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Appointment of special envoys mulled to highlight Kashmir issue globally

Islamabad: FM Qureshi said that 214 days have gone past since the Himalayan territory has been under lockdown and the Indian government was involved in the human rights abuses of indigenous people.

The Narendra Modi-led government revoked the semi-autonomous status of

demning New Delhi's August 5 unilateral move.

Speaking on the occasion, Senator Mushahid said that the intolerant attitude of the Indian government is a threat to peace and stability of the region.

FM Qureshi said that 214 days have gone past since the Himalayan territory has been



Occupied Kashmir on August 5, 2019 after sending tens of thousands of troops in the already heavily-militarised disputed region to quell any uprising against New Delhi's illegal and unconstitutional move. The region remains under siege ever since with almost a complete information and communication blockade, while top local political leaders are in detention. The Modi government is now reluctantly easing the draconian curbs after drawing flak from the international community.

FM Qureshi said that parliament of several countries passed the resolutions con-

under lockdown and the Indian government was involved in the human rights abuses of indigenous people.

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13 dead, 30 injured as five-storey residential building collapses in Karachi

KARACHI: At least 13 people died and dozens others sustained injuries when a five-storey residential building in Karachi's Gulbaha area — formerly known as Golimar — collapsed on Thursday.

Metropolitan Cooperation Director Medical and Health Services Dr Salma Kausar confirmed that 13 people had been died in the accident.

At least 32 people sustained injuries and two of them with serious wounds have been shifted to the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre (JPWC), she added.

"The lists of all those injured and dead in the building collapse have also been placed outside the hospital," the medical officer said.

There is no shortage of the medicine, she added.

According to Abbasi Shaheed Hospital MLO Dr Sohail Khan, five women and two children were among the deceased.

Police and Sindh Rangers personnel also reached the incident site to assist in the rescue effort. Locals were seen digging through the rubble and were trying to rescue those trapped.

Families of the victims, however, express dissatisfaction with the rescue efforts.

A contingent of engineers from the Pakistan Army has also arrived at the scene to assist rescue officials. Initial reports suggest the building was constructed two years ago.

Taking notice of the incident, Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah directed Commissioner Karachi Iftikhar Ali Shahwani to ensure people are safely recovered from the rubble.

The chief minister also sought a detailed report, questioning whether the building was a legal construction.

In January, the city administration directed the Sindh Building Control Authority (SBCA) to vacate the 382 residential buildings declared 'dangerous'.

The majority of the earmarked buildings are located in Saddar, where 295 residential buildings have been declared dangerous. Meanwhile, 44 buildings are in Lyan. Out of the 382 dangerous buildings, 339 were located in South district, 14 in East district and 10 in Central district.

SBCA official Ashtar Dawar lamented that evacuation notices had been served to the buildings' owners but they were not implementing the orders of the building control

authority.

At least 14 people were killed and several others injured when a five-storey residential building in Karachi's Gulbaha area — formerly known as Golimar — collapsed on Thursday.

According to Police Surgeon Dr Qamar Abbasi, the bodies of 14 victims have been brought to Abbasi Shaheed Hospital, while at least 17 injured have been brought to the same facility.

Rescue workers are still engaged in efforts to remove the debris and rescue people trapped under the rubble.

Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah took notice of the building collapse and directed Commissioner Karachi

ensure that rescue and relief operations to be executed smoothly the area.

Karachi Mayor Wasim Akhtar, while taking notice of the incident, ordered that the injured should be provided the best possible medical care.

Inspector General of Police Mustaqbal Khan has also directed Central Senior Superintendent of Police Mohammad Arif Aslam Rao to head the rescue operation in the area, a police press release said.

A contingent of police and rangers was dispatched to the area to help with the rescue operation as a number of area residents gathered in the



street.

Sindh Governor Imran Ismail took notice of the building collapse and asked Commissioner Karachi and Sindh Building Control Authority to compile detailed reports on the incident.

The chief minister also asked for a detailed report on the buildings' construction to be completed after the relief operations are concluded.

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This is a developing story that is being updated as the situation evolves. Initial reports in the media can sometimes be inaccurate. We will strive to

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Pakistan's sixth coronavirus case emerges in Karachi

KARACHI: Another coronavirus case was reported in Karachi on Thursday, pushing the total number of COVID-19 cases to three in Sindh and sixth in the country.



A 69-year-old man who returned from Iran on February 25 was tested positive in Karachi.

Minister of State for Health Dr Zafar Mirza has confirmed the case in his tweet.

"The patient is in clinically stable condition in Sindh and is being well taken care of," he added. The patient is admitted to a private hospital of the metropolis, he added.

Confirming the third positive case in the city, the Sindh government's spokesperson said that Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah had directed the health department to shift the family members of the patient in an isolation ward and also screen those who were in contact with the Iran-returned man.

Of the sixth confirmed COVID-19 cases in Pakistan, all had a history of travel from Iran. Three of the cases are in Karachi and three in Gilgit-Baltistan. The virus has spread to more than 30 countries, killing over 2,700 and infecting at least 80,000 — mostly in China. FM Qureshi also thanked his Iranian counterpart for condemning the recent wave of violence against Muslims in India on Tuesday. Zarif in his tweet had urged Indian authorities to ensure the wellbeing of ALL Indians and not let senseless thuggery prevail.

QUETTA: Pakistan is closing one of its two border crossings with Afghanistan for a week to prevent the spread of coronavirus, officials said on Sunday. The announcement comes a day after Pakistan detected two new cases of the virus bringing the total number of infected patients to four.

The Pak-Afghan border at Chaman would close from Monday (today) for seven days "in order to prevent the spread of coronavirus on both sides of the border in the best interest of the people."

of the brotherly countries", said a notification issued by the Ministry of Interior. During the period, necessary measures will be taken to safeguard the health of the people of both countries.

There are growing fears in Pakistan — sandwiched between China and Iran, both hotspots for the disease — over how the country would deal with the outbreak.

Iran coronavirus death toll rises by 15 to 92

Qureshi also assured Zarif

of Pakistan's all-out support in containing the spread of contagious disease. Both the ministers also agreed to jointly take measures against the epidemic of COVID-19 which has spread to more than 30 countries, killing over 2,700 and infecting at least 80,000 — mostly in China. FM Qureshi also thanked his Iranian counterpart for condemning the recent wave of violence against Muslims in India on Tuesday. Zarif in his tweet had urged Indian authorities to ensure the wellbeing of ALL Indians and not let senseless thuggery prevail.

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13,000 schools closed in Sindh, Says Education Minister Saeed Ghani

KARACHI MARCH 06: Sindh Education and Labor Minister Saeed Ghani has said that out of 49,000 public schools across the province, 13,000 are closed while there is a short fall of 37,000 teachers. In the past, some schools were built on wrong plans that are closed. Educational institutions have shut down as a preventive measure to prevent the spread of the Corona virus. He said most countries around the world have banned public gatherings and closed educational institutions. Saeed Ghani said there were two cases of corona virus in Sindh. A large number of pilgrims from Iran have come to



Pakistan via Taffan, Balochistan. The Minister said that symptoms of Corona virus appear in 14 days. The health of these families and children has been reviewed and educational institutions have been spread in accordance with the precautionary measures. In response to another question, he said that false information was being circulated on social media regarding the Karuna virus. The government is providing accurate information and nothing is being hidden. He expressed these views while talking to the media after appearing in a case related to the lack of teachers in some schools in Tando Allahyar in Sindh. High Court in Hyderabad on Thursday. Saeed Ghani said that there are changes in the cabinet around the world. The party leadership and the Sindh Chief Minister make decisions in this regard. Saeed Ghani said, "If I am the Minister of Education at the time, I would not do anything new. The things that were done well by the previous Minister Sardar Shah and later by the Chief Minister have continued. Here are some things and ideas and improvements I'm working on." Responding to another question, Saeed Ghani said that all provinces make their budgets under the target: reduction in revenue in the federal government and lowering of their share of provinces affect development work. He said that last year, the province received less share of the province.

He further said that the Pir

included in the curriculum as a national hero.

Sardar Abdul Rahim, general secretary of the Pakistan Muslim League Functional Sindh, was addressing a press conference at Karachi Press Club here on Thursday.

Addressing press conference PML-F's leader further said that the K-4 project should be completed immediately in order to providing water to citizens of provincial capital of Sindh.

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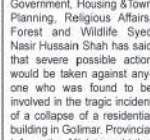
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Nasir Shah vows action against involved in incident of building collapse

KARACHI MARCH 06: Sindh Minister for Information, Local Government, Housing & Town Planning, Religious Affairs, Forest and Wildlife Syed Nasir Hussain Shah has said that severe possible action would be taken against anyone who was found to be involved in the tragic incident of a collapse of a residential building in Golimar. Provincial Information Minister said that Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah had also taken immediate notice of the incident and sought a report from Commissioner Karachi and the concerned officers of the Sindh Building Control Authority. He said he would personally supervise the investigation of the incident. Syed Nasir Hussain Shah said this while visiting the locality of Golimar where the five-storey residential building fell on Thursday. The provincial minister for Information and Local Government said



best possible medical treatment. Syed Nasir Hussain Shah during his visit to the spot met with the people and assessed the damages caused by the collapsed of the building. Talking to the media, the Minister promised a thorough probe into what he

the departments of Sindh Building Control Authority, Karachi Municipal Corporation, as well as officials to Provincial Disaster Management Authority reached the spot immediately and rescued the people. The Minister said.

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Chief Editor
Fida Hussain

Editor
M. Murtaza

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Email: dailykarachitimes@gmail.com
info@dailykarachitimes.com

Website: www.dailykarachitimes.com

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Coronavirus spreads

It is distressing to note that the new strain of coronavirus is spreading across countries at an alarming speed, at a time when the Chinese premier had reassured the world that the virus would be under control soon. Instead, even more deaths are being reported from mainland China, where the total number of cases has swollen to over 77,000 a massive uptick since the virus was first reported in December 2019. Meanwhile, South Korea and Italy have seen a sudden increase in the number of cases in recent days.

Especially worrying for Pakistan, all four of its neighbours have now recorded cases of Covid-19 within their borders, with the Afghan health ministry confirming its first case in Herat yesterday, after three men who returned from their travels from Iran were tested and placed under quarantine. Iran itself is struggling to contain the outbreak of the virus, particularly in Qom. A global health catastrophe that has claimed more lives than the previous SARS scare of the early 2000s, the news will unfortunately continue to be peppered with a generous dose of xenophobia and politicking, but fear of the virus is not irrational. As the death toll in Iran keeps increasing though the exact figures continue to be debated, Afghanistan, Turkey, Armenia and Pakistan have now imposed travel restrictions and closed their borders with the country, fearing that the outbreak will spiral out of control without strict measures in place to restrict the movement of people crossing boundaries. In fact, it is a rather remarkable fact that, so far, Pakistan has yet not reported a single case, despite fears being expressed by some that the virus may already be here. If such a contagious illness were to enter the country, one can only imagine the toll it would take on the already overburdened and under-resourced healthcare system. It will be a massive challenge for the government to combat the virus, as Pakistan is already struggling to end diseases which pest the world eradicated many years ago such as polio.

Fariha Hyder

THERE is considerable excitement in Pakistan, especially in official quarters' over the Afghan peace deal. From taking (some) credit for the impending deal to the vindication of Islamabad's stand, there has been considerable celebration that is bound to grow louder with time.

However, at the same time there is a quieter wave of concern over the uncertainty that faces Afghanistan and what it will mean for Pakistan. This is less obvious at the state level a government trying hard to gain international approval is not going to point out the slips between the deal and peace where the mood is

one of celebration.

But the lack of official acknowledgment does not mean that the less savoury aspects should be ignored altogether.

Earlier, this disquiet about the future was about the ability of the Afghan Taliban and Kabul to reach a deal, now it is about whether and how this phase will begin. For the dispute over the presidential election in Afghanistan is heating up, the election commission may have declared Ashraf Ghani the president but his main contender Abdullah Abdullah has refused to accept this result.

For the moment, it seems as if there is going to be no 'peaceful' transfer of power and this will have lasting implications for the peace talks and not just for the existing political dis-

Destination

ension that was put in place post the invasion of Afghanistan, as the deal with the US is to be followed by an intra-Afghan dialogue.

The first is of considerable importance, for the power elite that was and had invested in the post-Taliban setup now stands divided, with the non-Pakhtun leaders backing Abdullah Abdullah. For example, Dostum, an ethnic Uzbek, has backed Abdullah Abdullah, as has the Hazara-dominated party. A similar situation had emerged after the previous election but then the US had brokered a deal between Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah.

This time around, no one is sure if Washington will play such a role, which is why already there are some naysayers who are

conjuring up scenarios similar to the 1990s violence, bloodshed, infighting and a central government reduced to Kabul. Worse still, the 1990s brought infighting within the Afghan elites to a point where the warring factions destroyed the capital city as they fought each other. But perhaps such a scenario may not be as certain and as close as some fear. Hard as it is to predict the White House under Trump, it would still be in its interest to make efforts to broker a post-election government in Kabul.

For one, so far the US seems committed to an intra-Afghan dialogue and this will only be possible if there is a government in Kabul for the Taliban to have a dialogue with. In a rapidly changing scenario, it has been reported that

the Ghani government will announce a negotiating team to talk to the Taliban. But there are no indications how the opposing side will welcome the move, while the Afghan Taliban have already said that they will not accept a team which is not inclusive. This is reason enough for Washington to push the contenders in Kabul to come to an agreement.

Indeed, the US is the only power which has the clout to do so. Second, for the moment, the US is also not contemplating a complete withdrawal ala the Soviet Union. It has been reported repeatedly that the deal with the Afghan Taliban has included American control of bases where troops, or operatives, will continue to be based although their exact role in the country remains

unclear. The continued US presence means continued support/facilitation for a peace process, which again means outside pressure for a government in Kabul recognised by all those who stood against the Taliban post 9/11 just Kabul which can be influenced by Washington. The behaviour of the Afghan Taliban will also be dependent to some extent on the US. The latter too, will be interested in pursuing a dialogue and keeping the violence within acceptable limits (if one can be crass enough to assume there is a level of violence that is acceptable) because it would be keen to ensure the American forces present are under no pressure or compulsion to step outside the bases in Afghanistan. Courtesy-PO

The global deficit

Niaz Murtaza

THE world faces many current and looming shortages of water, energy, land and even clean air. They have less to do with population growth than with the inequitable distribution of resources, as a small minority hogs/destroys more and more of them.

But no deficit is as crucial as the intellectual deficit the world faces today. This means an absence of globally accepted ideas for structuring economic, political and social life, and interaction within and across human societies to lead to equitable and environmentally responsible progress.

Faith in democracy, capitalism and international

moral principles, the holy trinity of ideas that has underpinned life for the last one century, is fast reducing, leading to increased conflicts nationally and globally.

This is not the first time humanity has faced such a challenge. On each past occasion, conservative tendencies to amass power, wealth and prestige at the expense of others created huge conflicts, which were then resolved by the application of the liberal principles of rule of law, cooperation and democracy.

The 1648 treaty of Westphalia was one such early instance. Just before it, Europe had been ravaged by prolonged wars among several states spread over decades which had caused the

death of around eight million people as different strands of nobility fought to increase their wealth and power.

Under the treaty, a new system of political order emerged, based upon peaceful coexistence, respect of territorial rights and non-interference in others' domestic affairs. It is seen by many political scientists as the beginning of the modern international political order based on the idea of sovereign nations. It reduced warfare in Europe.

But this peace led to overseas conquests by European powers in the form of brutal colonialism and the simultaneous, quick spread of capitalism, democracy and science the three bedrocks of modern civilisation.

Relative peace lasted for a couple of centuries and was first disturbed by Napoleonic forays. It collapsed completely in the early 20th century due to renewed warfare in Europe and beyond. While capitalism, democracy and science had produced much progress, huge problems resurfaced as conservative urges again struggled to break free of liberal civility. Capitalism degenerated into a neoliberal form that produced huge economic inequality but little social protection. Democratic ideals came under attack from autocratic systems like fascism and Nazism. Efforts to forge international political order under the aegis of the League of Nations failed. Racism and xenophobia became wide-

spread. These conservative tendencies unleashed two world wars and a great depression.

Humanity again turned towards liberal principles after the Second World War to recover from the ravages caused by conservatism's ascent. Liberalism duly obliged by providing the ideas of social democratic capitalism nationally which ensured a fair share to all classes and an international political order based on the rule of law under the UN institutions. This system provided for the ascendancy of human rights and mutual cultural respect, and led to relative peace and prosperity despite the rise of the communist bloc as a challenger. There were many problems even with this

system, with massive poverty in developing states. But at least it provided a framework where these problems could be tackled.

It wasn't the communist challenge that led to the collapse of the post-Second World War order, but the rise of conservative urges again in the West under the leadership of three conservative US presidents. Reagan took the lead in the collapse of social democratic capitalism by unleashing the forces of neoliberal economics which have led to economic inequality and climate change. Bush Junior led an unprecedented attack on global institutions by acting unilaterally in economic and political spheres. Courtesy-PO



Aurat March: Call for equality ruffles feathers in Pakistan

KARACHI: With International Women's Day around the corner, preparations for the 3rd annual Aurat March are in full swing across the country. An Islamic republic, 'Slogans like 'mera jism, meri marzi' (my body, my choice) are vulgar expressions and an Islamic society like Pakistan has no space for such



including women rights activists, writers and intellectuals have objected to JUI-F's stance on the march and have instead announced their support for it. 'We will not bow down or succumb to extremist pressures. The Aurat March will take place in Sukkur, Karachi and other cities of the province as planned and women will march for their rights come what may,' said Dr Arfana Mallah, a women's rights activist from Hyderabad.

Speaking to The Express Tribune, JUI-F Sindh secretary general Maulana Rashid Soomro said that they are not against the Aurat March or the independence of women, but it is the 'vulgarity' in the name of any event which his party condemns and has protested against. 'We are peaceful people and none of our workers will come to the streets or create a riot. We have only appealed to the provincial authorities to not allow events where vulgar slogans like 'mera jism, meri marzi' and 'khaana khud garam kero' (warm up your food yourself) are chanted,' commented Soomro. 'Islam is the first religion to offer rights to women and we stand by them. We talk against honour killing and child marriages; killing and child marriages; we also demand equal rights for women. How can we be against women's cause? We just want the Aurat March organisers to avoid slogans which go against the teachings of Islam,' he added.

Not bowing down On the other hand, multilateral political parties and members of civil society

JSSF demands opportunities for poor in private schools

Karachi: Jeay Sindh Students Federation (JSSF) president Ashraf Kalhoro demanded on Tuesday that the Sindh government impose a ban on private educational institutes, which he held responsible for 'the existing disparity in education' and 'discriminating' against the poor.



As an alternative, he suggested that if the government could not meet the demand, then strict measures should be taken to reduce the tuition fee at private schools so that the underprivileged too could acquire quality education. Addressing a press conference, he said that private educational institutes charged exorbitant fees, which prevented the poor from acquiring education. He claimed that among 'all 250 private educational institutes of Larkana division, none had admitted any poor children,' and said that 'white-collar mafia, in the form of private institutes, had ruined the education system.'

from March 8 to March 19. He also criticised the Sindh government for its 'lack of will and interest' in improving the situation and claimed that large-scale corruption in the education department had further aggravated matters.

'The education standards [at public schools in the province] have declined to such an extent that now even the poor do not want their children to study at government institutes,' he was reflected, adding that the current state was reflective of the 'alarming situation.' The JSSF president warned that if action against such institutes was not taken and none of the demands were met, JSSF would hold protests across Sindh, from March 8 to March 19.

Schools in a bind over admit cards for matric exams

KARACHI: With the ongoing closure of educational institutions, school administrations found themselves in a fix on Wednesday after the Secondary Education Department issued the schedule for the issuance of admit cards for matric examination candidates. The schedule stated that schools may collect the admit cards from the board office between March 5 and March 9, after the Sindh Universities and Board Department gave orders for the examinations to be held on time despite the closure.

On the other hand, the Sindh Education Department has ordered strict compliance with the Sindh government's orders to keep schools closed until March 13, to lower the potential spread of coronavirus. To ensure compliance, education department teams have been carrying out visits to private schools on a daily basis. While the exams are scheduled to begin on March

16, delivering the admit cards to Grade 9 and 10 students is apparently impossible.



students whose cards are held back by the board offices. In this scenario, the

Private school administrations claim that the admit cards cannot be delivered to students before March 13 even if the schools collect the cards from the board offices, as schools must remain closed till the given date. Another concern is even if they summon students to collect their cards on March 14 and March 15, there would still be thousands of

students must clear the offices' objections in order to obtain the cards, which is nearly impossible to do in a day or two.

However, secondary school education director Hamid Karim stated that the process of delivering the admit cards to students was not a big deal. 'Stating that it could be done in a couple of hours, he said that if the matric board had issued the school.

SHC to ask SBP, finance ministry about IMF loan

KARACHI: The Sindh High Court (SHC) issued on Monday notices to the attorney general, State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), Ministry of Finance, and other relevant authorities over a plea challenging the constitutionality of the third instalment of loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). A bench comprising Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Yusuf Ali Sayeed was hearing the plea. The petitioner, Barrister

Alli Tahir, maintained that the government had issued a press release for the collection of \$452 million as the third instalment of the loan. Tahir claimed that according to the law, the government can only take a loan up to 60 per cent of the country's total gross domestic product. He moved the court to restrict the government from taking the third instalment of the loan as it had already borrowed a hefty amount from the IMF. However, the court

rejected his request to immediately issue a stay order to the government. Justice Mazhar remarked that the court would first inquire about the matter from the government and only then decide whether steps needed to be taken. The court issued notices to the relevant authorities, seeking replies by March 19.

Another bench, comprising Justice Naadeem Akhtar and Justice Adnan Karim



Karachi: Khalil Jibran presenting cake to renowned anchor person Hussain Thebo on his birthday.



Karachi: A group photo of officials and members of council with Chairman District Council Karachi Salman Abdullah Murad during the inauguration ceremony of community center at Mai Garhi UC.



CAPTION: A Group Photo lunch in honour of Canadian businessman Andy Merchant, Arshad Abrar and Kalim Siddiqui from Toronto hosted by S M Munir, Chief Petron UBG at local hotel. Abdul Haseeb Khan, Mazhar Ali Nasir, Nadeem Khan, Salman Aslam, Noor Ahmed Khan, Abdul Sami Khan and other guest seen in the picture.



Karachi: Nauman Sikandar Mirza MD & CEO Foodpanda receiving Food Excellence Awards 2019, on best delivery solution from Manzar Naqvi Chairman Food Excellence Awards (FEA), at his head office. Award was announced at Sindh Governor House in November 2019 but Nauman was out of Pakistan at that time. Mushtaq Changezi Director Project FEA also seen in the picture.



Karachi: On the occasion of Surprise day organized by Ghazi Pakistan Foundation, Air Commodore Syed Nihal, Abid Rizvi and Brigadier Haris Nawaz presenting Shield Umair Ahmed Arain, Raja Ghulam Mustafa Bhutto also present.



Chairman DMC East Moied Anwar receiving award on best performance on Maharam UI Haharam and Rabiul UI Awwal from Pak Mahram Association.



Karachi: Al Mustafa Welfare Society organized a free medical camp for dental treatment at Abdullah Sports Tower Hyderabad with collaboration of Rotary Club Qasimabad Kahkashan and Trunk wala, group photo of doctors and other paramedics with secretary information Moin Khan, Imran Khan, Suresh Kumar and others.

Journalist Waseem Bhutto's anniversary celebrated

By Ghulam Mahdi Lund LARKANA: 28th Birthday anniversary of journalist



Muhammad Waseem Bhutto celebrated at BITE family Hall and fun land Larkana. On that occasion, the president of Larkana Press Club Murtaza Kalhor, Ex President of Larkana Press Club S Iqbal Babu and senior journalists namely Naveed Larik, Jawed Shah, Abdul Khalik Mugheri, Hanif Suhag, Rasheed Samo, Salfar Sindhi, Zulfiqar Langah, Nadir Abro, Shah Muhammad Lashari, Nawaz Mangi, Kamran Sangi, Ali Gul Detho, Jani Soomro and others attended the event.

President of Larkana Press Club Murtaza Kalhor and Ex President S Iqbal Babu also visits newly structured Family Hall and Playland and meets with the owner of Family Hall and Playland.

TDAP's Consultation with Exporters for the new GSP Scheme of the UK

Karachi: The UK Government is developing its own scheme for the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) to become effective from January, 2021 after completion of the transition period for Brexit. Additionally, the UK is also undertaking a review of its current MFN tariff regime for its further rationalization. They have sought inputs from Pakistan for designing of the new scheme which will maintain the current level of preferential access available to Pakistan under the EU's GSP/GSP Plus scheme.

GSP scheme more user friendly, improving trade between the UK and Pakistan, and address any issues being faced on the Pakistan side under the current EU-GSP scheme.

During the consultative session specific areas relating to the GSP regime and MFN tariffs as well as avenues for improving overall trade and cooperation between the UK and Pakistan were covered. This included broad parameters for the new GSP scheme and MFN tariff rationalization, origin certification system and rules of origin, standards and compliance, and possible avenues for improving trade with the UK which the third largest export destination for Pakistan's products. The TDAP is planning to hold similar consultative sessions with trade bodies and exporters during the next week on 9th, 10th, and 11th March, 2020 at Lahore, Faisalabad and Sialkot, respectively.



Nigerian Foreign Minister Received Pakistani Envoy Bronai Ahmed Ali Sarohi

Nigerian Foreign Minister Received Pakistani Envoy Bronai Ahmed Ali Sarohi. The Pakistani Head of

he also praised Nigerian role in OIC contact group on Kashmir. The minister said that they reiterate their

tries. he also recalled assistance to equip Nigerian armed forces and train them. the undersigned



stand on Kashmir and wish to see the issue resolved up to the expectations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. The minister thanked Pakistan for supporting Niger in all hard days including current relief assistance. He wished to visit Pakistan at the earliest and expected also high level visits between two countries.

informed him that the same were forwarded to the concerned quarters for consideration.

The foreign Minister said that his counterpart may kindly be conveyed his best wishes and compliments. He said that he was looking forward to welcome Pakistani foreign minister at OIC ICFM.

58 arrested, foreign brand liquor, drugs recovered

KARACHI: As many as 58 suspects including absconders and drug peddlers were arrested by City police in past 24 hours during raids in different parts of metropolises.

The police also recovered 9 pistols along with number of rounds, 338 bottles foreign liquor, 2.665 Kg Charas, different types Gutk/Mawa (Chewing tobacco), 6 Huka with flavours, 3 cell phones 3 vehicles and 1 motorcycle from the possession of suspects, said a spokesman Karachi police.

The arrested were identified as Omair Kumar son of Nathan Dad, Saifullah son of Imran, Manzoor son of Shah Hussain, Zahid son of Haras, Ramgan son of Imran, Talah son of Khadir, Moghis Hassan son of Shahwani, Noor kamran son of Hazoor, Murtaza Khan son of Mastan, Hamza son of Javed Kayani, Faizullah son of Naseebullah Nazamuddin son of Maqsood, Rehan son of Dinul Salgaam, Mehmood son of Yaseen, Fahad Shah, Muhammad Ibrahim son of Muhammad Zahid, Sobia Khan son of Zafarullah Khan, Muhammad Irfan son of Iqbal Hussain, Muhammad Asad ulah son of Muhammad Anwar and Afaq son of Saqib.

The police has registered FIRs and further investigation is underway.

Mukhtiar Leghari posted Executive Program Manager of PTV Karachi

Karachi: Senior Producer of Pakistan Television (PTV) Mukhtiar Leghari promoted in group 9 and posted as Executive Program Manager of PTV Karachi Center. It is reported here on Thursday.

According to the details Mukhtiar Leghari had taken his charge and started his work on new designation and also started new dramas from Karachi Center. Daily



Karachi Times learned.

Govt providing equal opportunities domestic women: Shahla Raza

KARACHI MARCH 06: Sindh Minister for Women Development, Syeda Shahla Raza said that 40 goal girls successfully completed vocational training to gain employment opportunities would allow thousands of domestic skilled women across the province to access the markets besides furthering their skills. Addressing a ceremony organized by Standard Chartered Pakistan, in partnership with Right to Play to recognize girls from underserved areas that have been trained to become future economic leaders in their communities. Syeda Shehla Raza said that

workers and skilled women were playing vital role in national and provincial development. It was imperative that we take further steps to address gender equality. Under the Sindh Union Council and Community Economic Strength Support (SCESS) program, the Sindh government was providing support to more than 2 million skilled women, while plans to expand the program to 7 million women in the future was underway. Syeda Shahla Raza said that through the SCESS program, domestic skilled and poor women were being financially stabilized.

Women workers announce big rally

Karachi March 6: Strongly condemning a hatred-based propaganda against women, leaders of women, workers, political, social organizations and civil society announced here on Thursday to stage a big rally of women worker in the metropolis, Karachi, on March 08, to celebrate the international women's day. Addressing a crowded press conference here at the Karachi Press Crated Club (KPC), they said the day of March 8 is being celebrated in whole world historically to pay homage to the heroic struggle of women workers. Women in whole world on this day raise voice for their equal social and economic rights and gender justice. They said it is sad that reactionary and undemocratic forces, who are afraid of awareness of women and already have started a hatred-based evil propaganda against

women. These elements do not want to see progress and empowerment of women in society. Recently, these elements have started threatening to stop the women's day program with use of force. Moreover, in some districts administration is also refusing to give permissions to women marches on pretext of corona virus. They said in every democratic society it is a right of citizens to express their views and talk about their problems in a peaceful manner. They appreciated that the Lahore High Court (LHC) in a recent judgment has accepted this right of citizens, upholding the constitution. The speakers said the leaders of Home-based Women Workers Federation (HBWWF) are getting direct and indirect threats and being asked not to organize and hold programs and marches on the women's day. They said they have

already communicated to the concerned authorities about these threats. They announced that despite these threats and dangers thousands of women would hold their programs scheduled on March 08 and later would participate in a huge rally. In this rally Hari women, glass bangle women workers, home-based women workers, lady health visitors, teachers, students and women belonging to other walks of life would actively participate along with male workers. They said the basic objective of staging the women workers rally is to struggle for making a society which is free from economic and gender exploitation and male supremacy. It would also highlight the demand that women's liberty and economic independence should be accepted and gender-based wages difference.



Meeting with Former President KCCI & Chairman Businessmen Group Mr. Siraj Kassam Teli and Former President, Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industries Mr. Younus Bashir along with Yousuf Prince, Muzammil R. Chappal, Akhtar Ismail, Khawar Noorani, Farhan Ahmedani. We appreciate Mr. Siraj Teli efforts for business community and leadership qualities to solve the issues of big and small Businessmen and Industries in good manner so it is a great opportunity to join BUSINESSMEN GROUP (BMG) unconditionally.



Karachi: Muhammad Atif Hanif Billu and Hamad Pona wala presenting Mask to vice president of photographers Javed Hanif at press club.



Karachi: Ilyas Memon president of Tariq Road Traders Alliance presenting shield to Dr Seeman Jamali executive director Jinnah Hospital.

Economic Coordination Committee fails to agree on cheap electricity for exporters

ISLAMABAD: The federal government on Wednesday could not agree on the provision of subsidised electricity to textile exporters due to refusal by the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Power to foot the bill and also put off decision on 38% increase in electricity prices for Karachi consumers.

The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the cabinet decided to take up the matter of providing cheap electricity to exporters in its next meeting.

Headed by Adviser to PM on Finance Dr Abdul Hafeez Shaikh, the ECC directed Minister for Economic Affairs Hamid Azhar and Minister for Power Omar Ayub to sort out the subsidy issue.

On February 27, Azhar announced that the government had reached an agreement with all stakeholders of the textile export sectors that addressed their concerns and also ensured that no additional financial burden would be put on the Power and Finance Divisions in the current and next financial years.

However, Ayub stated in the ECC meeting that his ministry did not have funds to provide a subsidy of Rs28 billion to the exporters. Provision of subsidised electricity by collecting the difference from domestic and commercial consumers was also not possible in the current circumstances, he said.

The Ministry of Finance also refused to provide additional subsidy for the exporters.

In January last year, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government had agreed to charge 7.5 cents per unit from the export-oriented sectors but two months ago the power distribution companies started applying higher rates. The exporters threatened to go on strike against the hike

in electricity cost, forcing the government to sit and negotiate.

The ECC also established a committee to review the decision of

38% or Rs4.87 per unit in K-Electric's tariff that will go up to Rs17.69 from Rs12.82 per unit across the board for 11 quarters from Jul-Sept 2016 to



increasing power tariff for K-Electric consumers by Rs4.87 per unit or 38% on account of previous years' adjustments. Some ECC members, including Railways Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmad, opposed the decision.

The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) has approved an increase in tariffs for the period July 2016 to March 2019. The ECC constituted the committee to examine the issue in detail and come up within a week with a solution and road map for resolving the issue, according to the finance ministry.

Total revenue impact of the tariff hike of Rs4.87 per unit is nearly Rs100 billion. It was proposed during the meeting that instead of fully passing on the tariff determined by Nepra, the government should allow an increase of Rs2.87 per unit and absorb the remaining impact. There was also allocation in the budget for picking the price differential.

Nepra has approved a hike of Jan-Mar 2019 under the quarterly adjustment formula. The ECC put off decision on providing subsidised electricity to agricultural tube wells in Balochistan.

The Ministry of Energy had sought a further extension in the supply of subsidised electricity till June 2020.

The ECC was briefed that nearly 30,000 agricultural consumers in Balochistan had been given subsidy since 2015 with 40% of the burden borne by the federal government and the remaining 60% by the Balochistan government.

However, the recovery of dues from farmers for the electricity consumed over and above the subsidy limit had been negligible and attempts to recover the arrears from defaulters had not been successful. The ECC discussed the issue in detail and formed a committee. The federal government was contributing Rs3 billion annually to the subsidy on tube wells.

The ECC also approved a host of measures to encourage and facilitate overseas Pakistanis in sending remittances through official banking channels. The rebate of reimbursement of TT charges transactions between \$100 and \$200 will be increased from SAR 10 to SAR 20.

It decided to continue the scheme of incentives launched in 2018-19 for banks and exchange companies during the current calendar year from January 2020. As per the scheme, financial institutions would be offered Rs0.50 per \$1 on 5% growth and Rs0.75 per \$1 on 10% growth and Rs1 per \$1 on 15% growth.

The amount of remittances transferred into bank accounts will be exempt from withholding tax with effect from July 1, 2020.

The National Remittance Loyalty Programme will be launched on September 1, 2020 in collaboration with major commercial banks and government agencies through which various incentives will be given to the remitters through mobile apps and cards. The ECC approved a technical supplementary grant of Rs9.6 billion for the current financial year to finance the remittance initiative.

The ECC approved technical supplementary grant of Rs5 billion in favour of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) for the current financial year 2019-20 with the instruction that called for a judicious and need-based distribution of funds among universities.

On a proposal of the Ministry of Defence, the ECC approved a technical supplementary grant of Rs34.528 million for the internal security duty allowance to Pakistan Air Force.

China allocated \$16 billion to fight coronavirus outbreak

BEIJING: China will step up funding support for local government bodies to ensure smooth operations as a coronavirus outbreak takes a toll of their revenues. Vice Finance Minister Xu Hongcai said on Thursday.

The finance ministry is accelerating transfers, particularly in regions hit hard by the virus, to guarantee normal operations of local government and ensure salary payments, Xu told a news conference.

The ministry will meet the funding needs of the central province of Hubei, the epicentre of the outbreak, as its revenue has shrunk, Xu said, with only 'sporadic' income in February.

phased measures to help virus-hit sectors, but did not elaborate. China has said it would study phased tax cuts to help small- and medium-sized firms struggling with the impact of the outbreak.

China has issued an advance quota of 6.1 trillion yuan in transfer payments for local governments in 2020, finance ministry official Hao Lei told the briefing.

Mainland China reported a rise in new virus cases on Thursday, driven by a spike in infections in Wuhan, the provincial capital of Hubei, reversing three straight days of declines. The finance ministry is accelerating transfers,



290 million students out of school as global virus battle intensifies

'Some other areas with more severe epidemic situation also suffer from periodical falls in revenue. In order to prevent problems, we must take precautions,' Xu added.

But he expected the pressure on the government's fiscal position to ease as the economy recovers. Chinese governments at all levels have allocated funds of 110.48 billion yuan (\$16 billion) to fight the coronavirus outbreak by Wednesday, including 71.43 billion yuan that has been used, Xu said.

From March the finance ministry has started to provide weekly funding support to Hubei, with 35 billion yuan allocated in the first week, he said. China's huge tax cuts aimed at stimulating a slowing economy have already hurt the revenues of debt-ridden provincial governments, with poor western regions suffering the most from squeezed budgets, a Reuters analysis showed. Asked whether China will raise its budget deficit ratio this year, Xu responded that the government would have to consider various factors, such as economic performance and fiscal revenue and expenditures. Policy insiders have said increased government spending could push up the annual budget deficit ratio to 3% this year, from 2.8% in 2019. Some Chinese economists have called for the deficit ratio to rise to slightly more than 3% 'Most coronavirus patients survive' Xu said Beijing would roll out targeted and

particularly in regions hit hard by the virus, to guarantee normal operations of local government and ensure salary payments, Xu told a news conference. The ministry will meet the funding needs of the central province of Hubei, the epicentre of the outbreak, as its revenue has shrunk. Xu said, with only 'sporadic' income in February. 290 million students out of school as global virus battle intensifies. Some other areas with more severe epidemic situation also suffer from periodical falls in revenue. In order to prevent problems, we must take precautions,' Xu added. But he expected the pressure on the government's fiscal position to ease as the economy recovers.

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Pakistan likely to make first cut in benchmark interest rate this month

KARACHI: In line with the global trend, Pakistan is likely to make the first cut in benchmark interest rate sooner rather than later to let economic activities gain pace following a much lower-than-expected inflation reading for February and a notable reduction in the rate of profit on government debt securities.

"We expect the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) to make the first rate cut of 25-50 basis points in its monetary policy statement this month (March)," Anif Habib Limited Head of Research Samiullah Tariq said while talking to The Express Tribune.

At present, the policy rate stands at an eight-year high of 13.25% since July 2019. Earlier, the central bank jacked up the rate by a hefty 7.5 percentage points from January 2019 to July 2019. Although Topline Securities' Research Director Syed Atif Zafar anticipated the rate cut in March but he was sure of a reduction by May 2020. "We foresee the first rate cut of 50-100 basis points by May," he said.

Earlier, several research houses anticipated the first rate reduction in July or later in the wake of unexpectedly high inflation that hit a nine-year high at 14.6% against expectation of around 13.5% in

January 2020. In February 2020, the inflation rate once again beat market expectations but this time it stood lower at 12.4%, which was



contrary to market anticipation. "The inflation number will fall to around 10.5% in March. This may force the central bank to make the rate cut sooner rather than later," Zafar said. Tariq anticipated the inflation reading to touch 10% in March.

A major support will come from the reduction in petroleum product prices by Rs5-7 per litre for March. Besides, food prices have also softened in recent days and

weeks. "This will build up the case for the rate cut," Zafar said. In addition to these, commercial banks lent Rs110 billion to the

government at comparatively lower rates of return on Wednesday. "This development also suggested a rate cut in the near future," he said. Banks lent money to the government by participating in the auction of long-term (3 to 20-year) Pakistan Investment Bonds (PIBs). The cut-off yield on 3 to 10-year PIBs dropped 15-46 basis points in the auction. Previously, the central bank

increased the interest rate to contain inflation. This, on the other hand, made financing expensive for businesses and resulted in an economic slowdown.

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OPEC seen backing big oil output cut, but awaits Russian support

VIENNA: Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) ministers are expected to approve on Thursday the outlines of a deal for a significant cut in oil production to shore up prices hammered by the coronavirus outbreak but they are still waiting for Russia to indicate whether it will back such a move.

Saudi Arabia wants OPEC and its allies, including Russia, to cut 1 million to 1.5 million barrels per day (bpd) for the second quarter and to keep existing cuts of 2.1 million bpd, which expire this month, in place until the end of 2020.

But Riyadh, the biggest producer in the OPEC, and other members of the group has to win Russian support for such a deal. So far, Moscow has indicated it would back an extension but not a deeper cut. Saudi Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman, who met his Russian counterpart Alexander Novak in Vienna on Wednesday, has kept the market guessing about progress in the negotiations.

Asked about prospects for a pact, the Saudi minister informed the reporters "We will have to see today and tomorrow." Moscow, which has cooperated on output policy since 2016 in an informal group

known as OPEC+, has in the past shown reluctance during negotiations but has signed up at the last minute.

OPEC sources have signalled that preliminary talks with Russia this week in Vienna have been trickier than before. The slide in oil prices to about \$11 a barrel has made it tough for OPEC states to balance their budgets, while Moscow has said it can cope with current prices.

Two OPEC sources said they anticipated that Thursday's meeting in Vienna of OPEC ministers would go smoothly, with an agreement on a big cut, possibly above 1 million bpd, although a third source said allocating quotas could be tough.

But such a big reduction will hinge on Moscow.

Surprising on the upside, If OPEC+ was to decide to remove an extra 1.5 million bpd from the market, it would bring the group's overall output reduction to 3.6 million bpd or about 3.6% of global supplies. Russia's energy minister returned to Moscow for consultations on Wednesday but will be back in Vienna on Friday for the broader OPEC+ meeting. Novak made no public statements during his trip this week to Vienna.

The 2019 real estate roundup: From lows to highs, up and downs recorded

Karachi: The year 2019 was quite eventful for Karachi's real estate industry. Many remarkable developments came into being, such as the lifting of the ban on high-rise construction. The expected rise in developmental activity enticed property agents from all over the country who were eager to claim their share from the evolving market situation. Moreover, over the year there was an escalation in the number of genuine buyers interested in securing affordable residential properties scattered around the northern suburbs of the city.

On the other hand, due to the prevalent tax regime, areas where short-term investments were not deemed conducive experienced gradual price drops. In an attempt to make tactful decisions against this backdrop, investors did not only resort to making precise calculations, they also strove to anticipate which societies (or parts of them) were safe for stake holding. This often resulted in major price fluctuations in different sections of the same housing schemes. In order to understand these trends

in full, let's glance over Zameen.com's statistics that were collated over the course of the year. Based on the figures, Scheme 33



scored the first position, as it remained the most sought after housing scheme in the city for buying residential plots in 2019 – with overall stable property rates. The price drops here were mostly recorded for the smaller plot categories due to the introduction of new

real estate options in the inventory. These statistics further indicate that Scheme 33 also fared as Karachi's most active housing development in

among the most searched areas for buying plot units. This project, in fact, is responsible in many ways for the northern and northeastern suburbs of the port city now appearing much more accessible and somewhat more desirable for living than what was previously the case.

The society, on its own, is eclectic in terms of meeting its residents' everyday needs. Its recent addition of several leisure facilities has also helped prospective buyers to see the good side of living in Bahria Town. The rise in property demand The rise in property demand The rise in property demand, coupled with the on-ground development work, as well as an increased selling pressure that emerged in the society's precincts and projects due to the pending litigation cases continued to surge property rates. This was evident especially in those peripheral Bahria Town sections that did receive clearance from these legal issues, accounting for the price shifts recorded for the average value of 120 square yards, 240 square yards and 500 square yards plots listed in the table.

US panel hears of risks to Indian Muslims

WASHINGTON: Experts warned a US government panel on Wednesday that India's Muslims face risks of expulsion or other persecution under a citizenship law that has triggered major protests.

The hearing held inside Congress was called by the US Commission on International Freedom, which has been denounced by the Indian government as biased. Ashutosh Varshey, a prominent scholar of sectarian violence in India, told the panel that the law championed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalists amounted to a move to narrow the democracy's historically inclusive and secular definition of citizenship.

"The threat is serious, and the implications quite horrendous," said Varshey, a professor at Brown University.

"Something deeply injurious to the Muslim minority can happen once their citizenship rights are taken away," he said. Varshey warned that the law could ultimately lead to expulsion or detention – but, even if not, contributes to marginalization. "It creates an enabling atmosphere for violence once you say that a particular community is not fully Indian or its Indianness in grave doubt," he said.

The Indian parliament in December passed a law that fast-tracks citizenship for persecuted non-Muslim minorities from neighboring countries. Responding to criticism at the time from the US commission, which advises but does not set policy, India's foreign ministry said the law does not strip anyone's citizenship and "should be welcomed, not criticized, by those who are genuinely committed to religious freedom." Years are particularly acute in the northeastern state of Assam, where a citizens' register finalized last year left 1.9 million people.

