raises many questions. Is the Turkey peace conference stillborn? Can the peace process be revived? If so, can progress be made to reach a settlement before the US withdrawal? Will the US leave without a peace deal? Will the Taliban wait for the departure of American/Nato forces to strengthen their hand in peace negotiations afterwards? The answer to all of the above turns principally on the Taliban's calculation as well as to how much leverage — and interest — the US has to push the peace effort. Indications are that the Americans will remain engaged in diplomatic efforts and seem serious in wanting a peace deal or at least progress towards it before their departure. This would be an important element of face-saving for Washington and also enable an orderly and 'honourable' exit. That is why behind the scenes talks are also focused on negotiating. Dawn..

Complicated Afghan endgame



China's South Tibet

Masud Ahmad Khan

The Indian border with China is divided into three sectors; the eastern sectors comprise of the state of Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim, the largest disputed area of 90,000 square kilometers. Arunachal Pradesh shares its borders with the states of Assam and Nagaland to the South, Myanmar in the West, and China in the North. In 1912, the British named it the North Eastern Frontier Agency (NEFA). The state is home to Christians, Hindus and Tibetan Buddhists. 63 percent of its population belongs to faiths other than Hinduism and contains one of the highest numbers of Buddhists in India. It was in 1914 that the British Foreign Secretary, Sir McMahon, drew a 550 mile border between British India and Tibet which was signed by British and Tibetan representatives. China objected to the validity of the demarcated border since it was not a signature to the agreement. China's position was that Tibet was not independent from China and could not sign treaties and therefore, the accord was invalid. In a reply to Nehru's memo of 1959, Chinese leader Zhou Enlai made it clear to Nehru that the British policy of aggression cannot be considered legal.

Govt decides to open two new Pak-Iran border crossing routes: Sheikh Rashid During the 1962 war in NEFA, the Indian army proved too weak to fight the Chinese army considering it came down to Tezpur in Assam. During the war, all of Arunachal Pradesh was occupied by the Chinese army which later withdrew voluntarily. According to Bruch Riedel, "India was humiliated and Nehru devastated. Indians had been driven from the East and even Calcutta was at risk. Nehru was so desperate that he requested the United States to rescue them." The NEFA

was renamed as Arunachal Pradesh and made a union territory in 1972. Later in 1987, it became an Indian state. China's Foreign Ministry spokesman, Zhao Lijian, made it clear last year that China has never reorganised Arunachal Pradesh as a state of India since it is in China's South Tibet region. China claims its sovereignty over Arunachal Pradesh, which is under the illegal control of India. The Tawang region in Arunachal Pradesh is centre of the dispute. China also claims that the sixth Dalai Lama, Tsangyang Gyatso, was born in Tawang therefore Arunachal Pradesh is more so a part of Tibet. Global military spending hits highest level since 1988 Tawang was part of Tibet but in 1914, it became part of Arunachal Pradesh after the British demarcation. Despite that, Tibet continues to administer the Tawang Monastery as India took control of it in 1951. The population of Tawang predominantly belongs to the Monpa tribe that speaks the language of Tibet and practices Tibetan Buddhism. The Tawang Monastery is the second largest Tibetan Buddhist monastery in the world, after Potala place in Lhasa. Tawang is also strategically important because during the 1962 war, the Chinese army came down through the Bumla Pass north of Tawang town. If China occupies it, it will facilitate their occupation of the Assam plains.

Arunachal Pradesh is strategically important to both India and China. Arunachal Pradesh provides security to Bhutan from its eastern flank. In the case that Tawang is occupied by China, Bhutan will be at the mercy of the Chinese pincer attack. The state of Arunachal Pradesh provides strategic depth to the Brahmaputra valley

and North Eastern States. India will lose all its states in the North East to China or become independent. Therefore, it is vital for its defence in the North East.

Federal cabinet to approve 30-day remission to jail-prisoners on Eid China has been objecting to visits by Indian leaders to the disputed region. It objected to Dalai Lama's visit to Tawang by stating that his visit violated India's commitments on the border dispute. China also objected to PM Modi's visit to the state in February 2015 to participate in the celebration marking 29 years of Arunachal Pradesh's integration to India. China also condemned the visit of Home Minister, Amit Shah, to the region by saying that the visit violated Beijing's territorial sovereignty. Even Lobzang Sangay's visit to attend the oath taking ceremony of PM Modi was rejected. In 2019, China destroyed 30,000 world maps in the country for not mentioning Arunachal Pradesh as part of its territory. During the summit of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Beijing, China removed a map from the website that depicted the entire IIOJK and Arunachal Pradesh region as part of India. China has given Chinese names to six places in Arunachal Pradesh to reaffirm its territorial sovereignty over the disputed state. According to Mao, Tibet is the right hand's palm of China and Ladakh, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and NEFA are its fingers. Pakistan Navy distributes ration in coastal, creeks area amid pandemic In January 2021 there was a fresh clash between the Chinese and Indian soldiers at the Naku La pass region in Northern Sikkim. Last year, India accused the Chinese People's Liberation Army for kidnapping five villagers from Arunachal Pradesh. The nation..

Cancel these exams

Kamal Siddiqi

As Pakistan grapples with the third wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, thousands of students are expected to appear for the O and A-Level exams in person — which goes against the SOPs announced earlier this week by the government itself.

These students have asked that the Cambridge Board cancel the upcoming May-June 2021 exams which seems like a reasonable demand given the extraordinary times we live in.

But their pleas have fallen on deaf ears. Four different high courts have turned down the petitions to cancel physical examinations or switch to predicted grades.

As things stand, the Cambridge O and A-Level exams in Pakistan this year will begin on April 26 and end on June 11. While the government decided to close down schools in Punjab, Islamabad, and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa this month, Federal Education Minister Shafqat Mahmood insists that Intermediate, Matric, and Cambridge exams will be held as per schedule. This does not make any sense.

In comparison to Pakistan, we are told the Cambridge International board has cancelled exams in over 10 countries across the world. Cambridge International is opting for teacher assessments for its IGCSE qualifications in the UK. The board said that it will go for teachers' assessments in a "very small" number of countries and regions where it will be "impossible" for the exams to go ahead. One wonders why Pakistan

does not fall in that category.

This week, #cancelcie-exams2021 emerged as one of the top Twitter trends in the country as students tried to get across their point of view. The issue goes beyond the fact that in most schools, the prescribed syllabi has not been taught fully or that online classes have left a lot to be desired. The question is — why expose these young men and women to risk that can be avoided?

Some students have complained that the real disruption caused by the pandemic was the constant switching between online and on-campus classes. They say that the CIE was unmoved by the plight of the students and did nothing to help them.

Students have raised a number of points to argue their case. Schools struggled with delivering curriculum due to on/off schedules. Also, students and their parents who contracted the virus found it difficult to cope with their studies. We can also not forget hostel students who were forced back home didn't have a proper environment to study. In comparison, most countries have promoted students based on predicted grades. Local boards also reduced the exam syllabus or delayed assessments.

Many students fear that if they end up with bad grades, which happened with a lot of them last year, it will make it difficult for them to get into universities of their choice. It seems that the government's different ministries are not on one page. While the NCOC issues its set of SOPs, the

education ministry does not seem to abide by them. If outdoor activities are banned, then why are in-person examinations allowed?

The bigger question is — why do we allow CIEs in the first place? Why does Pakistan have this smorgasbord of examination bodies assessing our students? Why can't we fix this problem so that we have one national examination system in place without having to resort to foreign boards. Granted that the CIEs exist in different countries across the world but not as an alternate to the national exam system. Instead they cater to a small minority of students. Not so in Pakistan where millions of dollars are spent in this exercise.

When the CIEs issue surfaced last year, I asked some colleagues from South Asia to tell me how their countries were coping with the issue. They were at a loss to explain. It seems all the other countries in South Asia — be it India, Bangladesh, Nepal or Sri Lanka — have their local exam boards which are responsible for testing and grading the students. India has two central boards and every state has its own board. Central boards emphasise on English while state boards prefer the state language. This is exactly the system that should be in place in Pakistan.

I recall that the Aga Khan Board tried to introduce something like this but it did not take off as expected. What's surprising is why the government continues to sleep on this. Where is our national pride now? Express Tribune..

With Myanmar

Usama Khilji

HORRIFIC events have played out in Myanmar in the past few months as its military deposed a democratically elected government and imposed martial law. It has killed over 800 civilians so far in demonstrations against the coup, and arrested journalists covering the violence. An information and communication blackout has been imposed, including intermittent internet shutdowns, blocking of social media, limiting public WiFi, and disabling wireless broadband internet, acts that the Global Network Initiative has strongly condemned.

This is a gross violation of fundamental rights of the people of Myanmar and a violation of international human rights laws. A military coup in the region emboldens anti-democratic forces, worsens the refugee crisis, cuts off people, and stifles voices.

South Asian governments, all elected by the people, must stand against the coup and not legitimise the military government. It was a morally reprehensible decision by South Asian governments including Pakistan's to attend the Armed Forces Day parade in Naypyidaw, the day the Myanmar military killed over 100 protesters. The other governments attending the parade included Bangladesh, India, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, China and Russia.

Our Constitution outlaws military coups; any abrogation of the document is an act of high treason as per Article 6. By extending this principle, Pakistan should refuse to legitimise a regime that acts against the spirit of its own Constitution, and suspend provision of military equipment that is used to trample the people's voice.

South Asia must stand against the Myanmar coup.

Myanmar's military is an amalgamation of the Japanese-trained Burma Independence Army that fought British colonial rule in the late 1940s and its offshoot that changed sides during the war to fight the Japanese presence. Upon independence in 1948, the two armies merged to form the Myanmar Army, but as minority communities struggled for independence from the state, civil war broke out and many army members joined the insurgency.

The short-lived democratic government system

was overthrown in the 1962 coup, imposing the Buddhist majority's views on the country. Citizens had had enough by 1988, but demonstrations were quelled by shootings that killed thousands. Pro-democracy protesters were dismissed as communists from the mountains, a dehumanisation tactic used by militaries to 'otherise' indigenous voices. However, the demonstrations led to Myanmar opening up the economy. Thereon, the army came to be known as a 'state within a state', isolated in lavish garrisons with its officials enriching itself through lucrative trade licences and contracts that made joining the military lucrative.

In 2011, the generals decided to allow some representation to civilians, with a constitution that allowed them to retain a quarter of the seats in parliament and certain ministries — a hybrid democracy arrangement. In 2015, the National League for Democracy (NLD) led by Aung San Suu Kyi won a landslide election. Her government tread carefully with the military, in fact defending it against accusations of genocide of the Rohingya community at the ICJ.

However, in late 2020 when the NLD won another election, the military illegally suspended the results by alleging fraud, declared a state of emergency, and announced control of the country for one year. For people of Myanmar who have seen military rule for most of their history, this is not a reliable promise.

The situation in the region is getting precarious. As more citizens of Myanmar try to escape the oppressive military rule, seeking asylum is all the more complicated given border restrictions due to Covid-19. For the Rohingya Muslims, the genocide can get worse.

Bangladesh has been hosting over a million Rohingya refugees since 2017, but India has been threatening to deport Rohingya refugees, having detained several from India-held Kashmir recently, which is highly condemnable.

The participation of Gen Min Aung Hlaing at the Asean summit also raises questions, as the multilateral body should be engaging with democratically elected civilian leaders. Dawn..



IPL under fire for plan to keep playing despite Covid-19 crisis

NEW DELHI: The Indian Premier League (IPL) will carry on with games, its organisers said on Sunday, but came under heavy criticism for the plan as the country grapples with a massive surge in coronavirus cases.

The New Indian Express and a sister publication said on Sunday they had decided to suspend its IPL coverage, while hundreds of fans lambasted the league on social media.

An IPL governing council member said the league has "a robust bio-bubble" and is being played without fans which made it safe to continue.

"IPL provides a much-needed distraction for all from the doom and gloom around us," the official said, requesting anonymity.

"Yes, cases have



surged in venues like Delhi, but we have two standby venues in Hyderabad and Indore and we'd use them if needed."

India's number of Covid-19 cases surged by 349,691 on Sunday, a new global record, and hospitals in Delhi and across the country are turning away patients after running out of medical oxygen and beds.

The Chennai-based New Indian Express said its decision to suspend

coverage, calling the glitzy tournament "commercialism gone crass" and "incongruous".

Express Publications said in a front-page editorial of its flagship English-language daily that the paper was halting reporting on the Twenty20 event until a "semblance of normalcy is restored".

The Morning Standard and the Sunday Standard — two other English-language newspapers in their stable — shared the

same editorial.

"In such a tragic time, we find it incongruous that the festival of cricket is on in India," the newspaper group said. "This is commercialism gone crass."

The media company said it was not against the competition but its timing, adding: "Cricket, too, must accept that we are passing through an unprecedented crisis."

Australia's Adam Gilchrist, who led now-defunct Deccan Chargers to their maiden IPL victory in 2009, also waded into the debate.

"Best wishes to all in India. Frightening Covid numbers. #IPL continues. Inappropriate? Or important distraction each night? Whatever your thoughts, prayers are with you," tweeted the former Test player. Dawn..



Pakistani skipper Babar Azam made history once again by shattering a record previously held by Virat Kohli, becoming the fastest batsman to get to 2,000 T20I runs.

Pak vs Zim: Pakistan defeat Zimbabwe by 24 runs in final T20I



Pakistan captain Babar Azam won the toss, opted to bat and the tourists made 165-3 in 20 overs as they sought redemption after a shock 19-run second match loss.

The batting of Rizwan and Azam (52) and the bowling of recalled Hasan Ali (4-18) ensured Pakistan would not suffer the humiliation of losing twice to minnows Zimbabwe within three days.

Zimbabwe made a bold bid for victory, though, reaching 101 for one after 13 overs before being undone by the loss of three wickets within 15 balls for the addition of just eight runs.

As the Pakistan bowlers tightened their grip, only Brendan Taylor

(20) made a meaningful score and the hosts finished on 141-7.

It was the second successive T20 series success for the tourists after beating South Africa 3-1 before travelling to Harare.

Rizwan cracked three sixes and five fours as Pakistan exceeded the expectations of Azam, who believed it would be a challenge to surpass 140 on what he considered a bowler-friendly pitch.

After the loss of Sharjeel Khan for 18 off the last ball of the fourth over, Rizwan and Azam put on 126 runs for the second wicket before the captain was out for 52 in the final over.

Medium-pacer Luke

Jongwe, the star of the shock Zimbabwe victory, was once again the most impressive bowler, taking the three wickets while conceding 37 runs.

Needing to score at a rate of 8.3 runs an over to overtake Pakistan and achieve a historic first bilateral T20 series victory, Zimbabwe began promisingly.

Unperturbed by the loss of Tarisai Musakanda for 10, fellow opener Wesley Madhevere and Tadiwanashe Marumani speedily put on 65 runs in a second-wicket stand.

But when Marumani (35) was bowled by Mohammad Hasnain, Pakistan took control and Madhevere (59) and Regis Chakabva (0) soon followed to the change room.

Ali excelled among the Pakistan bowlers, and Haris Rauf (2-34) atoned for a costly earlier spell by capturing two wickets in the final over.

The T20 series will be followed by two Tests, also in Harare, beginning on April 29 and May 7. The news..

Babar's troops face rare Zimbabwe challenge in T20 series decider

HARARE: Pakistan suddenly find themselves in a spot of bother as they face a weak-looking yet spirited Zimbabwe in the series-deciding third and final Twenty20 International here at the Harare Sports Club on Sunday.

Fresh from their ODI and Twenty20 series triumph in South Africa where they toured prior to coming to Zimbabwe, Babar Azam and company received a big jolt on Friday when Zimbabwe, 11th in the ICC T20 rankings, stunned the tourists by 19 runs in the second T20 in Harare to level the series that before Friday did not hold any considerable significance.

After getting restricted to 118 in the second game, the Brendan Taylor-led Zimbabwe defying the odds, bundled out Pakistan the former top-ranked T20 team, for a mere total of 99 off 19.5 overs. This was also Zimbabwe's first-ever T20 win over Pakistan.

Surprisingly earlier in the series opener held at the same venue, fourth-ranked Pakistan team barely managed to win by 11 runs while defending 149. On Sunday, the tourists would be looking to sort their batting woes as in both games thus far, their batters have not fired. Barring wicket-keeper/batsman Mohammad Rizwan and Babar, the rest of the batsmen have struggled. Middle-order batting has only raised the concerns of Pakistan think-tank in recent times. While veteran Mohammad Hafeez, who had a fine 2020 with the bat in the game's shortest format, has so far struggled on the African safari, Asif Ali's string of abject outings have only continued on the tour; add to this the failures of novice Danish Aziz who debuted in the first T20 of the Zimbabwe. Dawn..

National Women's Softball Championship to be held in June under floodlights

KARACHI: Chairman Sindh Softball Association (SSA) Syed Afzal Zaidi said on Saturday that due to the outbreak of Covid-19 major sports events in the world have been cancelled and softball activities in Pakistan have also been severely affected.

The 15th National Women's Softball Championship has been cancelled due to the increased cases of the coronavirus. However, after the situation improves we will try to hold the National Championship by implementing full Covid-19 SOPs in Karachi in June this year under floodlights. He expressed these views while addressing a Sindh Softball Association meeting. President SSA Syed Waseem Hashmi, Vice Presidents

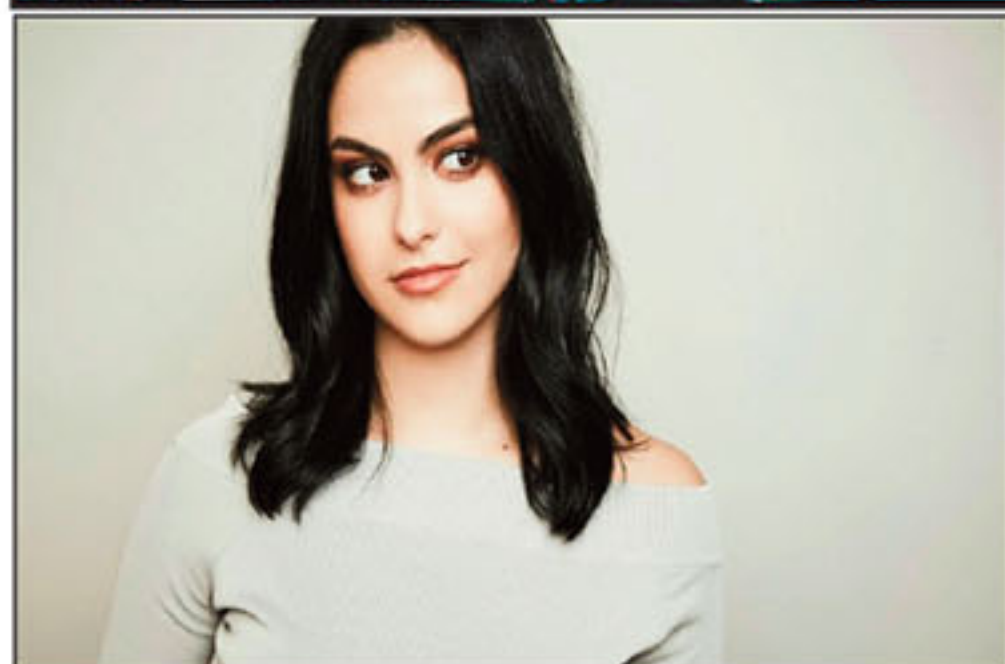


Pervaiz Ahmed Shaikh & Muhammad Nasir, General Secretary Zeeshan Merchant, Chairperson Women Wing Alia Ahmed, Finance Secretary Murad Hussain, and other officials attended the meeting. Afzal said that Softball Federation of Pakistan (SFP) gave Sindh Softball Association the opportunity to host the 15th National Women's Softball Cham-

pionship, which is an expression of confidence in the Provincial Association. "Events like these will prove to be very fruitful in the promotion and development of softball," he said. "Such competitions will discover new talent and will create an atmosphere of healthy contests among the players at the national level but also will build an atmosphere of mutual har-

mony and brotherhood."

He further said that we will try to organise this championship in the best way possible to make this event memorable and exemplary. Afzal added that Karachi is a cosmopolitan city of peace and harmony and the national championship being held here will send a positive image at the international forums. President SSA Syed Waseem Hashmi said that women of this country are participating in sports alongside men just like in all aspects of life which is very heartening. He directed Secretary Zeeshan Merchant to form an organising committee for the national championship as well as take all possible steps to provide facilities to the guest players participating in the event. Dawn..



Camila Mendes recently sat down for a chat and got candid about all the absurdities she finds in Riverdale's story line.

Pakistanis are breaking the ice with their special someone and we are here for it



Adverts can be annoying - nobody actually likes sitting through them. But this one's here with our favourite celebs, some ice cream, memories of sweet love, and just the right song we'd like to hum to all day long.

The new #SayItWithCornetto campaign has been the sweetest of all TVCs we've come across lately. Revealing heartwarming moments of breaking the ice with a special someone, the campaign has reminded everyone of their first love and the joy it brings along. From celebs to social media users, everyone's excited to share their story.

Here are all the reasons we're enjoying the new #SayItWithCornetto campaign:

Asim Azhar's unique

homage to Nazia Hassan has us tapping our feet

Sorry, anyone who doesn't know Nazia Hassan songs can't be friends with us. The whole vibe around her songs is unmatched till date, especially the Aankhen Milane Walay tune which is just one desi song we can't get enough of.

With Asim Azhar's vocals clubbed with a fresh tune, this song is one of the most beautiful remixes we've come across lately. Actor Bilal Abbas Khan is dropping some serious tips on how to break the ice

We already adore everything about Bilal Abbas Khan, but his boy-next-door looks and acting skills in the new Cornetto Disc Brownie TVC have us falling in love with him all over again.

We love how the boy meets girl moment in the TVC sends sparks all

around. Such magnetic moments in the TVC make us want to pause channel surfing when this one's on.

The TVC has the internet reminiscing about the moment they fell in love. Ah, don't those two look just lovely together?

The Asim and Bilal duo in the new TVC inspired some sweet reminiscing, and had the internet sharing their own moments of breaking the ice with their special someone.

Facebook was brimming with stories both silly and cute, with groups like Diaries and Mommy Has Solutions triggering nostalgic conversations on first love.

Social media showed us how they would say it all with a Cornetto Disc Brownie

It wasn't just Facebook that flooded with love stories and confessions; other social media platforms also followed the #SayItWithCornetto trend. Influencers like Ghazanfar and Rida from Bekaar Films as well as social media personalities like Kanwal Aftab and Aden Rehan shared their unique ice-breaking moments with their special ones. Dawn..

Oscars 2021: Frances McDormand wins Best Actress award for 'Nomadland'

LOS ANGELES: Frances McDormand won her third Oscar on Sunday for Nomadland, cementing her reputation as one of the best actresses of her generation.

McDormand's win makes her a member of an elite club that includes Meryl Streep, Daniel Day Lewis and Jack Nicholson as the winners of three acting Oscars. The late Katharine Hepburn won a record four. "My voice is in my sword. We know the sword is our work. And I like work," McDormand said in accepting the award, echoing a line from the film. In Nomadland, the 63-year-old McDormand plays a widow who, in the wake of the US economic recession, turns her van into a mobile home and sets out on the road, taking seasonal jobs along the way.

The publicity-shy McDormand was one of the favorites for the best actress prize, which she first won in 1997 for her portrayal of a pregnant police chief in crime drama Fargo.

McDormand won again in 2018 for playing an angry mother seeking justice for her dead daughter in dark comedy Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri. McDormand, who is married to independent movie director Joel Coen, made her film debut in 1984's Blood Simple. She has starred in several of Coen and his brother's movies, including Raising Arizona and Burn After Reading.

Her other major roles include Mississippi Burning, Almost Famous and North Country, all three of which earned her Oscar nods, as well as Moonrise Kingdom and Something's Gotta Give.

In 2011, she won a Tony award for her portrayal of a single mother in the play Good People and in 2015 she picked up an Emmy for her lead role in the television mini-series Olive Kitteridge. The News..

Feroze Khan, when you empathise with a 'but', there's a problem

As India's new coronavirus infections continue to hit record peaks, many countries including Pakistan, Britain, Germany and the United States have pledged to send urgent medical aid to fight the crisis overwhelming its hospitals.

Across the border, Pakistanis are sending love and prayers as heart-wrenching videos and pictures emerge of Indians struggling for their lives. Feroze Khan too showed empathy but there were a few issues with his message:

"I am sure it's tough time in India and I pray for humanity everywhere. But just imagine what Kashmir has been going through and why?" he questioned.

To begin with, his first half of the message seems to trivialise the enormous scale of devastation India is undergoing right now. Two, why add a 'but' in your message of empathy and bring up Kashmir in the same tweet?

No one is denying that Kashmiris have gone through continuous oppression and violations of their basic rights but when you're talking about one tragedy (the one in India), don't correlate it to the other.

People on Twitter also



asked the actor to keep politics out of a major crisis, pointing out innocent people who were losing their lives had nothing to do with the atrocities in Kashmir.

However, that didn't sway the actor's opinions. "Kashmir is out of oxygen since god knows when. They just are not a nuclear power so we don't talk much about it. Face with tears of joy they've been caged and killed dirty," he said. "Again I am praying for humanity in India and in Kashmir!"

After facing heavy criticism and backlash from fans who called his tweets insensitive and against basic human decency at a time like this, Khan then responded to a fan who pointed out how he should be praying for humanity instead of spreading unnecessary hate.

"I have prayed for human-

ity there and everywhere. But I would still not wanna be quiet for a few likes and views," he said, making references to his serial Khuda aur Muhabbat which is currently on air.

"The drama could fail too and I would still not want innocent to be killed, suppressed and caged. Praying for everyone everywhere," he added.

We understand his frustration about the atrocities in Kashmir, but empathy costs nothing. There are many celebrities praying for people in India and encouraging people not to lose hope who still believe that India is in the wrong on the Kashmir issue.

You don't have to give up your stance on Kashmir to show kindness in India's time of great need. Dawn..

Prince Charles may cut off Prince Harry, Meghan Markle after becoming king

In a bid to reduce the number of working members in the royal family Prince Charles may be looking to cut off Prince Harry and Meghan Markle when he becomes king.

Royal expert Angela Levin has claimed that the Prince of Wales will likely "ditch" the Duke and Duchess of Sussex since they already stepped down as senior members of the royal family.

"Prince Charles has wanted for a very long time to cut the monarchy down to save costs and to make people be worth the money that they got from the taxpayer," she said.

"I imagine that might be when Harry and Meghan are ditched from being members of the Royal family."

"I think the outer edge, which the Queen has wanted to keep together for a very long time for sentimental reasons, which at her age she didn't really particularly want change which I think is understandable."

"But he wants to change and I think he will do that."

"He will also accompany the Queen, it's said she's going to be there opening Parliament on May 11 and Prince Charles will be accompanying her."

"I think although she wants to do her duties she will step back, even more, it'll be quite hard to come back after the pandemic and all the isolation. "In fact, she will be grateful for him to be taking over in making I imagine quite big decisions on behalf of the Royal Family." The News..



The "Mere Paas Tum Ho" star on Sunday said she has reached 8.7 million followers on the Facebook-owned app.

Imran Khan is running country's economy on IMF's directions: Bilawal

KARACHI: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has strongly criticized the PTI government on the issue of high electricity and gas tariffs, saying that the IMF had directed Imran Khan to increase the electricity bill and the PTI government issued the ordinance in this regard. Imran Khan has run the Pakistani economy on the instructions of the IMF hence tarnishing the country's image.

In a statement issued from Media Cell Bilawal House on Monday, Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that the people are suffering the consequences of Imran Khan's incompetence in the IMF deal through their high electricity and gas bills. Imran Khan has now planned to rob 700 billion rupees from the pockets of the poor people.

He further said that Imran Khan is proud of his performance; people are looking for this performance for the expensive electricity and gas bills in their hand. Imran Khan who tore the electricity bill at Rs 8 per unit is now silent when it has gone up to Rs 21 per unit. According to Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Imran Khan has no idea about the situation of a middle class family who is reluctant to run the air conditioner due to expensive bills in this hot weather and during the month of Ramadan while they are fasting. In the state of Madinah, will the sav-

ings of a middle-class common man be used only to pay electricity and gas bills?

Chairman PPP also said that PTI had called a sit-in at D-Chowk against inflation and is now making people stand in line in front of banks to pay the expensive electricity bills. Addressing Imran Khan, he said that Prime Minister, it is not the previous governments that are responsible for raising the electricity and gas bills but you yourself. He also said that the people of Pakistan are paying a terrible price for change in the face of high electricity and gas bills.

Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari termed the price hike of electricity by the tyrannical PTI government for ordinary consumers who use 300 units per month as an extreme act of poor enmity. He demanded that Imran Khan should announce a reduced price for consumers who use 300 units per month.

He said that the extraordinary increase in electricity and gas prices has created havoc in the country by bringing a tsunami of inflation today due to high prices of electricity and gas. Declining demand for Pakistani products is also affecting the export sector, he said, adding that a possible increase in gas prices would make fertilizer more expensive, leaving 43 per cent of the country's agricultural manpower and 20 per cent of GDP affected. NNI



LAHORE: Army Personnel are patrolling on Mall Road to implement new restrictions as a preventive measure against the spread of the Covid-19 in Provincial Capital.

Pakistan attaches special importance to bilateral relations with UK: Shaukat Tarin

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Christian Turner, the British High Commissioner to Pakistan called on the Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Shaukat Tarin, at the Finance Division Monday.

According to a press statement here, Secretary Finance Division and Secretary EAD were also present during the meeting.

While extending a warm welcome to Christian Turner, the Finance Minister stated that Pakistan attaches special importance to bilateral relations with the United Kingdom and affirmed to further strengthen economic and business linkages between the two countries.

The Finance Minister also thanked the High Commissioner for the support extended by the British government and its people for the people of Pakistan during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

In his remarks, the Finance Minister apprised the High Commissioner about working of flagship Ehsaas Emergency Cash

program regarding direct cash transfers to underprivileged women. The Ehsaas program has played a significant role in mitigating the economic hardships of the marginalized groups of the society amid COVID-19.

The Finance Minister also underlined the various measures taken by the Government to stimulate economic recovery during these testing times. He commended the Pakistani diaspora abroad for sending in record remittances which enhanced the foreign exchange reserves and strengthened Pak-Rupee. The Pakistani diaspora in the United Kingdom are the real asset for the country, he added.

The Finance Minister reiterated the firm commitment of the Government in implementing vital economic reforms and achieving macro-economic stability with the help of development partners to build a better future for the people of Pakistan. Christian Turner discussed the issues of mutual interest and assured the Finance Minister of the full support.



ISLAMABAD: Laborers are busy in preparing structure of pillars during construction of Rawal interchange in Federal Capital.



ISLAMABAD: A view of Allama Iqbal Open University in Federal Capital as the University administration postpone the examination Autumn Semester 2021 due to the pandemic of third layer of Corona Virus across the country.

Army deployed in 16 cities as Covid death rate rises to 2.16pc: DG ISPR

RAWALPINDI: Personnel of the Pakistan Army have been deployed in 16 cities, which have the highest number of coronavirus cases in the country.

Pakistan is desperately trying to contain the pandemic before it spirals out of control like it did in India a few days ago.

Major-General Babar Iftikhar, Director General of the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), told the media at a press briefing on Monday that there was an alarming increase in the patient death rate in the third wave of the coronavirus pandemic.

He said that death rate had reached up to 2.15 percent in some cities. He said that Peshawar, Mardan, Charsadda, Lahore, Karachi, Hyderabad, Quetta, Faisalabad and Muzaffarabad had become the cities with the most number of cases.

The ISPR DG said the third wave was affecting the entire South Asian region. He said the army would come up to people's expectations in these difficult times.

He said that people's trust was an asset of the Pakistan Army. He said that army has been deployed in aid of the civil administration. He said the nation needed to be

more careful than ever to stop the pandemic situation from deteriorating.

The Pakistan Army spokesperson said that oxygen supplies to the industry would have to be halted and diverted to hospitals if the pandemic situation deteriorates. He said that currently 570 coronavirus patients were on ventilators and 4,300 were critical.

He said that coronavirus SOPs must be followed for safety. He said that 75 percent of the oxygen produced in the country had been allocated to health sector of Pakistan. He said the civil administration was responsible for maintaining law and order in the country.

He said that army troops had reached in all districts. He said that a lieutenant-general would head the army operations in every district and a brigadier at the division level. He said the army had decided not to take the internal security allowance.

On Sunday, the federal government had issued notifications for the deployment of Pakistan Army troops and Rangers in Punjab and Frontier Corps security personnel in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for strict implementation of Standard Operating Proce-

dures to prevent the spread of Coronavirus in the province.

The notifications had been issued on the requisition of Punjab and KP governments and subsequent decision taken at the meeting of National Coordination Committee held last Friday.

The Army troops, Rangers and Frontier Corps security personnel will assist civil administration and civil armed forces in implementation of COVID-19 SOPs particularly in big cities.

Meanwhile, on the other hand, Pakistan's confirmed COVID-19 cases have crossed 800,000 mark as the nationwide tally of fatalities has jumped to 17,187 on Monday.

According to the latest figures by the National Command and Operation Center (NCOC) 4,825 persons tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 24 hours.

Punjab remains the worst-hit province in terms of deaths and cases followed by Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Till now 7,990 individuals have lost their lives to the epidemic in Punjab 4,599 in Sindh, 3,134 in KP, 665 in Islamabad, 462 in Azad Kashmir, 232 in Balochistan, and 105 in GB. NNI



FAISALABAD: Army and Police Personnel are patrolling in Karkhana Bazaar as Pak army is deployed to implement new restrictions as a preventive measure against the spread of the Covid-19 in city.

Govt did not take timely steps to buy vaccines in sufficient quantity: Shehbaz Sharif

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President and Opposition Leader in the National Assembly Shehbaz Sharif took to Twitter on Monday to share a solution to combat the rampaging Covid-19.

"The experience over the last year has shown that the only way to overcome the virus is to vaccinate as many people as early as possible," he wrote on his official Twitter handle.

He said it was criminal negligence on the part of the government that it failed to accumulate enough vaccine which became the main cause of the rapid spread of Covid 19 in the country. He said the government should devise step-by-step administrative measures.

"It is criminal that the government did not take timely steps to buy vaccines in sufficient quantity, and the result is a surge in infections."

The PML-N leader suggested that all parties should devise an emergency contingency plan to avoid an India-like oxygen crisis situation. He said emphasis should be put on adopting an effective strategy to fight coronavirus variants and their lethal effects on the population.

Shehbaz touted his pre-

vious government's policies regarding the elimination of the dengue virus, adding that government could study and benefit from his dengue control model to tackle Covid 19 pandemic.

He said the government should accelerate the vaccine rollout and it could seek the private sector's help in this regard. He cautioned that any reluctant and lacklustre policy vis-à-vis Covid elimination efforts would be a huge mistake. He said the only effective method to eradicate this pandemic is the inoculation of more and more people.

He said the government should keep in view the ground realities and statistics while devising a covid policy and it should include all four provincial governments, Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan governments in consultation.

Shehbaz appealed to the people to observe the SOPs in order to stem this pandemic from their midst. All public representatives must apprise people of the urgency of adopting SOPs.

He demanded of the government to make local bodies more effective and seek their help in this regard. NNI

NCOC recommends week-long Eid holiday amid surge in Covid cases

ISLAMABAD: In view of the alarming surge in COVID-19 cases during the third wave of the pandemic across the country, the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) on Monday recommended a week-long holiday for Eidul Fitr.

According to the sources, the NCOC also proposed a complete ban on inter-city public transport service on the eve of Eid to stem the spread of the coronavirus.

The meeting also suggested the closure of tourist spots across

the country on Eidul Fitr. However, the final decision will be taken after consultation will all the provinces, the sources added.

The meeting suggested to close all commercial activities, except essential services, for one week across the country. The NCOC meeting directed the education ministry to ensure the implementation of coronavirus-related Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) while conducting exams of Cambridge students.

Earlier today, Direc-

tor-General Inter-Services Public Relations (DG ISPR) Major General Babar Iftikhar had confirmed the deployment of Pakistan Army troops in 16 cities of the country to ensure compliance with the Covid-19 standard operating procedures (SOPs).

While addressing an important press conference on the coronavirus situation in Pakistan, the DG ISPR had said that the army had been deployed in cities where the rate of coronavirus positivity had exceeded 16 per cent. NNI



FAISALABAD: Army and Police Personnel arrest the shopkeeper on the violation of the Corona SOPs at Kacheri Bazaar in presences of ACT Ayub Bhukhari as Pak army is deployed to implement new restrictions as a preventive measure against the spread of the Covid-19 in city.

Free, fair polls in AJK to boost Kashmir liberation struggle: Sardar Masood

MUZAFFARABAD: The AJK President Sardar Masood Khan has expressed his resolve that state government would hold general elections in fair and free manners to strengthen the democratic struggle of Kashmiri people for their right to self-determination.

"We will hold free and fair elections in Azad Kashmir and these elections should be publicized not only at the national but international level, so that the world should know we believe in elections and we want to decide our future through the power of the vote by participating in an UN-sponsored plebiscite," he asserted.

He expressed these views during an interview to London based web portal here on Tuesday. The President said that fair and free elections in Azad Jammu and Kashmir have been conducted since 1970. These elections have strengthened democratic institutions and promoted democratic values in the liberated territory.

While contrary to AJK, elections in Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir have never been held fair and transparent and the people demanding their democratic rights are showered with bullets.

He said innocent people in IOJK are killed, wounded, maimed, and disappeared simply because of their democratic right to self-determination. The people in IOJK, he regretted have been deprived of even those rights which they had enjoyed even during the dictatorial Dogra rule while in Azad Kashmir, the people not only enjoy basic civil liberties but also have all human rights in the democratic system," he added.

Sardar Masood Khan stressed that at present, voices are rising in the parliaments of the UK, Europe, the United States, and North America as well as the parliaments of Far Eastern states in favor of the democratic rights of the Kashmiri people. Therefore, we directly need to take advantage and mobilize the world public opinion about the Kashmir issue. "This job can be well done by the Pakistani political leadership particularly the parliamentary leaders," he added.

The AJK president appealed to the national political leadership of Pakistan to rise above their petty political differences, and join hands for the important national cause of Kashmir.

Pakistani workforce recruitment in Japan underway: Zulfi Bukhari

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Sayed Zulfiqar Abbas Bukhari said on Monday that the country would soon start sending its skilled workforce to Japan under a government-to-government Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) as a recruitment process of many young workers in final stages.

He revealed this while addressing the signing ceremony of a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) between the Overseas Employment Corporation (OEC) and Inter-SES.

The partnership was meant to explore employment opportunities for Pakistani manpower in Japan by reaching out to major Information Technology (IT) companies.

The MoC was signed by OEC Managing Director Kashif Noor and Inter-SES Chief Executive Officer Zafar Mahmood in presence of SAPM Zulfiqar Bukhari and Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan Kuninori Matsuda.

He said after signing of this MoC, the Inter-SES and OEC would make joint efforts to find new and lucrative job opportunities in Japan

for qualified youth of Pakistan. Recruitment of 120 skilled workers, who had been imparted Japanese language by the ministry, was underway, he added.

The SAPM said the chief aim of MoC was to boost footprint of Pakistani workforce in Japan through extensive marketing of the jobs' demand, emanating from Japanese companies, in Pakistan.

Unfortunately, both the countries were devoid of linkages for human resource in the past, but now there was a Memorandum of Understanding between the two states for manpower export, he added.

He said all-out efforts would be made to ensure presence of the Pakistani diaspora in Japan at par with the gulf countries as it had immense potential to meet the growing employment needs of Pakistan.

"Since Japan is an aging population and will be needing around 5,00,000 of workforce in future, it is our priority to fetch maximum quota for Pakistan out of this," Zulfiqar Bukhari maintained.

The SAPM said the ministry's prime focus for export of manpower to Japan was on IT sector as Pakistan had the best block chain devel-

opers in the world. The IT sector was not given due attention in the past which was 'very unfortunate', he added.

He said the ministry was exploring new markets to create maximum job opportunities for Pakistani workforce in other than gulf countries. "We want to digress as a country and ministry and do not want to be heavily populated in one region."

Regarding the Japanese ambassador as the biggest supporter in Pakistan-Japan relationship, he extended his gratitude to ambassador for always being at forefront between this relationship and particularly in Pakistani manpower export to Japan.

Japanese Ambassador Kuninori Matsuda said as of today, above 30,000 Pakistanis were living and working in Japan. Pakistanis were among the most constructive and low-abiding members of society in Japan, he commented.

He said Japan had high trust in capabilities of Pakistani youth, particularly in IT sector. "Spread good words about Japan and Pakistan relations, particularly in human resource," he remarked while addressing to the media. NNI