

COVID-19 claims six more lives, 37 new infections in RWP

RAWALPINDI: As many as 37 more people were tested positive for fatal coronavirus during the last 24 hours, raising the tally of confirmed cases to 46,049 in the Rawalpindi district, while six persons lost their battle of life against the deadly disease.

As per the latest data released by the District Health Authority here Sunday, among the new patients, nine belonged to the Potohar town, eight from Rawal town and Gujjar Khan, five from Rawalpindi Cantonment, three from Kahutta, two from Taxila, while one of each case has arrived from Murree, and Kotli Sattian. "Presently, 57 patients are admitted to six health facilities, including 32 in the Institute of Urology, 16 in the Fauji Foundation Hospital, four in the Benazir Bhutto Hospital, three in the Holy Family Hospital, and one in the Hearts International Hospital and BARM Hospital."

Meanwhile, 5,480,331 people, including 44,624 health workers, had so far been vaccinated against the fatal disease since the start of the vaccination drive from March 10, 2021", it informed. The report updated that

three patients were on ventilators in critical condition, 12 stable and 42 were on double oxygen support.

District Health Authority added that 550 were quarantined, including 488 homes and 62 isolation centres. In addition, the report updated that during the last 24 hours, 1,378 samples were collected, out of which 1,341 were declared negative, while the positivity rate was recorded at 2.69 per cent. Khanpur canal de-silting project; People asked to save water amid supply cuts

The citizens have been asked to use water scarcely as the supply of water from Khanpur dam to Rawalpindi city and cantonment areas has been reduced due to ongoing de-silting project, leading to a shortage of water in many localities. The Khanpur dam canal de-silting project started on Feb 14, would be completed till Feb 21 while the water supply to the residents would normalize during Feb 23 to Feb 25. Station Commander Rawalpindi and President Cantonment Board, Brig. Salman Nazar also visited Khanpur dam here the other day and inspected the ongoing dredging work of

the Khanpur dam canal. On the occasion, Rawalpindi Cantonment Executive Officer, Imran Gulzar, Senior Engineer Attique, officers of Water and Sanitation Agency, Capital Development Authority and other officers concerned were present.

The Station Commander was briefed about the ongoing dredging work. Brig. Salman Nazar also visited Sang-Jani Filtration Plant. President Cantonment Board expressed satisfaction over the pace of the work and appreciated performance of the authorities concerned. Meanwhile, Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) Rawalpindi, Rawalpindi and Chaklala Cantonment boards urged the residents to use water judiciously in their daily routine to avoid shortage as water supply to Cantt and city areas from Khanpur dam has been decreased. According to RCB spokesman Qaiser Mehmood, the Khanpur dam canal de-silting project started on Feb 14, would be completed till Feb 21 while the water supply to the residents would normalize during Feb 23 to Feb 25. He said the board was trying to meet water demand through tube wells. —APP

Six killed in three incidents in Mansehra

MANSEHRA: At least six people including two women Saturday were killed in three different incidents in Mansehra, police registered cases against the accused and started an investigation.

The first incident took place in Tarapi area of Pulrah where the accused opened fire on Lal Shahzad son of Sharif and his married daughter Pari Jan wife of Khurshed and killed them on the spot. The assassin fled away successfully after committing the crime.

Mansehra police registered double murder cases against seven accused including Waqar Shah, his brother Sardar Shah, Shah Farzand, Shah Peer and others, police also started operation to arrest them. Police told the media that Lal Shahzad's son had tied the knot with the sister of the accused on their own free will earlier this year.

In the second incident, two cousins Waqas and Liaqat were killed in the land dispute in the Baffa area. According to the police sources, 35 years old



Waqas was planting a tree at the disputed land where his two cousins Muhammad Liaqat and Sadaqat came and after an exchange of harsh words, Sadaqat attacked Waqas with a knife and injured him, for his defense Waqas also opened fire with his pistol on Liaqat and killed him on the spot. The injured Waqas could not survive and died in the hospital. In the third unfortunate incident owing to the domestic dispute husband shot dead his wife Fakhira Bibi while the niece of the wife also came in the range of firing and died at Jabba an area of Saddar Police Station Mansehra. —APP



ISLAMABAD: People take part during Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad Running Competition at D-Chowk organized by Directorate of sports and culture CDA.

'Govt starts developmental projects without any discrimination'

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Irrigation Arshad Ayub Khan Sunday said that the provincial government under the leadership of Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan started development projects in every sector without any discrimination that would ensure prosperity among people.

He said this while inaugurating a new Government Girls Higher Secondary building at a cost of Rs.50 million at Haripur. He said that record development projects have been completed in Haripur while development work is in progress on some of them. Drainage, paved roads, construction and rehabilitation of schools and hospitals are underway in various Union and Village Councils of Haripur, he added.

He said hundreds of people resigned from various political parties and joined the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) at Haripur's village council gegak due to developmental works. Addressing the function, Provincial Minister for Irrigation, Arshad Ayub Khan that development projects worth Rs.120 million works is in the final stages in the area, adding the construction of protective embankment and wall at a cost of Rs. 2 million in Village Council Toro Dhok will solve the long standing problem of the residents of the area. Former

provincial minister Yousuf Ayub Khan was also present on the occasion. The local government members announced joining the PTI and expressed confidence in the leadership of the Khan brothers.

Wildlife dept succeeds in obtaining Shuhada package for its martyred staffer: The Wildlife Department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has succeeded in obtaining Shuhada Package for one of its staffer who embraced martyrdom in 2019 in the line of duty while taking action against some miscreants who entered Togh Mangara Safari Park in Kohat.

Waqar ul Haq, a Wildlife Watcher of Kohat Wildlife Division received serious wounds during scuffle with miscreants who entered the park on February 10, 2019. Later, he succumbed to his injuries at hospital. On Saturday, Feb 19, 2022 Waqar has been awarded Shuhada package due to consistent efforts of Wildlife department which field the case and pursued it consistently, reads a press statement issued here. The family of martyred Wildlife Watcher will receive salary up to his age of reaching superannuation besides other benefits announced in the package, adds the statement. Meanwhile, the Model Court trying the accused charged under section 7 of ATA has convicted him on sentence for 25 years, the statement continued. —APP

US reiterates Russia could launch an attack against Ukraine at any time

NEW YORK: The White House said that Russia could launch an attack against Ukraine at any time and said US President Joe Biden will convene a National Security Council meeting on Sunday to discuss the situation.

Russia's strategic nuclear forces held exercises overseen by President Vladimir Putin on Saturday, and Washington accused Russian troops massed near Ukraine's border of advancing and being "poised to strike." A day ago, US President Joe Biden said he was now "convinced" Russian President Vladimir Putin had decided to invade Ukraine and assault the capital, an ominous assessment that emerged as the country's war-torn east saw more attacks that the West said could be designed to establish a pretext for an attack. After weeks of saying the US was not sure if Putin had made the final decision, Biden said his judgment had changed, citing American intelligence. "As of this moment, I'm convinced he's

made the decision," Biden said. "We have reason to believe that." He reiterated that the assault could occur in the "coming days". The president's comments at the White House followed a day of rising violence that included a humanitarian convoy hit by shelling and a car bombing in the eastern city of Donetsk.

Pro-Russian rebels began evacuating civilians from the conflict zone with an announcement that appeared to be part of Moscow's efforts to paint Ukraine as the aggressor instead. As further indication that the Russians are preparing for a major military push, a US defence official said an estimated 40 per cent to 50pc of the ground forces deployed in the vicinity of the Ukrainian border have moved into attack positions closer to the border. That shift has been underway for about a week, other officials have said and does not necessarily mean Putin has decided to begin an invasion. The defence official

spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss internal US military assessments. The official also said the number of Russian ground units known as battalion tactical groups in the border area had grown to as many as 125, up from 83 two weeks ago. Each group has 750 to 1,000 soldiers. —Reuters

Russia holds nuclear drills as Ukrainians flee border areas

DONETSK: Russia's strategic nuclear forces held exercises overseen by President Vladimir Putin on Saturday as Washington accused Russian troops massed near Ukraine's border of moving forward and being "poised to strike". Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, meanwhile, said that his country was a "shield" against Russia and deserved more support in the face

of a feared Russian invasion. In a speech at a security conference in Munich, Zelensky condemned "a policy of appeasement" towards Moscow.

"For eight years, Ukraine has been holding back one of the greatest armies in the world," said Zelensky, who travelled to Munich despite shelling in his country's conflict-torn east, that left two Ukrainian soldiers dead. He demanded "clear, feasible timeframes" for Ukraine to join the US-led Nato military alliance — a prospect that Moscow has said would be a red line for its security. But he said he was willing to meet Vladimir Putin to find out "what the Russian president wants". The US was quite unequivocal in its assessment as Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin said that Russian forces were beginning to "uncoil and move closer" to the border. "We hope he (Putin) steps back from the brink of conflict," Austin told a news conference in Lithuania, saying an invasion of Ukraine was not inevitable. —Agencies

Another pandemic may hit the world soon: Bill Gates



WASHINGTON: Bill Gates, who visited Pakistan this week to help eradicate polio, has warned that another Covid-19 like pandemic may hit the world soon.

Mr Gates, who co-chairs the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, however, acknowledged that the risks of severe disease from Covid-19 had "dramatically reduced" as people were getting immune to the virus.

In a weekend interview to CNBC, Mr Gates said a potential new pandemic would likely stem from a different pathogen to that of the coronavirus family. He, however, hoped that advances in medical technology would help the world do a better job of fighting it — "if investments are made now."

Mr Gates pointed out that the Covid-19 has been around for two years, and the worst effects of the pandemic were fading as huge swathes of the global population developed some level of immunity. The latest omicron variant showed that its severity also had waned, he added.

Instead of crediting global efforts to contain the pandemic, Mr Gates said the virus creates its own immunity as it spreads. And this ten-

dency did "a better job of getting out to the world population than we have with vaccines," he added.

"The chance of severe disease, which is mainly associated with being elderly and having obesity or diabetes, those risks are now dramatically reduced because of that infection exposure," he said.

Mr Gates said it was already "too late" to reach the World Health Organisation's goal to vaccinate 70 percent of the global population by mid-2022. Currently 61.9 percent of the world population has received at least one dose of a Covid-19 vaccine. He urged health professionals and authorities to "move faster to develop and distribute vaccines" when the next pandemic hits the world. "Next time we should try and make it, instead of two years, we should make it more like six months," Mr Gates said, adding that standardised platforms, including messenger RNA (mRNA) technology, would make that possible.

"The cost of being ready for the next pandemic is not that large. It's not like climate change. If we're rational, yes, the next time we'll catch it early," he told CNBC. —CNBC

Australia says China warship fired laser at its patrol plane

BRISBANE: The Australian Defence Department said that a Chinese navy ship fired a laser at one of its surveillance aircraft, putting the lives of the crew in danger. The incident happened when the P-8A Poseidon plane detected a laser illuminating the aircraft while in flight over Australia's northern approaches, the department said. Such episodes are not uncommon as the US and its allies accuse China of asserting its military might, and have taken steps to challenge Beijing's growing clout in the western Pacific and elsewhere.

The department said in a statement on Saturday that the laser came from a Peoples Liberation Army Navy vessel.

It was accompanying another Chinese ship that transited through the Torres Strait. Both ships were now in the Coral Sea, east of Australia, it said. Illumination of the aircraft by the Chinese vessel is a serious safety incident, the Defence Department said. We strongly condemn unprofessional and unsafe military conduct. These actions could have endangered the safety and lives of the ADF personnel. Lasers present a serious problem because when aimed at aircraft they can injure pilots or temporarily blind them — which can present safety risks particularly as they are taking off and landing. Two years ago, the US also accused the Chinese navy of firing a laser at one of its Po-

seidon planes over the Pacific. China denied it, saying the plane had circled at low altitude over its warship despite repeated warnings. In 2019, Australian navy helicopter pilots reported being hit by lasers while exercising in the South China

Sea, forcing them to land as a precaution. In 2018, the US issued a formal complaint to the Chinese government over the use of high-grade lasers near the military base in Djibouti that were directed at aircraft and resulted in minor injuries to two

American pilots. Tensions have ratcheted up particularly in the South China Sea, which Beijing claims almost in its entirety, while the US and its allies insist on freedom of navigation and overflight in international waters. —AP

