

36 brigadiers promoted as major generals

RAWALPINDI: The Kamran Tabrez Saveri, Pakistan Army Promotion board on Friday promoted 36 brigadiers to the rank of major general.

The meeting to this regard was held here at General Headquarters which was presided by Chief of Army



Staff (COAS), General Qamar Javed Bajwa, an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) press release said.

Around 25 brigadiers raised to higher rank belonged to various corps whereas 11 brigadiers were from Army Medical Corps. Those promoted include Brigadier Faheem Amer, Brigadier Rashid Mahmood, Brigadier Abdul Moeed, Brigadier Shahid Manzoor, Brigadier Arshad Mahmood, Brigadier Muhammad Afif Mansha, Brigadier Iftikhar Hassan Chaudhary, Brigadier Muhammad Umer Bashir, Brigadier Asad Ur Rehman, Brigadier Waqid Aziz, Brigadier

With two more coronavirus cases, tally rises to 30

ISLAMABAD: While two more cases of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) were reported in Pakistan on Saturday, raising the tally to 30, Prime Minister Imran Khan said he was personally overseeing the measures adopted to deal with the situation and would address the nation soon.

The first meeting of the National Coordination Committee (NCC) on COVID-19 was informed by the provinces that all decisions made by the National Security Committee on Friday had been implemented in letter and spirit.

The Sindh government on Saturday ordered the closure of all shrines, marriage halls and cinemas across the province for three weeks. Taking a policy decision, Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah also decided that educational process in seminaries and training institutes, marriage functions in clubs and public gatherings, including Urs celebrations of Sufi saints, would also remain suspended till April 5.

'I want to inform the nation I am personally overseeing measures to deal with COVID-19 and will address

the nation soon. I would advise people to follow safety instructions issued by our govt. While there is a need for caution there is no need for panic,' Prime Minister Khan tweeted.

He said in another tweet: 'We are alert to the dangers and have put in place sufficient protocols for the safety and health of our people. The WHO [World Health Organisation] has commended our efforts as being amongst the best in the world.'

Executive Director of the National Institute of Health (NIH) Maj Gen Dr Aamer Ikram, while talking to Dawn, confirmed that on Saturday two more cases were reported from Islamabad and Karachi due to which the tally had risen to 30.

'A 30-year-old woman who had come from the US to attend a marriage ceremony has been confirmed with the virus. She is in critical condition and has been put on a ventilator at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences. Another patient confirmed in Karachi is also a woman who had travelled to Saudi Arabia,' he said. The NCC meeting was

chaired by Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Health Dr Zafar Mirza and attended by the four chief ministers through video link, SAPM on Information Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan, the director general of Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), federal Finance Secretary Naveed Kamran Baloch, chairman of the National Disaster Management Authority, surgeon general of Pakistan and others.

A participant, requesting not to be quoted, said that the provincetold the meeting they were prepared to deal with any untoward situation. 'It was also informed that all border crossings had been closed for two weeks. However, only Indian pilgrims will be allowed to visit Kartarpur. Arrangements at points of entry are being further improved. People don't have to get panic and facilities have been set up across the country to test suspected patients of the virus,' he said.

According to an official statement, Dr Mirza said a coordinated national response to safeguard the health of people of Pakistan was under

way. 'The federal and the provincial governments and relevant agencies are working in unison to meet the challenge. All 1196,' he said. 'We are following international best practices strictly in all aspects of our response, be it in screening of travellers at not panic and fight this challenge as one nation by protecting ourselves through simple precautionary measures and educating communi-



educational institutions including madaris will remain closed for students and staff for three weeks. Incoming travellers at Kartarpur would be allowed after proper screening. The ministry of information, the ISPR and the Ministry of National Health Services will jointly work to keep the public informed on coronavirus. People are being provided guidance and necessary assistance through helpline points of entry, laboratory tests of suspected patients, establishment of quarantine facilities, preventing cross-border spread of the virus or surveillance,' Dr Mirza said. 'Incoming travellers from affected countries are being screened and followed up. A quarantine facility has been established at Pakistan-Iran border at Taftan. Necessary measures have been put in place at the Afghan border at Chaman,' he said. 'We must

Countries bolster virus defences as Spain reports 1,500 new cases

PARIS: Governments around the world ramped up the battle against the new coronavirus on Saturday by shutting borders and promising cash injections, as Spain emerged as a global hotspot registering more than 1,500 new infections just 24 hours.

A week that saw schools and businesses shut down



indefinitely, millions of travellers barred from crossing borders, celebrities and politicians become infected and the whole of Italy locked down ended with a flurry of announcements.

American President Donald Trump declared a national emergency and announced a \$50 billion package as the death toll in the US rose to 50, with similar measures being taken by governments from Austria to Canada on Saturday. The president's 30-day

ban on travellers from Europe also came into effect on Saturday, a day after the final plane loads of European passengers flew into Los Angeles.

European nations meanwhile ramped up border controls, with foreigners forbidden from crossing into Russia from Norway and Poland. Denmark and the Czech Republic also announced stringent restrictions.

Square and streets from Milan to Madrid were deserted as government calls to stay at home were heeded by most Italians took to singing to each other from their windows to beat the social isolation, others organised rounds of applause. The World Health Organisation (WHO) confirmed Europe as the epicentre of the pandemic on Friday after a dramatic slump in new cases in China, where the virus first emerged in

December last year. Attention has suddenly shifted to Spain, which has more than 5,700 cases, and Italy with more than 17,000. Iran too confirmed another huge jump on Saturday to almost 13,000 cases, making it the world's third worst-affected country from a virus that has infected more than 140,000 people globally and killed more than 5,000. Bailouts to come? The human cost is rapidly being matched by the economic cost financial markets endured a rollercoaster ride all week with spectacular losses triggered by fears of a global recession followed by huge gains after government spending pledges. Companies nounced drastic measures to help tackle the virus US tech giant Apple closed all of its stores outside China until March 27, with CEO Tim Cook saying he had learnt from steps taken in China. One of those lessons is that the most effective way to minimise risk of the virus's transmission is to reduce density and maximise social distance,' he said. British Airways meanwhile became the latest global firm to hint at drastic action to come, with CEO Alex Cruz telling staff to expect job losses.

Pakistan to participate in SAARC video moot on coronavirus

ISLAMABAD: The government has said that it will participate in a video conference of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) leadership to combat the coronavirus pandemic that has killed over 5,000 people globally.

In a tweet posted late Friday night, the Foreign Office (FO) - while responding to a proposal by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, calling for a "strong strategy" to combat COVID-19 - said that Pakistan "will be available to participate in the video conference of #SAARC member countries on the issue".

'The threat of #COVID-19 requires coordinated efforts at [the] global and regional level. We have communicated that SAPM on Health will be available to participate in the video conference of



#SAARC member countries on the issue,' FO Spokesperson Aisha Farooqui said. Farooqui's response came hours after Prime Minister Modi extended his offer. 'I would like to propose that the leadership of SAARC nations chalk out a strong strategy to fight Coronavirus. We could discuss, via video conferencing ways to keep our citizens healthy. Together, we can set an example to the world, and contribute to a healthier planet,' he had tweeted. Various media reports observed that Prime Minister Modi's offer was unexpected given the fact that his government

PML-N, Opp have split narratives, says Firdous Ashiq Awan

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Information and Broadcasting Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan Saturday said the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz lacked a unanimous



narrative as its own members had been demanding the return of its leader Shehbaz Sharif from abroad.

'The PML-N believes in only one narrative which is to conceal assets and evade

have also sent notice to its leader who laid foundation of 'Changa Manga' politics in the past.

'The PML-N members are matchless who by securing their personal gains, have devoured the national economy, growing richer at the cost of poor public. They have also pushed the people into a 'quagmire of loans' by transferring money through TTs (Telegraphic Transactions),' she stressed.

The special assistant said the people got rid of the PML-N government by standing against its fascistic rule.

The special assistant said it was evident from the history that both the PML-N and Pakistan People's Party had only admitted the results of those elections in which they stood victorious.

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### Increase in GSP Plus

THE European Union has extended the Generalized System of Preferences-Plus (GSP-Plus) status for Pakistan, enabling the country to continue to enjoy preferential duties on exports for the next two years. Making the announcement in this regard, Advisor to Prime Minister on Commerce Abdul Razak Daud thanked the EU institutions for allowing the country to avail itself of the status and also applauded federal and provincial authorities and Ministry of Commerce's treaty implementation cell for striving hard to meet the GSP plus obligations. The decision has deeper meaning and significance for Pakistan because of its economic and political benefits and the message that it sends to all concerned. Pakistan had lobbied hard to win the GSP-Plus status that is contributing to the cherished objective of poverty reduction and good governance. Since the grant of GSP-Plus in 2014, Pakistan's exports to the European Union have enhanced from 4.538 billion euros in 2013 to 7.492 billion euros in 2019, registering an increase of 65 per cent. The main sectors that benefited from GSP-Plus have been textile and garments, which besides earning foreign exchange for the country, provided employment opportunities, especially for females. Pakistan is passing through a difficult economic phase and by extending the application of the scheme, the European Union has adopted a sympathetic approach to help overcome the crisis. It is also a vote of confidence in the policies being pursued by the country especially the progress made by it in implementation of the relevant conventions. The latest assessment report of the EU has appreciated Pakistan in taking positive steps in the areas of climate change, forestation under billion tree tsunami project, improved vigilance to combat illicit narcotics.

Abdul Khaliq  
Pakistan's avowed enemy India from across and into our borders. Tears cannot help rolling down listening to the songster, realizing we can never pay back what our defenders continue to render as these emblems of defiance and undeterred martyrdom are not a commodity you can buy in the open market. But one is ashamed to endure the kind and level of response from Pakistan's political leadership offering nothing more than lip service to our valiant Armed Forces with which it claims to be on the same page, more significantly in succumbing to undue and uncalled for pressure at the international level from our so-called allies as well as the Islamic brotherhood and bringing to naught the sacrifices being rendered by defenders of motherland. The latest revelation was a news break over BBC late last week that the downed and captured Indian Pilot Abhi Nandan during last February's encounter with India was released promptly by Pakistan after receiving threats initially emanating

from India but mouth-pieced through the Saudi Government that it would not stand with Pakistan if it did not de-escalate by releasing the pilot forthwith. The news finds corroboration with Donald Trump responding to a questioner in Hanoi on the incident saying, 'you will soon hear some good news' promptly after the swift retort by Pakistani Air Force to Indian abortive incursion into Pakistan's side of Kashmir. This was instantly followed by the Pakistani Prime Minister announcing release and return of the Indian pilot, ostensibly as a goodwill gesture from the floor of the House of Parliament amid tailored applause, but criticized in the media by discerning analysts and the general public besides the Opposition which opined that even if it were to be a goodwill gesture it should not have been made in undue haste. The British Broadcast newsbreak gains currency as it has not been met with a forceful rejoinder rejecting the story and overriding it with its own version for world consumption, which severely dents the Pakistani

feat. Is it not ironic that instead of keeping your performance flag flying high among the colony of nations, you brushtreat pride of your defenders and bring to naught the performance of the Pakistani Air Force by bowing down to unsavoury pressures? Pakistan must harbour no illusions about strategic and concrete support either from its imperial ally deserting at critical moments, or that of its Muslim lackey like Saudi Arabia which has not upheld the religious bond in the manner the custodians of the House of God need to do in these moments of worldly tribulations. That the committed followers of the faith will be far and few is a revelation made in the Holy Scriptures; more specifically and repeatedly reiterated in the Bible, Taura and the Holy Quran. Isolation, in a world given over to expediencies against the ever-watchful eye of the Providence, is nothing to fear or shy away from as after all it is not a bad deal if earned in pursuance of your true and dedicated resolve of upholding your sovereignty and integrity.

These few in the eternal world will stand alone as they do even in this temporary human abode. The Prime Minister! Your call and desire to match Pakistan with the States of India and Indonesia is a noble thought, and one must reject voices mocking at the idea by comparing it with your Government performance in a matter of months. But having said that, you certainly need to match your words with at least an unambiguous road-map which shows a modest but concrete beginning in that direction at home, and a fearless and uncompromising resolve and outlook in dealing with the outside world as do Turkey, Malaysia, Iran and North Korea whose leadership is recognized and known far more than any other developing nation, precisely on that count. Your claims not to fall foul in fighting other's wars should not just mean refusal to act as mercenaries lending bases and strategic help to others, but also not to succumb to pressures such as those from Saudi Arabia which prevented you from attending the well-meaning moot in Malaysia meant to emancipate the world against Islam phobia, and premature release of the downed Indian pilot. One must not get carried away by Donald Trump's words of public praise on Indian soil for Pakistan's positive role in combating terrorism which was largely aimed at ensuring Pakistani support over the crucial settlement with Afghan Taliban, the effect of which he promptly neutralized in his joint Statement with Modi endorsing his right to defend and respond to imaginary terrorist attacks and arming India to teeth against Pakistan and China. Such is the myopic duplicity of the US Assistant Secretary of State Alice Wells, that rather than announcing clamping of sanctions against India for underfunded tampering of fundamental human rights, pig-headed discriminatory treatment and treachery against the Muslim majority in its occupied territory of Kashmir, and warning the BJP Government over anti-Muslim Delhi outbreak of rioting caused by RSS sleuths concurrent to Donald Trump's visit to India killing over a dozen and injur-

ing hundreds of Muslims, desecrating mosques and setting their houses and properties on fire, she instead had the cheek to ask the hapless Muslim population on the receiving end, to show restraint. Pakistan as usual failed to forcefully react and condemn the orgy or bring it to the call attention notice of the UN and the world community. Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenei's 8-year old Pakistani senator Hadya Hashmi's heart rending crooning of Sufi Tabassum's emotion-filled eternal verse 'Aey putar hatane nain wikhay' that reminds all Pakistanis of their invaluable being of the Pakistani menin uniform and their meek sacrifices in blood they render in defending the motherland against evil machinations of Khamenei's latest warning to India against continued massacre of Muslims in India and Kashmir is an immutable example of shunning expediency and disregarding any pressure. Courtesy: PO

### Stable economy

Abdul Malik  
Pakistan's Annual GDP growth rate of 2019, agriculture, forestry and fishing contributes to 11% of 53% of total GDP. Cotton is Pakistan's prize crop and since the invasion of locusts in June 2019, about 40% of crops have been destroyed by the incursion which mainly included cotton of course. Pakistan's economy mainly consists of cotton and textile as Pakistan

has an agrobased industry and the destruction of crops in 2019, and now 2020, the cotton production has decreased by 19%. According to the US Department of Agriculture, the growth rate of cotton exports was 66.67% in the year 2019 and this is not so bad if the percentage is considered but if we look back to the growth rate in 1993, the percentage was 72.94% and in the same year Pakistan was plagued by the same attack. And right now, due to lower tempera-

ture in Punjab, locusts are making their way to the farms over there and this time the situation is worse and the reason is that the locusts' type is the most notorious one i.e. (Schistocerca gregaria) and these locusts are the ones which caused significant losses to crops in West Africa in the years 2004-5 and had an adverse effect on the food and land security in the affected region. Pakistan can lose hundreds of acres of land, if the problem is not tackled the

right way. Pakistan's account the food crops this time). The economy of Pakistan, God forbid, can be in a shambles, considering the fact that the stock market and businesses are already facing numerous issues. So there's a really high chance that the growth rate of Pakistan is going to be really low this year. According to the report of Pakistan Cotton Ginners' Association (PCGA), there was a 21.09% decline in the cotton production in the year 2019. Punjab, being the



### IGP Mushtaq Mahar launches Zainab Alert mobile app

KARACHI: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Mushtaq Ahmed Mahar formally launched an indigenous mobile app to save the lives of future generations through the use of current Information Communication Technology (ICT). He commended the efforts put in by the project team members to develop an excellent app that is user-friendly and free of charge. Sindhi Police Chief hoped that soon more such apps will be included in Zainab Alert System, to address other problems like checking of the vehicle on the go and use of ICT to identify criminals through facial recognition, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning.

IGP Mushtaq Ahmed Mahar mentioned that efforts of our young engineers were being recognized and letters of appreciation would be given to project members and the police headquarters would facilitate them to produce more results. Also present on the occasion, CPLC Chief Zubair Habib mentioned, 'The App is a joint venture of the Sindhi Police, CPLC and volunteers from all concerned departments, members of civil society, Officers /Staff of Sindhi Police and guests from CPLC along with volunteers. Addressing on the occasion, IGP Mushtaq Ahmed Mahar highlighted the importance and need of such a mobile app to save the lives of future generations through the use of current Information Communication Technology (ICT). He commended the efforts put in by the project team members to develop an excellent app that is user-friendly and free of charge. Sindhi Police Chief hoped that soon more such apps will be included in Zainab Alert System, to address other problems like checking of the vehicle on the go and use of ICT to identify criminals through facial recognition, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning.

2020 has also been passed by the Senate and this app would fulfill the requirement of 'Establishment of Zainab Alert System' for reporting missing children. Zubair Habib expressed his confidence that launching of this app from Karachi would soon expand to nationwide. 'The role of media in raising awareness about the App is the need of the hour,' he said. KARACHI: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Mushtaq Ahmed Mahar formally launched an indigenous mobile app to save the lives of future generations through the use of current Information Communication Technology (ICT). He commended the efforts put in by the project team members to develop an excellent app that is user-friendly and free of charge. Sindhi Police Chief hoped that soon more such apps will be included in Zainab Alert System, to address other problems like checking of the vehicle on the go and use of ICT to identify criminals through facial recognition, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning.

### Seminar calls for portraying women equally and exclusively in media

KARACHI: There is the need to portray women in media equally and exclusively at par with men so that they can play their due role in national development. The recent slogan 'Mera Jism Meri Marzi' was spotlighted wrongly by electronic media as in fact, it was just aimed at saving women from sexual harassment. Electronic media directly needs to train its anchors and reporting staff so that they can highlight women's issues positively and played a major role in women empowerment and safety, hence, they should follow the suit. Noleed politician and former MPA Mahtab Akbar Rasidi said that electronic media needed to adopt ethics and give respect to women. 'It is matter of great concern that these days, people are being disgraced in talk shows of electronic media while assemblies had also become a bad place for disgracing each other. There are no ethics at all at both places. Society should change its mindset that is hitting women hard.'

### Police book husband for burning wife, four-in-laws to death

KARACHI: The Hyderabad police have booked the suspect who allegedly killed his wife, her mother and 3 sisters by setting their flat in Hyderabad SITE area on fire on March 9. SITE police station SHO Mazhar Soomro said on Friday that the accused Arshad Dero was produced before the local court that granted his 3-day physical remand for further interrogation. The FIR had been registered on the state's complaint under section 302 of Pakistan Penal Code previous night. Earlier on Thursday, SSP Hyderabad Adeel Hussain Chandio told media persons that the March 9 incident of fire was an act of arson. He informed that the police had arrested the suspect Dero who confessed during the investigation that he committed the crime. According to Chandio, Dero was the husband of 26-year-old Reshma, who was one of the victims and eldest among the four sisters who burnt to death along with their mother in that incident. The SSP had told that Dero poured petrol from under the gap of the main door of the flat which was located in Labour Square Apartments, adjacent to the Federal Board of Revenue's regional office in the SITE area. The SSP said the police would nominate Dero in the FIR which was lodged at the SITE police station on the state's complaint.

### City gets 12,000 coronavirus diagnosis kits from China

KARACHI: China sent at least 12,000 diagnosis kits to Karachi on Tuesday as the city witnessed a sudden increase in coronavirus cases. The testing kits were a part of the special relief package that also included pesticides to control the spread of locusts in the country. As per China's authorities, the country would continue its relief efforts to curb the spread of both coronavirus and locust infestation, going on since the end of last year, in Pakistan. A part from the diagnosis kits, the cargo includes 14 stop at a safe distance and was sent in all around before being approached. China sent at least 12,000 diagnosis kits to Karachi on Tuesday as the city witnessed a sudden increase in coronavirus cases. The testing kits were a part of the special relief package that also included pesticides to control the spread of locusts in the country. As per China's authorities, the country would continue its relief efforts to curb the spread of both coronavirus and locust infestation, going on since the end of last year, in Pakistan. A part from the diagnosis





### PM-L-N leaders say will support creation of new provinces

MULTAN: Pakistan League-Nawaz (PML-N) senior leader Shahid Khaan Abbasi on Saturday urged all political parties to work together for the establishment of new provinces, saying the incumbent government is properly allegedly bought illegally from a government entity more than 34 years ago.

"The government is so obsessed with the media that it has used every tactic to put curbs on it," he said. Abbasi said that this is not



the PML-N by putting its leadership behind bars," he added.

Addressing the reporters, Ahsan Iqbal said that the opposition would offer unconditional support to the government if it was serious in establishing the

only applicable to Mir-Shakur Rahman and that there is a war between the media is bad.

"His (MSR) newspaper portrays the truth. They tried to pressurise him to stop him from telling the truth. And when they failed, the government made a fake case against him," he said.

"They (government) cannot bear criticism. All of you must have seen that they have shifted GEO News to the last numbers (on cable TV)," he said.

"What happened the day before yesterday (Thursday), I believe is the darkest chapter in the history of Pakistan's democracy," he noted. The former premier vowed that in these times of distress he would stand with the media fraternity.

Shedding light on the cases made against the PML-N leadership he said: "Imran Khan has not been able to prove corruption against us, even after 1.5 years of PTI-led government." "They cannot scare

### Coronavirus: CAA suspends flight operations from several airports

KARACHI: The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has announced that flight operations from several airports across the country will remain suspended after the total number of confirmed coronavirus cases reached 31 on Saturday.

The CAA said that international aircraft operations will only be available to and from Jinnah International Airport in Karachi, Islamabad International Airport and Allama Iqbal International Airport in Lahore.

The notice stated that operations from all other airports will remain suspended to control the



spread of Covid-19. March 23. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has already declared the outbreak of Covid-19, a mysterious pneumonia-like disease caused by the coronavirus, a pandemic.

### Pakistan Post touts increasing revenue

ISLAMABAD: The revenue of Pakistan Post has witnessed an increase of Rs7 billion in a year after the Pakistan Tehreek-e-



Insaf (PTI) government came into power, government sources have said.

According to officials, the government had taken many steps to minimize the loss of state-run postal services in order to compete with private couriers.

He said the revenue of the department was on the rise which was proof of the fact that postal business was not on the decline.

"Under the e-commerce initiative, Pakistan Post also offers partnership

### Court orders NAB to allow family's meetings with Mir Shakilur Rehman

LAHORE: An accountability court on Saturday directed the National



Accountability Bureau (NAB) to facilitate the meetings of Jang Group editor-in-chief Mir Shakilur Rehman with his family members according to the law. Rehman was arrested by the anti-corruption watchdog on Thursday when he appeared before NAB in a 34-year-old case relating to a 54-kanal land allegedly allotted to him in 1986 by then-Punjab chief minister Nawaz Sharif.

The court had on Friday granted NAB 12-day physical remand of Rehman. On Saturday, Rehman's son Mir Ibrahim Rehman, mother, Mrs

### Pakistan Railways rolls out plan to tackle virus threat

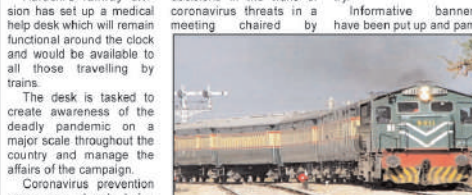
LAHORE: Pakistan Railways on Saturday has made major decisions in the wake of coronavirus threats in a meeting chaired by Minister of Railways Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed.

Karachi's railway division has set up a medical help desk which will remain functional around the clock and would be available to all those travelling by train.

The desk is tasked to create awareness of the deadly pandemic on a major scale throughout the country and manage the affairs of the campaign.

Coronavirus prevention sprays are already being sprayed in all the trains before and after arrival at major stations in the country.

Informative banners have been put up and pamphlets have been printed that are to be handed out to all passengers before boarding their respective trains.



A separate ward has also been designated to specifically deal with possible coronavirus cases at Pakistan Railways Hassan Hospital in Karachi cantonment.

Railways on Saturday has made major decisions in the wake of coronavirus threats in a meeting chaired by

### For Chinese, US visa halt puts jobs, citizen hopes at risk

BEIJING: Courtney Huang fell in love with the US as a nursing student in Texas. She ended up staying 13 years and wants to become a US citizen.

But Huang now finds her job, future and dreams of citizenship on the line since the Trump administration barred entry last month to non-US citizens and residents flying in from China over the coronavirus outbreak.

With crucial deadlines looming, her plans look increasingly bleak.

"I'm really scared, Huang said. I have a lot here. If I don't go back, it's just going to be very difficult.

The US suspended visa processing in China on Feb 3, citing limited staffing during the virus outbreak. No deadline extensions have been announced and its not known when the suspension will be lifted.

That's put hundreds of Chinese citizens applying for US work visas in limbo, fretting as their jobs look increasingly at risk.

Huang had returned to China to see her parents over the Lunar New Year holiday in late January. She had recently landed a new job in California and her work visa was on the verge of approval when the American Consulate in Shanghai announced it was returning everyone's passports.

After weeks of fretting and weighing her options at her parents home in eastern China, Huang flew to Thailand. She now plans to wait out a mandated 14-day self-quarantine before seeing if she can get her visa from the US Embassy in Bangkok.

Though Huang was born and raised in China, her whole life is now in Oakland, California, where she has an apartment, car, friends and job. With her Christian faith and gregarious, outspoken manner, the US feels like home.

I feel like I fit in better there. Free speech, free religion, Huang said. Clear air, better career opportunities for women and a liberal social environment were also draws, she added.

Huang obtained a nursing degree in Texas, then a masters degree in biotechnology from UC Berkeley. She's on the verge of completing an MBA, with an eye towards settling permanently.

Now, Huang is concerned those plans could fall apart. Though her new



employers, a company that provides clinical support for physicians, are understanding, Huang worries that as the months go by, there's a possibility she may lose her job and with it, her right to work in the US.

Like Huang, Kevin Yang, a Chinese doctoral student researching immunology at an American university, is also reconsidering his options. After moving to the US eight years ago, Yang has returned home each winter holiday and had his student visa renewed without a hitch.

This year, though, Yang became one of many Chinese citizens caught up in the brutal tussle between Beijing and Washington over trade and technology.

When Yang applied for a visa in December, the State Department told him it was being delayed while they investigated his background for ties to the Chinese government.

American officials have in recent years grown alarmed over the alleged theft of US technology by China, casting a cloud of suspicion on Chinese citizens like Yang who work in

the sciences.

Told the check would take four weeks, Yang changed his flights and prepared to stay longer.

Then in late January, the Chinese government began locking down whole cities to contain the virus. Soon after, Trump announced the US travel ban. Yang got his passport back in the mail with no visa.

American officials told Yang's academic adviser that since Yang no longer had a visa, they could no longer pay his stipend or fund his research with federal grant money. Hospital surveys that Yang said he spent thousands of dollars and thousands of hours over two years to set up were now in peril, something he described as a crushing blow.

Maybe it's time for me to start thinking about an alternative career, Yang said, mulling the possibility he won't be able to finish his Ph.D. Its like restarting my life.

Discouraging high-skilled foreigners from immigrating could undermine the US economy and its global prominence, said Anastasia Tonello, former president of the American Immigration Lawyers Association.

Nearly 2.5 million Chinese were in the US as of 2018, according to the nonpartisan Migration Policy Institute, and most are significantly better educated than the average American. China is also the main source of foreign students enrolled in US higher education.

Justice Athar Minallah.

In 2019, the AWP approached the high court

### IHC issues notice to PTA for failing to notify PECA section

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday issued a notice to 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



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 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 10A made it mandatory to observe the requirements of due process before passing any order.

### PM gives go ahead to five-year trade policy, says Razak Dawood

ISLAMABAD: The federal government is going to make fundamental changes in trade policies following the approval of the five-year Strategic Trade Policy Framework (STPF) by Prime Minister



Imran Khan, said PM's Adviser on Commerce Razak Dawood.

The PM aide said the new policy will cover 26 sectors and the government will provide an incentive to the value-added sectors. He said the current average duty drawback is 3 per cent which will be modified for some traditional sectors, such as engineering, pharmaceutical, auto parts, processed food and beverages, footwear, gems, chemicals, meat and poultry, fruits and vegetables, seafood and

### Coronavirus: Sindh schools closed till June, NSC summoned

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Thursday called an emergency meeting of the National Security Committee (NSC) on Friday to chalk up a strategy in wake of the surge in cases of the deadly coronavirus in Pakistan, as the Sindh government announced that all educational institutions in the province will remain closed till May 30, 2020.

The NSC meeting will be attended by the chief ministers of all four provinces along with the defence, interior and foreign ministers. PM's on health Dr Zafar Mirza, economic adviser Abdul Hafeez Sheikh, media adviser Firdous Ashiq

payment of refunds to the exporters.

At present, the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) deals with duty drawback and sales tax refunds whereas the Ministry of Commerce deals with Drawback of Local Taxes and Levies (DLTL). However, these subjects will be transferred to the State Bank of Pakistan under the new trade policy framework.

He said that there was anti-export bias in the country, adding that there was no culture of taxes, levies and surcharges where export culture existed. The drawback has not been revised for the last eight years, he added.

He mentioned that the incentives on duty drawback will not be available for the textile sector. "We have not witnessed growth in the textile sector," he said, adding that the government will have to move away from the textile sector.

The global textile volume amounted to \$637bn whereas engineering and chemicals had \$2 trillion volume each, he added.

positive for the novel coronavirus. The first confirmed case in GB was of a 45-year-old woman, who arrived from Iran a few days to Gilgit before she was diagnosed. According to data shared by the National Institute of Health (NIH), over 0.8million people were screened, out of which 271 were suspected cases. Upon tests, 21 people were tested positive out of a total of 471.

On the other hand, a meeting of the Sindh provincial cabinet chaired by Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah decided that summer vacations were being preponed in Sindh and all schools in the province will reopen on June 1.



## Detection of new coronavirus cases in country heightens concerns

KARACHI: The detection of two new cases of the coronavirus in Karachi on Saturday prompted the Pakistan Medical Association (PMA) to ask the National Database and Registration Authority (Nadra) to come up with a strategy to prevent transmission of the virus at its crowded centres and the Sindh government to order closure of all shrines, wedding and cinema halls across the province for three weeks.

Urging Nadra to help prevent possible spread of the virus through centres, the PMA said the places were visited by hundreds of people daily.

'As the government has banned public gatherings across the country to contain the spread of the virus, Nadra should come up with a plan to avoid long queues at its centres,' said Dr Qaiser Sajjad representing the PMA. The authority, as a precautionary measure, should also provide a facility to its visitors to wash their hands with soap or clean them with a sanitizer before and after registration via the biometric system, he added. He also shared concerns over reports that private laboratories were conducting the test for the coronavirus and the government should intervene in this matter.

'It has come to our knowledge that some labs are privately doing the coronavirus test. Since it's a sensitive test, the government shouldn't allow any facility to do this test without getting a no-objection certificate

from it,' he added. The association suggested that the government strengthen its screening process put in place at the airports and border entry points of the

country and that isolation and quarantine facilities should be improved and expanded. All isolation facilities should be equipped with ventilators. We already have acute shortage of ventilators and it's important given the fact that the infection can cause serious respiratory illness,' he said.



Meanwhile, the Sindh Health Department has announced two new cases of coronavirus in Karachi, raising the total tally in the province to 17. One of the two cases is a 38-year-old man who has arrived from Saudi Arabia a few days back. He was tested

positive on Saturday. This brings the total number of cases to 17 in Sindh out of which two patients have recovered and sent home and 15 are under treatment,' said Meeran Yousuf, the media coordinator to the health minister. Meanwhile, Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah decided that educational process in madrassahs and training institutions, marriage functions in clubs and public gatherings, including use of sanitary people would also remain suspended till April 5.

He directed the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) to take lead in developing taluka-wise data of the families so that in case of any emergency such as lockdown people could be reached for their food, medicines and other related supplies and help. The chief minister issued these directives while presiding over the 17th meeting of the task force on the coronavirus and another meeting of the PDMA. The chief minister said that since the novel coronavirus had become endemic, his government had no option but to take drastic measure to control the situation and save our people. It is high time to close the cinemas, marriage halls, shrines and urs programmes being observed there and even we can't allow marriage function at clubs,' he said. 'Yes, people can hold marriage functions at a limited level at their homes. Mr Shah directed the chief secretary to issue a notification for imposing a ban on such gatherings. I am sure people of this province will strengthen my hands in containing coronavirus,' he said. 'As and when situation is improved, we would reverse our decision of banning social and religious gatherings. WB support The chief minister said that the World Bank had agreed to divert its \$10 million fund for its Sindh Resilience Project to Coronavirus Support Programme being launched by the Sindh government.

## Two new polio cases reported in KP, Sindh

ISLAMABAD: Two new cases of poliovirus have been detected in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and in the province of Sindh on Saturday. In KP's Khyber district, a three-year-old girl was diagnosed with the poliovirus. She was previously administered polio vaccine during the anti-polio campaign.



This is the seventh polio case reported in Khyber district and 16th in the entire province. The overall tally of polio cases across the country reaches 29. On Mar 12, two more polio cases were detected in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, raising the total tally of cases across the country to 29. Meanwhile, the Sindh Emergency Operation Centre for polio confirmed one new polio case for the year 2020 in District Nowshero Feroz. This takes the total tally of Sindh to 9 and Pakistan to 30 for the current year. According to a statement released by the EOC, a four-year-old girl - experiencing weakness in her facial muscles among other symptoms since February 23 in UC Lalia - contracted the polio virus. So far the child has received seven doses of oral polio vaccine (OPV) according to parents with no inactivated polio vaccine (IPV) administered, as investigation is still in progress. In KP's Khyber district, a three-year-old girl was diagnosed with the poliovirus. She was previously administered polio vaccine during the anti-polio campaign. This is the seventh polio case reported in Khyber district and 16th in the entire province. The overall tally of polio cases across the country reaches 29. On Mar 12, two more polio cases were detected in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, raising the total tally of cases across the country to 29. Meanwhile, the Sindh Emergency Operation Centre for polio confirmed one new polio case for the year 2020 in District Nowshero Feroz. This takes the total tally of Sindh to 9 and Pakistan to 30 for the current year.

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## MQM-P slams PPP govt for giving urban jobs to rural Sindh citizens

KARACHI: The Mutiahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan on Saturday once again accused the Pakistan Peoples Party-led Sindh government of being 'corrupt, biased, and racist' and demanded that the National Accountability Bureau launch probe into government jobs given during the past 10 years by the provincial government.

The party also warned that the 'injustices' if continued would only lend credence to the call for a new province in Sindh.

Speaking at a press conference here, MQM-P convener Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui said that the urban areas of Sindh had been facing 'economic terrorism' during the over 11-year rule of the PPP as the provincial government had snatched all municipal and service delivery functions to mint money.

He alleged that the PPP government had appointed 'favourite' officials in the Sindh Public Service Commission (SPSC), made illegal appointments in the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board by extending its jurisdiction and now posted 73 police officials of Larkana to Karachi. He said that the Sindh government wanted to create a law and order situation by depuling non-local police.

He said that the PPP government transferred officials from rural parts of Sindh to Karachi and then filled the vacant posts of rural areas by the

people of its own choice since the SPSC had been 'plagued' by corruption and nepotism. He said that the government had



'Sindh friends' as to how long they would be deceived in the name of Sindh. 'The sense of insecurity and deprivation within the people of urban Sindh could turn into sense of alienation,' he warned. He said that the MQM-P would not only raise the issue of injustices with the people of urban Sindh before courts and in assemblies, but it could also stage sit-ins outside the offices of the SPSC, deputy commissioners and CM House.

Senior MQM-P leader Kanwar Naveed Jameel said on the occasion that his party had signed a memorandum of understanding with the federal government and one of the points was pertaining to formation of a commission comprising Supreme Court judges to investigate the wrongdoings and injustices meted out to the

people of urban areas of Sindh in jobs in the name of so-called quota system. He demanded NAB to hold investigation into over 100,000 government jobs meant for the people of urban Sindh but were actually given to the people of rural Sindh during the last 10 years. Senior leader Amir Khan said that after some positive developments in the way of Khwaja Izhair's constitutional petition against taking government jobs to the people holding 'fake' domiciles and permanent residence certificates of urban Sindh the biased government of Sindh had spent the plundering of urban Sindh's resources.

He warned that the MQM-P would take to streets and if injustices would not stop it would accelerate its struggle for a separate province in Sindh. Khwaja Izhair also posed a question as to why the Sukkur Institute of Business Administration was making recruitments on government jobs for urban areas of Sindh. He demanded that the head of Sukkur IBA resign since he had become 'controversial' the plundering of urban Sindh's resources. He warned that the MQM-P would take to streets and if injustices would not stop it would accelerate its struggle for a separate province in Sindh. Khwaja Izhair also posed a question as to why the Sukkur Institute of Business Administration was making recruitments on government jobs for urban areas of Sindh.

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## 'Our faith gives us confidence to face our fears'

KARACHI: 'I am confident coronavirus will stay clear of me and I will stay clear of harm's way because when I was leaving home my mother read a few ayat from Quran Sharief before blowing on me to protect me from any kind of misfortune, especially infectious diseases,' Bilal Mohammad Hussain, an express bus driver, told Dawn on Saturday while waiting for the passengers to board his bus near Empress Market.

When asked about the ayat, Hussain said he wasn't sure 'but I know it is in Surah Al-Baqarah, on page 27 of my mother's copy of Quran.'

Having overheard our conversation, Mohammad Rashid, the ticket seller sitting at the counter, pulled out his smartphone to play the ayat for us. 'I have been reciting it myself,' he said. 'But yes, our faith gives us confidence to face our fears. We are also taking precautions such as mopping the bus floor with phenyl and antibacterial solutions before the passengers get on board,' he said, adding that the cancellation of flights to all except three big cities of the country had diverted many passengers to them.

'Since the domestic flights are only running between Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad,

to the extent of cancelling international flights and partially close the airports but it is yet to lift its threatening head at our railway stations,' joked a Pakistan Railways official at the inquiry desk of the Cantonment Railway Station. He said that although the station platforms and train compartments had been fumigated twice since the morning, and they have put up awareness posters and distributed awareness flyers, they were working as if nothing was wrong.

This is a busy public place and we are working here with hardly any protective measures. The scouts administering polio drops to children lock clean wearing masks but what about us? We have no protective masks, no hand sanitizers. We are quite exposed, actually, he said. He also added that since the cancellation of flights to most cities of the country, they had also been seeing a class of passengers who were not normally seen at train stations. The Clifton and Defence gentry is also heading here to catch the train and Pakistan Railways is doing well, actually. Although we wish it did well in different circumstances,' he said. The Clifton gentry could not be missed. Although some of them had missed their train



people are getting off in the city nearest to their destination and then taking the bus. So there is more pressure upon us. I have sold double the amount of tickets for buses headed to cities such as Hyderabad, Larkana, Jacobabad, etc. than I do in a day,' he said. When asked if they had anyone to check people's temperature or anyone to distribute protective disposable masks or any literature or flyers regarding awareness about the spread of COVID-19, the ticket seller shook his head. 'I think people already know a lot by now thanks to the media. They are themselves quite careful. If they see anyone coughing or anyone with a runny nose, they refuse to sit near him or her on the bus,' he said. 'But that person has also bought a ticket so also needs to travel. Therefore, we change seat for whoever has a problem with sitting near the person but we don't offload him or her,' he informed. On pointing out that in case, God forbid, what if the person might really be infected and is a risk for others, a passenger about to board a bus said that he had felt the lines and wellness come from God Almighty. 'When we have faith in Him, He will also protect us. Besides, Pakistan is a Muslim country. The majority is Muslim here. We pray five times a day and before saying our prayers we do our ablutions which helps wash away viruses and bacteria,' he said. At Gantt station 'Coronavirus may have reached our country's airports but they go

and looked rather confused at Platform No 1 along with their luggage.

The schools are closed and we were taking the kids to Punjab because they are bored at home. Punjab is safe because it is clear of coronavirus, we hear,' said Fayyaba, who was also busy telling someone over the phone where to find them and bring the car to pick up their luggage besides taking them backhome. 'We are not used to travelling by train. And we didn't realise that the train departing from the station was the one we were to board. I thought trains in Pakistan are always late,' she laughed. Other passengers were waiting for their respective trains at the station. When asked why they wouldn't wait to traveller and had opted to travel privately now when there was such a huge risk of catching dangerous virus, Dr Mohammad Arshad, who was there with his family, smiled and said: 'I am not going to lock myself up from fear of catching anything. Confinement is like a punishment for me. Ask! Then if it would have been better to have taken precautionary measures and maybe wear a protective mask, he said that he thought the masks were substandard and not good enough to protect one from coronavirus. Meanwhile, a young couple, Mohsin and Naila, was fusing over their three-year-old daughter Zainab, trying to make her keep her protective mask on.

## Remand of building owner, three SBCA men extended till March 16

KARACHI: A judicial magistrate on Saturday extended till March 16 the physical remand of the owner of a multistorey building that collapsed in Gulbhar recently and caused death of 27 persons.

The remand of his alleged accomplice and three officials of the Sindh Building Control Authority (SBCA) was also extended.

After the end of their first remand, the investigating officer produced Mohammad Taved, Mohammad Younus and the three SBCA officials deputy director Sarfaraz Jamali, assistant director Maqsood Qureshi and building inspector Irfan Alifkarachi. A judicial magistrate on Saturday extended till March 16 the physical remand of the owner of a multistorey building that collapsed in Gulbhar recently and caused death of 27 persons.

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After the end of their first remand, the investigating officer produced Mohammad Taved, Mohammad Younus and the three SBCA officials deputy director Sarfaraz Jamali, assistant director Maqsood Qureshi and building inspector Irfan Alif before the judicial magistrate (Central) and sought extension in their custody for further questioning.

The IO submitted that during interrogations, Javed disclosed the names of some more SBCA officials and others who allegedly helped him in construction of the building. He further maintained that a letter



had been sent to the SBCA director general to also make those officials part of the investigation. A lawyer for victims also moved an application requesting the magistrate to make the wife and daughter of Javed accused in the case since the building/plot was on their names. The magistrate remanded the suspect in police custody till March 16 and directed the IO to produce them again with a progress report on the next hearing. According to the prosecution, the

five-storey residential building collapsed on March 5, resulting in the death of 27 people and causing injuries to over 20 others. The building was owned by Javed, who himself was engaged in the

business of construction and he had constructed the building in question on plot Number 195 in Gulbhar-2 area, it added. The police nominated the owner as well as the officials of the building regulatory watchdog posted in the area in the case. A case was registered under Sections 322 (manslaughter), 119 (public servant concealing design to commit offence which it is his duty to prevent), 337-H (punishment for hurt by rash or negligent act), 427 (mischievous causing damage to the amount of fifty rupees), 109 (abetment) and 34 (common intention) of the Pakistan Penal Code on behalf of the state. TV anchor's murder case A sessions court on Saturday expressed annoyance over the repeated absence of a defence lawyer in a case pertaining to thepe and causing injuries to over 20 others. The building was owned by Javed, who himself was engaged in the business of construction and he had constructed the building in question on plot Number 195 in Gulbhar-2 area, it added.

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