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Army brass reviews COVID-19 preventive measures

Rawalpindi: Chief of Army Staff Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa on Thursday directed 'all concerned to gear up preparations in support of national effort' to counter coronavirus in the country, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said.



Gen Qamar chaired the 230th Corps Commanders' Conference at General Headquarters. According to the ISPR, the forum discussed the emerging situation with regards to COVID-19 and the preventive measures taken at the army level. COAS directed all concerned to gear up preparations in support of national effort to counter this pandemic in case of any eventuality, the ISPR, the media wing of the military, said in a statement issued after the meeting.

The forum also reviewed operational preparedness, situation along the Line of Control (LoC), geo-strategic environment and national and regional security situation with particular emphasis on the Afghanistan peace process.

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"The path to regional stability & peace passes through Afghanistan. Collaborative approach and patience can help overcome all challenges for which Pakistan is ready to

play its part with utmost sincerity," the COAS emphasised. COAS directed all concerned to gear up preparations in support of national effort to counter this pandemic in case of any eventuality, the ISPR, the media wing of the military, said in a statement issued after the meeting.

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Schools closure extended in Sindh, PSL matches played in empty stadium

KARACHI / ISLAMABAD / LAHORE: As Pakistan confirmed its 21st novel coronavirus case on Thursday, the federal government convened the National Security Committee to review the measures put in place to check the spread of the deadly contagion while the Sindh government said the remaining matches of a popular T20 cricket championship in Karachi will be played without spectators.

While chairing a meeting of PTI's parliamentary party in Islamabad, Prime Minister Imran Khan said the government was already on alert to deal with possible emergence of the novel coronavirus in Pakistan. He said a meeting of the National Security Committee has been convened to review the situation. The announcement coincided with a decision of the Sindh government that the remaining matches of Pakistan Super League (PSL) in Karachi will take place without any crowd.

"This decision has been made after consultation with all stakeholders including the Pakistan Cricket Board," the provincial government spokesman, Senator Murtaza Wahab, wrote on his verified Twitter handle. Most of Pakistan's 21 coronavirus cases have been reported in Sindh. Wahab denied claims the provincial government was hiding information regarding the virus spread. "The Sindh government is not hiding any information about coronavirus or the number of patients in the province," he added. All educational institutions in Sindh are shut until March 16. Wahab said that the provincial cabinet would convene at 10pm on Thursday to decide whether to extend the closure of educational institutions in the province. Meanwhile, a spokesperson for Gilgit-Baltistan government confirmed on Thursday that a young man has been tested positive for the coronavirus which has infected nearly 125,000 people in 118 countries in all continents barring Antarctica. "The 31-year-old man, who hails from Shagar area of G-B, had recently been to Iran," the spokesperson, Faizullah Firaq, told The Express Tribune. The patient has been shifted to the isolation ward of the G-B hospital. So far, three coronavirus cases have been

diagnosed in the region, but Firaq said G-B is at a greater risk from the virus as compared to other parts of the country. Over in Punjab, the government declared health emergency in the province. The decision was taken by the provincial cabinet on Thursday after receiving a briefing on the coronavirus from health officials. The cabinet was informed that as many as 3,964 Zareen who returned from a pilgrimage in Iran have been screened and kept under observation. A quarantine facility has been established in the southern Punjab district of DG Khan for 800 pilgrims from Iran. The cabinet has also informed that Chinese citizens in the province are also being screened for the mysterious contagion. A ministerial committee has been assigned to decide further actions.

In Balochistan, which shares a border with Iran — one of the worst hit countries by the coronavirus — Provincial Minister Sardar Yar Muhammad Rind said all schools would remain closed till March 31 as a precautionary measure. "Action will be taken against schools that do not comply with the decision which has been taken after consultation with the health ministry," he

levels of inaction. We have therefore made the assessment that COVID-19 can be characterised as a pandemic," he told a news conference.

added, "Matric exams have been postponed. We're in talks with to shut madrassas as well. A decision regarding reopening of educational institutions will be taken on March 27."

A day earlier, WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus officially declared the outbreak of the novel coronavirus a global pandemic. "We are deeply concerned both by the alarming levels of spread and severity and by the alarming

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NSC meets tomorrow to weigh whether to declare national emergency

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Thursday called a meeting of the National Security Committee (NSC) to decide a national action plan to counter the coronavirus outbreak declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO), ARY NEWS reported. The meeting of the country's top civil-military body will



be held at the Prime Minister House on Friday evening. The three services chiefs, the federal ministers for interior, foreign and law affairs will be in attendance in the meeting. The meeting will take a decision on whether or not to declare a national emergency over the virus outbreak.

Read More: Gilgit-Baltistan reports third coronavirus case. Earlier today, a 31-year-old man in Shigar district tested positive for coronavirus. Gilgit-Baltistan focal person on coronavirus confirmed.

The 31-year-old man had visited Iran and tested positive for the disease today. This takes the total number of confirmed cases in Pakistan to 22 and three in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Prior to that, two more cases of novel coronavirus were reported at the Pakistan-Taliban border. A spokesperson for the disease at the Fatima Jinnah Hospital.

Two more confirmed cases of novel coronavirus (Covid-19) surfaced in Sindh on the same day. A spokesperson for the Sindh Health Department said that one confirmed case of coronavirus has been reported in Hyderabad while the other case emerged in the provincial capital.

The person who tested positive for the disease in Hyderabad had flown back from Syria via Doha, while the Karachi coronavirus patient had returned from Dubai.

Sindh government on Wednesday has decided to monitor inter-provincial borders amid apprehensions about spread of novel coronavirus. The provincial government departments will monitor the movement of people arriving in Sindh.

One patient is a Pakistani national and other is an Afghan national, who was sent back to his country after detection of the deadly virus. Read More: 64 year old cured of coronavirus after serving isolation: Murtaza Wahab. Since the start of the outbreak in late December, more than 115,000 people worldwide have contracted the coronavirus disease, resulting in the deaths of over 4,000 people. Over half of the people

who contracted COVID-19 have recovered, although the number of cases is rising rapidly in particular, across Europe. The patient hails from Skardu. On Tuesday, a 12-year-old boy was diagnosed with novel coronavirus at a Quetta hospital. Dr Shams, a focal person for the isolation ward, said the boy who arrived in Quetta from Iran via Taffan border last night tested positive for the disease at the Fatima Jinnah Hospital.

So far 21 Pakistanis have been tested positive for COVID-19 — 15 of them belonged to Sindh, five in Gilgit-Baltistan and one in Balochistan. "Decision to reopen all academic institutes will be reviewed on March 27," the educational minister said. "The matriculation examination has also been postponed."

World Health Organisation declares coronavirus outbreak as pandemic. He further said that the

provincial government is also discussing extending the closure of madrassas with the administration of the religious institutions.

The decision was taken after consultation with the Ministry of Health and Chief Minister Jam Kamal Khan, Rind added.

Earlier, the provincial government had extended winter vacations due to severe weather conditions in Balochistan. Besides, Rind also briefed media about complaints in recruitment tests and assured that action would be taken against officials.

Saudi Arabia suspends travel, flights to Pakistan, India, several other countries over coronavirus. The education department has obtained evidence of irregularities in appointments of officials and the issue has been reviewed," the minister said, adding that the department has sent the summary to the chief minister.

Punjab govt declares health emergency amid coronavirus threat

LAHORE: The Punjab government has declared a "health emergency" in the province to deal with the novel coronavirus which has been designated as a global pandemic by the World Health

Organisation (WHO). The decision to declare health emergency was taken by the Punjab cabinet on Thursday after receiving a briefing on the novel coronavirus from provincial health officials. The cabinet was informed that as many as 3,964 Zareen who returned from a pilgrimage in Iran have been screened and kept under

observation. A quarantine facility has been established in the southern Punjab district of DG Khan for 800 pilgrims from Iran. The cabinet was also informed that Chinese citizens in the province are also being

screened for the mysterious contagion. A ministerial committee has been assigned to decide further actions. A day earlier, WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus officially declared the outbreak of the novel coronavirus a global pandemic. "We are deeply concerned both by the alarming levels of spread and

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Balochistan extends closure of educational institutions

QUETTA: Balochistan Minister for Education Sardar Yar Muhammad Rind on Thursday announced the extension in the closure of educational institutions in the province till March 31.

The decision was taken as a precautionary measure to protect children from COVID-19, the mysterious viral pneumonia-like disease caused by the novel coronavirus, which has killed more than 4,500 people around the world.

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govt adopting all protective measures to control coronavirus: Nasir Hussain Shah

KARACHI MARCH 13: Sindh Minister for Information, Local Government, Housing & Town Planning, Religious Affairs, Forest and Wildlife Syed Nasir Hussain Shah has said that so far, 198 people have been tested for the Coronavirus, out of which 14 people were found affected by the virus. Provincial Minister for Information said that the meeting of the task force was being presided over by Sindh Chief Minister on a daily basis at Chief Minister's House to conduct a detailed review of the situation arise after spread of the Coronavirus. He said this while addressing a press conference on Thursday. Syed Nasir Hussain Shah said that Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah was personally monitoring the situation related to the Coronavirus. The Minister said that people coming from abroad were being screened, while people coming from Taffan had been tested. He said that 1500 people were contacted by the government in Sindh and anyone suspected of the Coronavirus. Syed Nasir Hussain Shah made it clear that the Coronavirus was not spreading in the province, rather it was found in people coming from abroad.

Referring to the Pakistan Super League's matches in Karachi, the provincial minister said it was the choice of every person whether he wanted to watch the match or not, the government had completed all its arrangements. He said that decision regarding schools closure would be taken at a meeting of the Steering Committee of the Education Department. Syed Nasir Hussain Shah said that Prime Minister Imran Khan should have convened a meeting of all four chief ministers on the situation arising from the Coronavirus. The provincial Minister for Information said that the Prime Minister had not yet contacted the Chief Minister Sindh in this regard.

Syed Nasir Hussain Shah said that all countries were making excellent arrangements to deal with the

news running on social media.

Meanwhile, Sindh Minister for Information and Local Government Syed Nasir Hussain Shah, while addressing a seminar as chief guest at the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry, said that Sindh government was striving to provide all the facilities to the citizens of Karachi similar to those available in other international cities. Provincial Minister Information and Local Government said that work had been started for the restoration of Karachi Circular Railway as per the directions of the Supreme Court and the cooperation of

Saudi Arabia and other countries were following rigorous procedure of screening and that people were kept waiting for several hours in these countries. Syed Nasir Hussain Shah said that it was good to know that the common people were also offering Masks to the people as safety precaution. Responding to a question, Information and Local Government said that Sindh government was going to set up courts of Sindh Building Control Authority to prevent illegal construction in the province. He said that 28 offices of Sindh Building Control Authority involved in illegal construction had been suspended and they would be arrested soon. Answering another question, Syed Nasir Hussain Shah said that a decision on wheat procurement would be made soon. Responding to another question, the provincial Minister for information and Local Government said that cyber-crime watchdogs had been approached to check fake

the federal government would also be required in this regard. He said that the restoration of Karachi Circular Railway would reduce the pressure on the roads and provide people with cheaper and better transport, while on the other hand it would also be beneficial for the improvement the environment. He said that in accordance with the vision and directives of Chairman Pakistan People's Party Bhatta Bhutto Zardari work on the Urban Forestry had also been started in Karachi and soon one of the largest urban forests of the world would be established with Lyari Riverbed. Syed Nasir Hussain Shah said that strict action was also being taken against illegal constructions and encroachments in Karachi and soon all illegal encroachments would be abolished. He thanked the Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry office bearers for inviting him and giving him an opportunity to express his views.

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PML-M leader Maryam Nawaz breaks months-long silence

LAHORE: PML-N leader Maryam Nawaz on Thursday finally broke her months-long silence to reaffirm her commitment to the leadership's narrative of civil supremacy amid mounting criticism from



reporters in Islamabad accompanied by PML-N leaders Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, Miftah Ismail and Mariyum Aurangzeb. "If anyone thinks that my I am not intimidated or subdued

by putting in jail, they should know that my commitment to the civil supremacy and the [rule of] Constitution has strengthened instead of weakening," Maryam, who faces

charges of money laundering and is currently out on bail in the Chaudhry Sugar Mills case, urged her father not to abandon his medical treatment abroad and return to the country because of her.

"My father left the country for medical treatment when his life was in danger. His condition is better than before and I want him to continue undergoing treatment. I don't want to cause him any pain and return [before the treatment ends] for me. Maryam had moved the Lahore High Court seeking the return of her passport and one-time permission to be with her ailing father in London. The court had directed the government to decide the matter. However, her request was turned down by the federal cabinet on the recommendation of a

Organisation (WHO). The decision to declare health emergency was taken by the Punjab cabinet on Thursday after receiving a briefing on the novel coronavirus from provincial health officials. The cabinet was informed that as many as 3,964 Zareen who returned from a pilgrimage in Iran have been screened and kept under

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Cabinet deals with anomalies

THE Federal Cabinet, which met in Islamabad on Tuesday with Prime Minister Imran Khan in the chair, discussed issues related to anomalies in the governmental system and took decisions on some of them with a view to ultimately streamlining the system. The Prime Minister directed for uniform pay scales of the government employees to avoid discrimination and disparity and assigned the Adviser on Finance to hold talks with striking employees and also work with central and provincial governments to remove this disparity and both should send proposals to cabinet so that sense of deprivation among employees is removed. The meeting approved privatization of 46 entities, abolition of four departments and hand over of four others to the provincial governments under its policy of structural reforms and considered prospects for mid and long-term mechanisms for determination of energy prices.

The issue of uniform pay scales and substantial increase in salaries of the government employees assumes urgency in view of the pen-down strike by lower grade employees (from one to five) of the federal government, who are demanding pay raise in commensurate with the increase given to some selected departments and institutions. The demand of the employees is justified in view of the discriminatory policies of the successive governments in this regard, which are causing heart burning and frustration among government servants with serious implications for the overall performance and output of the governmental machinery. It is pertinent to mention that the incumbent government has been blaming the past governments for decisions that have caused distortions in the system but surprisingly it also granted exclusive increase in the salaries of NAB, FIA and Naya Pakistan Housing employees by almost 150 to 200 per cent and, therefore, there was hardly any justification not to give sympathetic consideration to the demand of the striking employees.

Muhammad Raza

THE speech of Prime Minister Imran Khan at a public gathering after distributing Kafalat cards among deserving people under the anti-poverty Ehsaas programme at Ghalanai reflected true feelings of the people and expectations that they are pinning on his Government to resolve their chronic problems. He categorically announced not to increase the electricity and gas tariffs as people and industries cannot sustain more pressure. Instead, he declared the Government would take all possible measures to bring down the power tariff in any way.

Apart from echoing sentiments and aspirations of the people regarding electricity and gas tariff and their impact on their lives, the Prime Minister also spoke about the problems of the formerly Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) that have been merged with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and explained policies and programmes of his Government to resolve them. This is important as there is growing resentment in the merged areas that the merger has not brought them the intended benefits, strengthening viewpoint of those who believe FATA should have been made a separate province. Initiation of Ehsaas Kafalat programme in those areas is a positive step but this would not

help resolve the multitude of problems that the region faces. Abysmal poverty is the fundamental cause of all other issues of the formerly tribal areas and promotion of education, infrastructure development and creation of job opportunities would be the answer. As pointed out by KP Chief Minister Mahmood Khan, tribal areas were rich in mineral resources and there was urgent need to draw up a comprehensive programme to exploit them as this would contribute significantly to reduction in poverty and creation of employment opportunities at the doorsteps of the people. There has been an untended but sound suggestion that the Government should draw upon the technical skills of tribal people as demon-

strated in production of small arms by way of proper training and their induction in similar industries that should be established in the region. As for rates of gas and electricity are concerned, the acknowledgement of the Prime Minister that the high tariff has created difficulties for the people should lead to some meaningful relief for them. He has announced a workable plan to talk to the power producers and urge them to bring down electricity prices and close down those plants which were producing costly power as no more burden could be passed on to the people and industries and hopefully this would lead to the desired outcome along with measures being taken by the Government to overcome line losses

and tackle the menace of gas and power theft. PM Imran Khan at a public gathering after distributing Kafalat cards among deserving people under the anti-poverty Ehsaas programme at Ghalanai reflected true feelings of the people and expectations that they are pinning on his Government to resolve their chronic problems. He categorically announced not to increase the electricity and gas tariffs as people and industries cannot sustain more pressure. Instead, he declared the Government would take all possible measures to bring down the power tariff in any way. Apart from echoing sentiments and aspirations of the people regarding electricity and gas tariff and their impact on their lives,

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Courtesy-PO

Plight of women

Muhammad Sajid

IN every armed conflict women are soft target. Women are directly or indirectly victim of occupation and human rights violations. Women in India-occupied Jammu and Kashmir have been facing human rights violations since 1947 but from 1989 they are suffering a lot. From January 1989 to 29 February 2020 in IOJK 95,506 civilians have been killed and 22,911 women were widowed. Occupational forces are systematically targeting women and enjoying impunity. Indian occupational forces are using rape and molestation of

women in IOJK as weapon of war. Mostly rape cases go unnoticed or unreported. From January 1989 to 31 January 2020 in IOJK 11,178 cases of rape and molestation were reported. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) prohibits torture and other forms of degrading, inhuman and cruel treatment and it has been ratified by India. Rape is also prohibited through common Article 3 of Geneva Convention which is also ratified by India. The decision of International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in a case, "Prosecutor v Jean Paul Akayesu" is very important to define the intensity of crime of war. The court

declared that rape is not only a crime against humanity but if it is intentionally done to destroy a particular group also constitutes genocide. Article 07 of Rome Statute of International Criminal Court considers rape as crimes against humanity and Article 08 included rape in war crimes. UNSC adopted many resolutions for the protection of women rights. Resolution, 1325(2000) emphasizes that it is the responsibility of the states to end impunity for crimes against humanity, war crimes including sexual and other forms of violence against women and girls. Resolution 1820(2008) is more specific which says, "Sexual vio-

lence as a tactic of war and a matter of international peace and security." There are many reported cases of mass rape. On 23 February 1991, more than 800 soldiers of the 4th Rajputana Rifles entered two adjacent villages Kunan and Poshpora at 11:00 PM and cordoned off the village. Males were interrogated overnight. The soldiers gang-raped almost 80-100 women of those villages that night till 9:00 AM as well as the next day. Women were raped without consideration of their ages and physical conditions. The raped women were from 13 years age to 80 years. There are many reported incidents of mass rape, some are from Chak

Saidpora, Haran, Chhampora (Srinagar), Kupwarah, Puzgora, Gurnakhar district Handwara, Hyhama, Wavosa, Hundwara and Kathua A new term half widows introduced which is used for the women whose husband had been forcefully disappeared and their wives did not know about their whereabouts. In India-occupied Kashmir, the Indian Occupational forces and police had forcefully disappeared 8000 to 10,000 people. According to the report of Association of Disappeared Persons there are 1500 half widows in IOJK. These half widows are facing economic issues, social problems, insecurity and health prob-

lems because of the missing husbands. Kashmiri women are facing physical and mental health problems due to conflict and oppression of Indian occupational forces. An NGO, MSF conducted a survey of IOJK in 2006 and found, "there is an alarming increase in the suicide rate by 400 times; almost 50% women have Post Traumatic Disorder." Due to this conflict women are also facing cardiac problems, nervous breakdown and infertility. Many victims of rape could not share their problem with anyone in Jammu and Kashmir mostly the male members of family are bread earner and women are responsible for work at home. Courtesy-PO



Unscreened travellers shunned by family, friends in Sindh

KARACHI: Though the government claims otherwise, unscreened passengers returning from Iran, Iraq and Syria appear to be freely moving around their areas of residence – albeit shunned by those around them, due to fears of coronavirus transmission.

Sources told media that several travellers who had visited Iran and Iraq landed safely at the Karachi airport four days ago, going to their homes in Larkana without being screened for the infectious disease.

"My brother-in-law N" visited Iran and Iraq," Rizwan Shaikh, a resident of Rato

ited Iran with another friend. "Since people are afraid of his presence, he has confined himself to his house on his own," added Shaikh.

Meanwhile, Ghafar Jaf, from Sanghar, told The Express Tribune that two men in his village had returned from Iran last week. "No one has yet approached them for testing. They were working in the fields without any symptoms, but now, after media reports, they have switched off their phones and moved from the village to Sanghar city," he disclosed. The Centre's domainAs the novel coronavirus spreads across the

'PML-N has ensured continuity of PTI govt', Says Aitzaz Ahsan

KARACHI: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has guaranteed the continuity and stability of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government, claimed

but in kind, by lending the support of the party legislators for the amendment [in the act concerning appointment of the army chief], he contended.



Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader Aitzaz Ahsan, adding that the PML-N was the biggest obstacle to a unified opposition against the PTI government. He was talking to the media in Hyderabad on Wednesday, outside the Sindh High Court. Ahsan and Advocate Farooq H Naek had earlier appeared in court to plead for bail of 16 persons, including businessman Iqbal Z Ahmed, in a National Accountability Bureau reference.

Ahsan claimed that the PML-N had guaranteed stability of the government against permission for the Sharif brothers to leave the country. "Prime Minister" Imran Khan wanted \$2 billion to \$3 billion in guarantee from the Sharifs before they left the country. But they traded not in cash

He further asserted that the Pakistani government could not bring them back because the British government would not deport them. Comparing them to PPP leaders Asif Ali Zardari and Farayal Talpur, he said the latter had never tried to get permission to travel abroad on health grounds, even though, according to him, Zardari's health was in worse condition. "The only plea that Zardari and Talpur have made is that their cases should be transferred from Islamabad to Karachi because the NAB had filed the reference against them in Karachi," he added. Meanwhile, Naek's appeal to NAB chairman Javed Iqbal to withdraw the reference against Ahmed and others because none of them were public office holders.

MDA employees protest non-payment of salaries

KARACHI: Scores of Malir Development Authority (MDA) employees staged a protest outside the Karachi Press Club on Wednesday, demanding the payment of salaries due for the past 11 months and regularisation of their jobs.

The enraged protesters stated that MDA was "committing economic genocide" by depriving 1,600 contractual employees of their salaries for the past 11 months. They claimed that MDA had misled them, asking them to sit Sindh Testing Service (STS) exams in order to be regularised and maintained that previously, MDA had regularised its employees in 2015 and 2016, but their status was again changed to that of contractual employees just after two months.

The protesters said that even those working in the department since 1997 were asked to take the STS tests, questioning why employees who had been working in

MDA for the past 23 years were now required to give the test.



They demanded that the Sindh government ensure that MDA complied with instructions outlined in notices issued to it by various government agencies and warned that they would march towards the Chief Minister House if their demands were not met.

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SHC orders action against use of wastewater for cultivation

KARACHI: The Sindh High Court (SHC) ordered the relevant authorities on Wednesday to form a taskforce and take immediate action against the use of contaminated water from Malir River for vegetable cultivation. A two-member bench, comprising Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Yousuf Ali Sayeed, issued the directives during the hearing of a petition pertaining to the use of contaminated water for growing vegetables. The petitioner's

counsel appealed to the court to put an end to the use of the Malir River's contaminated water for cultivating vegetables. At this, Justice Mazhar stressed that using water containing industrial waste for vegetable cultivation was "dangerous" and posed health risks and remarked, "Does nobody have any control over [the discharge of] wastewater?" In response, the Malir deputy commissioner (DC) informed the court that waste from several industrial units was being

discharged into Malir River. This polluted water was being used to cultivate vegetables, the court remarked, adding that it was a matter of serious concern. The Korangi DC informed the court that the issue was brought to the relevant authorities' attention earlier too. Relying on this information, the court asked the DC to seek the police's assistance to resolve the problem and commented, "Is there nobody to monitor whether [clean] or filthy is used for growing.



Dero, told The Express Tribune, "I have told my wife to close the doors of our house and not to let her brother and his family enter."

Shaikh said that even though N was still healthy and showed no symptoms of flu or fever, everyone in the area was afraid of him. "No one from the government has quarantined him or conducted other tests," he pointed out. According to N's family, the young man is a cleric in Baghdad and recently vis-

globe, with 20 patients in Pakistan now as well, it has created fears about an outbreak in the country. Though there has been much talk about screening travellers as they return to the country, reports of gaps in the system have now led to the Sindh government accusing the Centre of shirking its responsibilities. On Wednesday, the Sindh government asked the Centre to establish a quarantine facility near Karachi's Jinnah International Airport,



Karachi: Chairman District Council Karachi Salman Abdullah Murad has been given briefing by Library staff at UC Wali Muhammad.



Karachi: A group photo of Bait Ul Mail Sindh Junaid Lakhani with members of governing body of Press club.



Karachi: Executive Director, Punjab Group of Colleges Prof. Sahal Afzal presiding over Nuseem Ali Jinnah University, Karachi Board of Governors meeting at a local hotel, yesterday. Members of Board of Governors Nuseem Ali Jinnah University, Dr. A.Q. Khan, Prof. Dr. Mansoor Ahmed, Prof. Dr. Subair Shalikh and Rafiq Hussain also seen in the photo.



Karachi: Chairman DMC East Moeed Anwar, Municipal Commissioner Waseem Mustafa Soomro visiting Shaheen Park Bahadurabad.



Karachi: Deputy Director Sports and Culture KMC Jamil Ahmed is presenting Sindh Ajrak to President Al Karam Sports M Tariq Hafeez at the TMC Ground. Former President KCCA Prof. Ejaz Ahmed Faruqi and Tausif Siddiqui and Nadim Khan also present on the occasion of 7th Bilal Bhatti Inter School Cricket tournament.



Karachi: People from different classes offering fatiha at graveyard of renowned writer, politician, social activist, educationist and journalist Comrade Taj Muhammad Abro at his 34th death anniversary.



Newly elected office bearers of Aram Bagh furniture Market association group photo at oath taking ceremony held in a local hall yesterday night. Photo: Manzoor Alam Balakoti

CSSP meeting regarding training program held

Karachi: The Meeting with (CSSP) members regarding new training program for potential Peer Group Leaders (PGLs) to

trainers from 16th March to 21st March 2020 at Hyderabad.

CSSP will cover all costs of training, including



identify and engage girls aged 18 to 20.

These PGLs will receive face-to-face training on English, Digital and Social skills which will be delivered by British Council

food and logistics, and will also provide training material. Interested girls can apply for registration. Contact with me: The deadline is 16th March 2020.

Students of Ilma University visits Sindh Police Museum



Karachi: Ilma University arranged a treasure hunt to the Sindh Police Museum. It was a one of a kind excursion. The students got a chance to experience the preserved artifacts in this historical monument.

They also met with Mr. Saud Ahmed, IGP (R), Muhammad Ahmed Baig, SP (HQ Garden) Mr. Shamim Ahmed, DSP Sindh Police Museum who shared their valuable police experience with them which was no less than a source of inspiration.

The students and faculty members were shown a documentary which was very informative and insightful based on the collections of the past. An entire tour was arranged of the museum which was well received. This was followed by a Q & A session.

Ilma University expressed its deep gratitude to the esteemed police personnel for providing such a unique opportunity and enlightening the students about the precious moments in Sindh Police history.

Ahmed Ali Sirohey held meeting with the president chamber of commerce Niamey

The Pakistani Head of Mission Mr Ahmed Ali Sirohey held meeting with the president chamber of commerce Niamey, the matters pertaining to trade and commerce were discussed in detail. The envoy briefed about the potential of Pakistan and

ing single country exhibition in August 2020. The ministry of Commerce/TDAP may send an exploratory delegation with appropriate catalogs and presentations to survey the market and submit the report for specific sector wise actions



cost effective quality products manufactured in Pakistan.

The sectors that were discussed in detail with chamber high up for cooperation

Agro-industry Home appliances pharmaceutical industry surgical

sports goods Food specially rice Agriculture equipment including tractors

Textile and ready made garments light machinery

Motorbikes, tricycles and auto parts Children wear ladies wear

Furniture tanneries and Halal meat processing.

Presently motorbikes and tricycles are imported from China and India, the cost of bikes is very high.

The envoy recommends to the private sector and TDAP to take proactive steps and exploit this virgin market.

He suggested that TDAP may consider hold-

Harassment of business community wouldn't be allowed: DG Excise

Karachi: Director General Excise, Taxation and Narcotics control

Muhammad Shoaib Siddiqui has clarified that no one would be permitted to harass business community, only the provided documents as per the company category would be enough to evaluate professional tax. He was addressing a meeting at Korangi Association of Trade & Industry (KATI) here on Thursday.

President of KATI Sheikh Umer Rehman, Chairman & CEO KITE Zubair Chhaya, Senior Vice President Muhammad Ikram Rajput, Vice President Syed Wajid Hussain and others also addressed that occasion.

The DG said that Sindh was the first province which digitalized its taxation and excise systems and for cess payments there is no need to contact any one from the concerned departments all the collection system are digitalized. He said that for the collection of professional tax only the documents provided as

per the company category would be enough for evaluation, nobody can ask any

right on this amount as the cess was collected from us and we were facing many



details regarding profit or any other thing. He said that to facilitate the members of KATI regarding professional and property taxation issue a senior officer will be designated as focal person. He also told that a mobile application for tax, excise and other payments would be available in coming months.

Prior to this President KATI Sheikh Umer Rehman mentioned that Government of Sindh collects 1.25 pc infrastructure cess from industry on import goods and the amount reaches to Rs 70 billion annually. He said that industry reserves first

infrastructure issues. He urged that 50 pc of annual cess collection under the head of infrastructure should be spent for the development of industrial zones.

Zubair Chhaya said that only the tariff of Professional tax have changed and not the procedure but our members were receiving warning notices for additional information including profit and turnover details. He said this kind of harassment should not be tolerated.

Zahid Saeed said that taxation information should be arranged for industrialists and business community.

Hutchison wins 'Port/Container Terminal of the Year 2020' Award

Hutchison Ports Pakistan has been acknowledged as the 'Port/Container Terminal of the Year - South Asia 2020' Award. The ceremony was held in Dubai as part of the Global Port Forum Award 2020. H.E. Mr. Muhammad Sharaf, Assistant Foreign Minister for Economics and Trade of UAE, presented the award to Eric NG, Business Director - Middle East and Africa, Hutchison Ports.

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Rashid Jamil, General Manager & Head of Business Unit, Hutchison Ports Pakistan, highlighted that the organisation is committed to revolutionising the way trade is handled at Pakistan's shipping terminals. "Karachi is an important shipping port connecting many landlocked states with the world through sea. Streamlining operations at this terminal is imperative

because it makes up a significant chunk of the contribution to global transit of goods. This accolade is an acknowledgment of the innovative steps being undertaken by Hutchison Ports Pakistan including the introduction of state-of-the-art machinery, tools and techniques to create a hassle-free supply chain.

Commenting on the development, Capt. Syed

trade. Hutchison Ports Pakistan has had the honour of receiving this award for the first time through its demonstration of continuous innovation and introduction of efficient cargo-handling mechanisms at the South Asia Ports Terminal, Karachi.

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Dr Mughal appointed Convener FPCCI Central Committee on Insurance

Karachi: President FPCCI Mian Anjum Nisar has appointed Dr. Murtaza Mughal as convener of FPCCI Central Standing Committee on Insurance for the year 2020.

Dr. Murtaza Mughal has been authorised to nominate members in the committee who have experience and expertise in the insurance sector and he has been directed to furnish reports of the meetings of the said committee to the president FPCCI. Moreover, he has been asked to keep close liaison with the FPCCI sec-

retariat for assistance and guidance. Speaking at the occasion, Dr. Murtaza Mughal thanked President FPCCI Mian Anjum Nisar and Mian Zahid Hussain for their confidence and vowed to serve with full dedication and spread awareness about this important sector.

He said that the global economy is under stress due to coronavirus while the Pakistani economy is also facing many challenges. Industry, agriculture and services sector is not in good shape, inflation, low growth rate and inflation has

left many businesses bankrupt and million unemployed while major crops are also going down creating food security problems and export issues. He said that in such a depressing scenario, the importance of insurance has multiplied because it is the best tool to mitigate losses.

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Federal govt approves Rs23b subsidy for five export-oriented sectors

ISLAMABAD: The federal government on Wednesday approved Rs23 billion worth of subsidy for providing cheap electricity to five major export-oriented sectors in the current fiscal year by diverting funds meant for the supply of cheaper gas and utilising savings in the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP).

For the next fiscal year 2020-21, the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the cabinet also approved a subsidy of Rs20 billion for the five export-oriented sectors, which will be allocated in the next budget. The ECC approved a proposal by the Power Division for a special relief package to further continue provision of subsidised electricity until June 2020 to five export-oriented sectors, said a statement issued by the Ministry of Finance after the meeting.

Adviser to Prime Minister on Finance and Revenue Dr Abdul Hafeez Shaikh, who chaired the ECC meeting, directed that the authorities concerned should make sure that the subsidy was given only to those units that exported goods and was not availed by local industries.

He set up a committee to devise a mechanism for better utilisation of the approved subsidy. The ECC put off a decision on increasing the wheat support price by another Rs35 to Rs1,400 per 40 kilogramme – the second time in the past two months. It would meet again on Thursday to consider the proposal, which would require the reversal of its November 2019 decision when it rejected the Ministry of National Food Security's proposal to fix the support price at Rs1,400.

The ECC on Wednesday again took up a summary for electricity supply at an all-inclusive rate of 7.5 cents per unit under an agreement to

the five export-oriented sectors. Last week, it could not take a decision due to a lack of fiscal space.

Power Minister Omar Ayub Khan



and the finance ministry had refused to foot the bill in the March 5 meeting.

Later, Prime Minister Imran Khan intervened and the finance ministry finally created fiscal space by diverting funds from other areas, including cutting the PSDP. The Power Division estimated the cost of subsidy till June 2020 at Rs23 billion, excluding the impact of fuel price adjustment, Neelum-Jhelum surcharge and other fixed charges. In a summary, the Power Division proposed that out of the Rs23 billion, an amount of Rs14 billion would be diverted from the original subsidy allocation of Rs24 billion for cheaper gas supply to industries. The remaining Rs9 billion will be provided through savings in the PSDP, according to the ministry. The ECC approved the subsidy arrangement, which also indicated that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government would not be able to fully utilise the Rs701-billion PSDP.

Planning Minister Asad Umar has repeatedly said that he will ensure disbursement of the entire PSDP of Rs701 billion in current fiscal year 2019-20.

In light of the fresh ECC decision, the five export-oriented sectors would now be issued new electricity bills. Industrialists had agitated against the government's decision to suddenly send them electricity bills at double the agreed rate. The government sent the electricity bills to the export units due to a lack of fiscal space in the budget. The ECC also approved a proposal by the Ministry of Energy for two amendments aimed at ensuring ease of doing business for the upstream petroleum sector. The amendments were related to the extension of exploration licences beyond two years by the ECC rather than the minister in charge of the Petroleum Division and the creation of new Zone-1 (F) for an onshore licensing regime and consequent revision in the zonal map. Wheat support price

The ECC also discussed the proposal of increasing the wheat support price to Rs1,400 per 40 kg and would convene a special session to

discuss a detailed plan to keep flour prices at the lowest possible level throughout the year in view of any increase in the support price and incidental charges for the supply of Passco-procured wheat to provinces and allied issues related to wheat procurement by the provinces and the private sector, said the Ministry of Finance.

In November last year, the ECC approved an increase of 5% or Rs65 in the wheat support price that reached Rs1,365 per 40 kg. The wheat price had been hiked after over five years. Earlier, it had fixed the price at Rs1,350 but the federal cabinet did not endorse it and sought a review. At that time, Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Makhdoom Khusr-o-Bakht pushed for setting the price at Rs1,400 per 40 kg but other ECC members did not agree.

The ECC also approved National Telecommunication Corporation's revised budget estimates for 2019-20 and 2020-21. The ECC gave, in principle, approval to a proposal of 22.5 million Saudi riyal in equity investment abroad by Eastern Products (Pvt) Ltd, Pakistan.

The central government debt comprises long and short-term domestic debt and external debt. The central bank is also under increasing pressure to cut the policy rate, which is currently 4.75 percent, higher than the core inflation. The SBP's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) will hold a meeting next week to review the policy.

The Ministry of Finance has twice postponed a scheduled meeting of the Monetary and Fiscal Policies Coordination Board, which it called ahead of the MPC hurdle to give a direction for the monetary decision-making.

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HR activists refer to India's riots as an 'organised massacre' against Muslims

Washington: Two-thirds of the more than 50 people who were brutally killed in India have been identified as Muslims and human rights activists are referring to the ordeal as an 'organised massacre', reported The New York Times.

Kaushar Ali narrated his encounter with New Delhi police on February 24, 2020. He was on his way home, when he was met with Muslim and Hindu mobs hurling rocks at each other. Naturally, Ali turned to police officers for help. The officers pushed him to the ground and cracked his head. They started beating him,

growing mobs. Researchers allege that few officers have purposely been placed on the streets, with inadequate firearms.

A Muslim school principal in Kamataka was jailed for more than two weeks on sedition charges after her students performed a play that police officials believe was criticising of the Indian premier.

Muslims are leaving their neighbourhoods in fear – with more than a thousand already shifting into camps for internally displaced people, on the outskirts of Delhi.

Delhi police deny any bias and said they 'acted



along with other Muslims. The police laughed at them, jabbed them with their sticks and made them sing the national anthem, as the men lay on the ground, begging for them to stop. 'The police were toying with us,' he said, adding that the police said, 'Even if we kill you, nothing will happen to us.'

The eclipse of shining India India is suffering from one of the worst sectarian riots in years. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) – under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi – have openly berated Muslims.

Tensions skyrocketed after Modi's government stripped occupied Kashmir of its autonomy and imposed a strict communication blackout, on August 5.

Reports suggest that New Delhi police have actively helped Hindu mobs burn down Muslim homes, torture Muslim families and throw rocks at Muslim protesters.

Journalists of The New York Times overheard police officials yelling for guns to confront the

swifly to control law and order. Modi's annexation of Occupied Kashmir exposed 'fascist India'

After years of silence, India's Muslim population turned to the streets to protest the new anti-Muslim law – a law that eases the way for religious minorities from three Muslim-majority neighbouring nations to gain Indian citizenship, but not if they are Muslims.

'There's a method to this madness,' said a Muslim activist Umar Khalid. 'The government wants to bring the entire Muslim community to their knees, to beg for their lives and beg for their livelihoods.'

'You can read it in their books. They believe India's Muslims should live in perpetual fear.'

India has a history of torturing minorities. In 1984, the police in New Delhi stood back as mobs massacred 3,000 Sikhs. In 1993, hundreds of Muslims were killed in Mumbai and in 2002, hundreds of Muslims were brutally murdered in Gujarat.

US and Saudi Arabia suspend travel, flights several other countries over coronavirus

CAIRO: Saudi Arabia has temporarily suspended travel of citizens and residents and halted flights with several states including Pakistan, India and several other countries due to coronavirus fears, state news agency SANA said on Thursday citing an official source at Interior Ministry.

The decision also includes the European Union, Switzerland, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Sudan, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Eritrea, Kenya, Djibouti, and Somalia, source added, saying the Kingdom also suspended entry to those coming from these countries. World Health Organisation declares coronavirus outbreak as 'pandemic' Saudi Arabia also suspended passenger traffic through all land crossings with Jordan, while commercial and cargo traffic is still allowed, and the passage of exceptional humanitarian cases.

The decision excludes health workers in the Kingdom from Philippines and India, and evacuation, shipping and trade trips taking necessary precautions. Saudi Arabia has 45 coronavirus cases. President Donald Trump on Wednesday suspended travel from Europe to the United States for 30 days in a 'tough' new effort to halt the spread of the novel coronavirus pandemic that has

sparked a run on the stock market and is rapidly multiplying.

The ban will not include travellers from the United Kingdom, which



recently left the European Union, Trump said. In a prime time address from the Oval Office to a worried nation, Trump sought to quell critics who say his leadership has been lacking during the crisis, insisting that 'the virus will not have a chance.'

World Health Organisation declares coronavirus outbreak as 'pandemic' This is the most aggressive and comprehensive effort to confront a foreign virus in

modern history," he said.

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IHC issues notice to PTA in contempt case for failing to notify PECA section

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday issued a notice to the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) over the body's failure to notify rules contemplated by the legislature under sub-section (2) of Section 37 of the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) 2016.

The petition, filed by the Awami Workers Party (AWP), sought contempt proceedings against the PTA for failing to comply with the September 2019 order issued by the same court. The bench was presided by IHC Chief Justice Athar Minallah.

In 2019, the AWP approached the high court after their website was blocked by the PTA. The authority had maintained that it was empowered under Section 37 (2) of PECA 2016 to block the website. However, the bench ruled that the authority was not empowered to block any website in violation of due process and without hearing the viewpoint of the other party.

'This interpretation of Section 37 of the Act of 2016 is in flagrant violation of the fundamental rights guaranteed under the Constitution as well as the settled law enunciated by the superior courts,' read the order.

The court noted that the principles of natural justice are required to be read into every statute. It further observed that article 104 made it mandatory to observe the requirements of due process before passing any order or taking any action whereby persons could be adversely affected. 'The legislature in its wisdom by

using the expression 'shall' has manifested its intention that it is mandatory for the Authority to prescribe rules for the purposes described under Section 37(2) of the Act of 2016,' it added.

The IHC had directed PTA to frame rules under Section 37 (2) of the PECA 2016 within 90 days after the ruling. Six months on, the authority is yet to comply with the order. PTA not empowered to block any website: IHC Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act 2016 Section 37: Unlawful on-line content

(1) The Authority shall have the power to remove or block or issue directions for removal or blocking of access to an information through any information system if it considers it necessary in the interest of the glory of Islam or the integrity, security or defence of Pakistan or any part thereof, public order, decency or morality, or in relation to contempt of court or commission of or incitement to an offence under this Act. (2) The Authority shall, with the approval of the Federal Government, prescribe rules providing for, among other matters, safeguards, transparent process and effective oversight mechanism for exercise of powers under sub-section (1).

(3) Until such rules are prescribed under sub-section (2), the Authority shall exercise its powers under this Act or any other law for the time being in force in accordance with the directions issued by the Federal Government not inconsistent with the provisions of this Act.

Gender inequality in Pakistan: Only 11% of listed firms have female director

LAHORE: Pakistani companies are yet to induct greater number of female executives in senior positions to ensure gender equality because currently 50% of listed companies lack women directors on their boards. Almost 30% of the KSE-100 companies have no female director. In general, only 11% of the companies listed at Pakistan Stock Exchange have a female representative on their board of directors, stated a survey released by the Women on Board Pakistan. Women on Board is a self-funded initiative of professionals working voluntarily and aiming to ensure diversity as an important component of corporate performance. The survey, conducted for the year 2019 while setting 2016 as the base year, considered a total of 547 listed companies, of which 50 did not have any record. The survey revealed that 29% companies within the Pakistan Business Council and 41% at the PSX did not have any female director. The total number of directors in 2019 shrank marginally to 3,852, a drop of 0.44% compared to 2016. However, the number of

women directors registered a growth of 22.5%, rising from 351 in 2016 to 430 in 2019. This translates into 11% companies having women



directors whereas directorship in the remaining 69% companies still rests with males. 'There were 185 companies having women directors in 2016 and the number increased to 289 in 2019,' stated the survey. 'Similarly, 208 companies still exist in 2019 without female representation on their boards of directors. The number of

such companies in 2016 stood at 320.'

Currently, only one company in Pakistan has six female directors, the survey added. There was no company with five female directors, however, 13 companies had four women directors and 26 had three female directors.

The survey highlighted that 45 companies, which took part in the research, had two female directors while 204 companies had at least one female director on their boards. The survey also probed whether women were enjoying these key posts due to the companies being a family business or not. It revealed that the number of women directors related to each other decreased 11.9% to 281 in 2019 whereas the percentage of women directors unrelated to each other soared 365.6%, from 32 in 2016 to 289 in 2019. 'The index shall set and evaluate the performance of companies on gender development benchmarks such as hiring practices, ratio of female workforce and the number of women professionals on senior management.

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FB offers support to Pakistan for coronavirus awareness campaign

ISLAMABAD: Facebook on Thursday offered support to Pakistan in the coronavirus awareness campaign.

Special Assistant to Prime Minister on National Health Services Dr Zafar Mirza met an international Facebook's international delegation. According to a health ministry spokesperson, a comprehensive discussion was held on the growing pandemic which has claimed more than 4,000 lives world lives worldwide. Representative for Government and Public Advocacy Julian Zhu assured that misinformation regarding the COVID-19 would be removed the Facebook.

Dr Mirza said that more than 41 million people in Pakistan use Facebook. The support from the social media website would help sensitize people in the country.

First Pakistani coronavirus patient in Italy passes away On Wednesday, The World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the coronavirus a pandemic.

'We are deeply concerned both by the alarming levels of spread and severity and by the alarming levels of inaction. We have therefore made the assessment that COVID-19 can be characterised as a



pandemic,' Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a news conference. Four countries account for 93% of the nearly 110,000 cases worldwide, Tedros said. 'We are encouraged that Italy is taking aggressive measures to contain its epidemic and we hope that those measures prove effective in the coming days,' he added.