

## Series of traffic education activities continue in Vehari

From Our Staff Correspondent

**VEHARI:** The series of traffic education activities under the supervision of Regional Patrol Officer Madam Huma Naseeb continue in Vehari. According to the details, traffic education activities are ongoing in the light of the orders and instructions of the Regional Patrolling Officer Madam Huma Naseeb on behalf of the Punjab Highway Patrolling Police, in which awareness is being carried out on a daily basis in various educational and technical institutions as well as in the private courier company. Also supporting the Punjab Highway Police to train their staff keeping in mind the traffic rules and road safety to ensure their safety on the roads Sub-Inspector Javed Olakh giving a lecture to the staff of the private courier company. Explained in detail about the importance of helmet, seat belt, side view mirror, indicators during duty and daily life. And in case of any kind of help or complaint call 1124 and finally informational pamphlets were also distributed. Regional Patrolling Officer Madam Huma Naseeb of Punjab Highway Patrol, on the other hand, Sub Inspector Javed Aulakh, while giving road safety to the staff of local private courier company.

## All set to launch anti-polio drive in Sialkot

**SIALKOT:** All arrangements have been finalized to administer anti-polio drops to 762,472 children under five years of age in the district during the drive starting from August 22, Monday. This was stated by Deputy Commissioner Maisam Abbas while addressing a meeting of district anti-polio committee here on Sunday. He said that a total of 2,878 teams including 2,676 mobile, 133 fixed teams and 69 transit teams had been formed which would administer polio vaccine to children during the five-day drive. Briefing the deputy commissioner, CEO Health Dr Afzal Bhalli said that during the drive, a total of 11,909 children of high-risk population nomads, Pakhtun refugees, temporary residents from other districts and labourers working in brick kilns would be covered in 99 union councils of the district. He said that two-day training of union council monitoring officer, area in-charges and micro plan, disk review and field validation work by UC staff had been completed, in this regard. —APP



LAHORE: A mechanic repairing cycles along side a road on footpath. —Online

# 232 new cases of coronavirus, one death reported in Punjab

By Our Staff Reporter

**LAHORE:** As many as 232 new cases of coronavirus with one death were reported in Punjab during the 24 hours.

According to the data shared by the spokesperson of Punjab Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department (P&SHD) on Sunday, the number of coronavirus cases in the province reached 519,674 while death toll 13,596 and recoveries 502,558.

The P&SHD confirmed that 133 new cases of COVID-19 were reported in Lahore, 16 in Rawalpindi, 18 in Faisalabad, 21 in Hafizabad, 3 in Multan, 14 in Bahawalpur, 3 in Rahimyar Khan, 2 in Chinot, 2 in Okara, 01 in Gujranwala, 01 in Kasur, 01 in Sheikhupura, 03 in Pakpattan, 08 in Sargodha, 02 in Nankana Sahib, 01 in Toba Tek Singh, 02 in Gujrat and 03 in Sialkot district during the last 24 hours. The Punjab health department so far conducted 11,823,715 tests for COVID-19 in the province. The Punjab health department has urged the masses to follow SOPs for their protection and cover their faces with masks. The people should wash their hands with soap several times in a day to protect themselves from COVID-19. The citizens above the age of 12 years must ensure vaccination against the coronavirus.

## Strict dengue monitoring underway

**LAHORE:** The anti-dengue drive initiated by the district administration was in full swing under which surveillance was being carried out at various points in the provincial capital. In this connection, Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ali on Sunday visited Kalma Chowk, Faisal Chowk, Johar Town, Wapda Town, Faisal Town and other areas of the city to inspect the anti-dengue arrangements. He observed the attendance and performance of anti-dengue squad deputed on field duty in the area. He checked tyre shops and instructed shop owners to wrap their secondhand stock with polythene, otherwise, their stock would be confiscated. He confiscated used tyre stock of Hasan Tyre Shop in Wapda Town over dengue SOPs violation. The DC also got registered FIRs against two shop owners on dengue SOPs violation and warned others that strict action would be taken in case of negligence. All the departments were working in a coordinated manner to make the anti-dengue campaign a success, he said and directed the dengue teams deputed in the area to gear up the pace of anti-dengue spray process. —By Our Staff Reporter



LAHORE: A view of deserted The Mall due to Sunday holiday. —Online

## Call to improve revenue generation expenditure management

**LAHORE:** The experts at a roundtable on economic situation of the country said the fiscal deficits were there since 2014, and would continue unless interventions are made at all levels of government in relation to key policy areas like revenue generation and expenditure management.

A roundtable conference themed, "Fiscal deficits of Pakistan Economy," was held here as part of the second leg of Grand National Dialogue under the auspicious of Islamabad Policy Research Institute, a news release said. The distinguished panel consisted of Dr Maqbool Hussain Sial, Dr Ali Hussain, Dr Ghulam Ghouse, Dr Fahad Ali, Dr Ummad Mazhar, Dr Akhtar Mansoor, Dr Rafi Amir Uddin and Dr Aneel Salman, Chair Economic Security at IPRI.

In his opening remarks, the former National Security Adviser (NSA) Dr Moeed Yusuf said, "Only word that matters for Pakistan is Economy. The rest is all linked with the amount and management of resources we have at our disposal."

"The speakers noted that Pakistan has a serious debt problem and fiscal deficit is a worrisome factor. It has hindered growth, and led to spiraling inflation as well as battering of

the currency. "Pakistan's economy has been facing perennial and persistent fiscal deficits, varying from as low as 2.9% to as high as 12.2% of its GDP, it was pointed out.

The budget deficit stands widened due to sluggish revenue growth and excessive government expenditure.

"To reduce this deficit, governments have been resorting to domestic and international borrowing, and cutting down on spending, which has negatively affected the country's social and economic growth indicators, they said.

Ambassador Dr Raza Muhammad of IPRI stressed the need for being tolerant and reverent in our dealing with others that would ultimately go on to define the national character, as all the stakeholders cajole their synergies for putting the economy back on the track.

Dr Ali Hussain remarked that taxation was not voluntary anywhere in the world, and it has come into force with a vigorous and effective collection arm.

According to Dr Fahad Ali, "We must be clear on what can and cannot be achieved." He also said that providing subsidies to the sugar industry was not a good idea. He furthered it by saying, "We need a lot of money to barely keep afloat. With

glaring discrepancies in our tax regime, balancing the budget becomes all the more difficult."

Wrapping up the discussion, the President IPRI emphasized the need for a collective and cohesive approach by political leadership of the country for resolving the country's economic problems. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was also signed with the Center for Security, Strategy and Policy Research, associated with the University of Lahore, to facilitate academic collaboration between the two think tanks.

The signing ceremony was administered by Director CSSPR, Dr Rabia Akhtar, and President IPRI, Ambassador Dr Raza Muhammad. Former National Security Adviser and Patron-in-Chief of IPRI Dr Moeed Yusuf was also present on the occasion. The MoU stipulates initiatives to conduct joint research, publications, conferences and dialogues, and enable scholarly exchanges on a host of security and foreign policy issues. The express intention is to produce more qualitative research in diverse fields, which is data-driven, enabling scholars and policy-makers to make use of it in a more comprehensive manner. —APP

## Housing societies eating up fertile agricultural land across Punjab

**MULTAN:** Agriculture, being the mainstay of Pakistan's economy, is faced with numerous challenges and development of residential societies on fertile land is one of the major causes affecting agricultural productivity.

Around 68 percent of population living in rural areas of the country is directly or indirectly linked to agriculture sector as this sector contributes nearly 20 percent share in gross domestic products and more than 60 percent in export goods. Therefore, it is a challenging task for the government to not only employing the full potential of present agriculture land but also enhance its area by bringing more land under cultivation.

But, it has been witnessed in recent years that instead of adding more land to existing one for agricultural purposes, massive development of housing societies on rich agriculture land is shrinking already available land.

This tendency is rampant in the vicinity of most of major cities across the country where thousands of acre agricultural land has been converted into housing societies. If this trend continues in future couple of decades or so, the country's fertile land would be under extreme pressure of population growth.

"With the growing population, need for housing units is also growing. This tendency is resulting in expansion of cities to the adja-

cent rich agriculture land," said Vice Chancellor Nawaz Sharif University of Agriculture Dr Asif Ali. "No doubt that we need more housing units with rise in population but it does not mean to use our agricultural land for this purpose," he added arguing that in countries like Singapore where plain land is not available, the structure are built vertically.

Dr Asif opined that the government should pay proper heed to housing sector introducing a comprehensive plan wherein the alternate options are introduced and new cities on barren land should be established instead of using fertile land for housing societies.

"By developing societies at fertile land, we compromise biodiversity, landscaping and irrigation infrastructure," regretted.

He said the farmers have to toil for years to make land fertile and it is unjust that when this land starts giving production to the optimum, the owners sell it to developers to earn more money.

"What we are earning today by selling fertile land will land us in serious trouble of meeting food needs of our population already growing at the pace of around two percent annually," he added.

Since, Pakistan is already facing the issue of low agricultural productivity as compared to other countries in the region, shrinking fertile land coupled with climate change would be more challenging.

For example, in Pakistani Punjab, the average per acre yield of wheat is nearly 31 maund as compared to 45 maund in Indian Punjab. Same happens in case of other crops wherein the produce is lesser than other countries in the region.

"In this scenario we need multi-pronged strategy. On one hand we need to enhance productivity and one the other hand identify land for constructing more housing units," he pleaded.

"Our agriculture sector is already facing various challenges including poor seed quality, sub-standard and costly inputs, imbalance use of fertilizers, excessive use of pesticides, soil infertility and soil erosion," Dr Asif said. "In this situation, rising trend of urbanization and establishment of housing societies at fertile land would be lethal for agricultural sector."

He said, before establishing new cities, there should be proper study of the site, ecological balance and presence of underground water. Moreover, every society must be directed to ensure sufficient tree plantation in these settlements. The unplanned expansion of cities on fertile land is also damaging fruit plants as witnessed in Multan where hundreds of mango trees were cut down for using the land for housing purpose.

"Mango orchards are beauty of South Punjab. We have best mango varieties that are also exported to other countries for earning foreign exchange," said Laique Sheekhna, a progressive farmer. —APP



LAHORE: A street vendor sells goods to earn livelihood.