

Samana

Friday, February 18, 2022

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Bill Gates appreciates Pakistan govt for Anti-polio efforts

Detailed News On Page-01

Belarus could host nuclear weapons

A sister publication of **CENTRELINE & DNA News Agency**

Detailed News On Page-07

process

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister

Imran Khan has launched Schol-

arship Complaint Portal for early

redressal of complaints by the stu-

Addressing the launching ceremo-

ny in Islamabad on Thursday, he

said the primary objective of the

portal is to establish an exclusive

facility for students getting educa-

tion on scholarship for their help and resolution of complaints.

The Prime Minister said the portal will also ensure transparency

and meritocracy in the scholarship process. The meritocracy will pro-

vide opportunity to the segments

He said a panel of academics will monitor the portal and new sub-

lagging behind to grow.

gress of the country.

dents on scholarship.



Pak-Iraq ties needed to be bolstered

Detailed News On Page-08



Briefs

Fawad seeks alternative solution

DNA



Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hus

Thursday called out the opposition for unjustified criticism on the increase of petroleum products' prices in the country. He, in a tweet, said the opposition parties were criticizing the price hike in petroleum products but failed to provide an alternative which, he believed, was the main aspect of any criticism.

Shehbaz to be charged on corruption

YOOSAF BHUTTA



and Broadcasting Farrukh Habib said that Opposition Leader in Sharif is going to be charged for his corruption very soon. While talking to the media in Mandi Bahauddin, the PTI leader said that opposition is a group of blackmailers and PML-N holds special top position in forgery. Farrukh Habib stated, "Rs four billion was transferred to Magsood Chaprasi's account and on the other hand, Maryam Safdar used to say that she neither has properties in London nor in Pakistan.'

PML-N uses derogatory language

ISLAMABAD: Special As-



Special Assistant to the Prime Minister for Political communication Dr. Shahbaz Gill Thursday said, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) had history for using derogatory language against their opponents. Talking to a private news channel, he said many leaders of the PML-N had always crossed the ethical limits during discussion about their opponents. - APP

> Inside. Malaysia keen to

enhance ties with

Pakistan: Envoy

President stresses

value addition of citrus

produce to boost

Administrator MCI

assures to address issues of traders

Accelerate sustainable

actions to combat

impact of Covid-19

Inter-band

competition concludes

at PAF complex

Uzbekistan-Pakistan:

a course towards

practical cooperation

NAB establishes

"Pakistan Anti-

Corruption Academy'

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Anti-polio drive

Bill Gates appreciates Pak govt

PM thanks the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for its continued support; Gates visits NCOC

SHUJAAT HAMZA / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Microsoft co-founder and philanthropist Bill Gates Thursday appreciated Pakistan's polio-eradication campaign during his maiden trip to the country. Gates, who is visiting Pakistan for a day, landed early morning and held meetings with senior government officials, including a one-on-one meeting with Prime Minister Imran Khan, a statement from the PM Office said.

The philanthropist attended a meeting of the National Task Force on Polio Eradication, where he noted that despite COVID-19 restrictions, Pakistan has performed "amazingly" in eradicating polio. Gates thanked the prime minister for inviting him and extending warm hospitality on his first-ever visit. He appreciated the efforts of the Pakistani leadership, health workers, and parents for working

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President confers Hilale-Pakistan on **Bill Gates**

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi Thursday conferred Hilal-e-Pakistan on American technologist and philanthropist Bill Gates in recognition of his meritorious services to the people of Pakistan, particularly for the eradication of polio. The award was given at a special investiture ceremony held at the Aiwan-e-Sadr, attended by Begum Samina Alvi, federal ministers and senior officials. Born in 1955 in Seattle

Continued on Page 06

Russia staging pretext for invasion, West says

Ukraine and pro-Russian separatists within Ukraine earlier exchanged fire

News Desk

MOSCOW/KYIV: U.S. President Joe Biden said on Thursday there was now "every indication" that Russia was planning to go into Ukraine, including signs Moscow was preparing a "false flag" operation to justify it. Ukraine and pro-Russian separatists within Ukraine earlier **Zelensky admits Ukraine's NATO** bid has 'stalled'

BERLIN: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Thursday said Kviv had little chance of joining NATO despite its ambition to do so,

Continued on Page 06

Continued on Page 06



BRUSSELS: Pakistan Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa interacts with NATO officials during his visit to NATO HQs in Brussels. Pakistan Ambassador to Belgium Zaheer Janjua is also present. – DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi conferring the award of Hilal-e-Pakistan on Mr William Henry Gates III (Mr Bill Gates) in recognition of his services for the eradication of polio and the betterment of the people of Pakistan, in an investiture ceremony, held at Aiwan-e-Sadr. - DNA PM Imran No-trust move launches the only option, scholarship complaint says Maryam portal

Asks all the parties to step says the portal will ensure forward for the people's cause transparency in the scholarship **Parliament**

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: PML-N Vice President Maryam Nawaz on Thursday said that the Opposition's efforts to bring a no-trust movement to topple the incumbent government is a risk that must be taken.

"The people are looking towards the Opposition [hoping] that someone raises their voice for them. The notrust motion is a risk that must be taken." Maryam said while speaking to the media in Islamabad. She said that the people would going through worst times

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said on Thursday that these were the worst times for the parliament in Pakistan. Addressing



Continued on Page 06

Continued on Page 06

for higher education. **Intensifying political turmoil** confirms fuelling pressure

Now there exists a serious deadlock in the country at the time when prices of daily use goods especially petrol is on rise and the government in Islamabad is facing external pressure on the issue of Afghanistan

Situationer

SHAMIM SHAHID

HATEVER might be strategies on the part of Prime Minister Imran Khan and his aides but the political turmoil in the country is intensifying with each passing day whereas opposition leaders are holding contacts with leaders and office holders of political parties, still occupying important offices in Pakistan Tehrik Insaf coalition government. Besides increasing political hobnobbing, MQM chief Altaf Hussain's acquittal by a Great Britain court and warring MQM faction leaders' contacts with

each other are also considered some extra ordinary political developments. Rushing towards Chaudhry Zahoor Elahi Palace in Lahore, Prime Minister Imran Khan has realized the needs of tackling the situation erupted with latest call on meetings of opposition leaders like Mian Shahbaz Sharif, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Maulana Fazal Ur Rahman with Chaudri Shujaat Hussain who is chief of PML(Q). In fact, the PML(Q) plays a key role in Punjab politics whereas MQM is dominating urban Sindh. Both the parties are in coalition with ruling PTI and its switch over to opposition could be considered a serious threat to the future of the Imran Khan government. Besides hectic political activities.

Chief of Army Staff Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa's latest separate meetings on a single day with both Prime Minister Imran Khan and President Dr. Arif Alvi also generated rumors and apprehensions. Now there exists a serious deadlock in the country at the time when prices of daily use goods especially petrol is on rise and the government in Islamabad is facing external pressure on the issue of Afghanistan. However, certain external forces including the US and UK are still patronizing Pakistan on the issue of Taliban in Afghanistan. But apparently both the US and UK along with allies are also concerned with growing violation of Human Rights, especially political victimization in Afghanistan.



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Friday, February 18, 2022

Briefs

ANF arrests 2 smugglers, narcotics seized

PESHAWAR: Anti Narcotics Force (ANF) Peshawar on Thursday arrested two drug smugglers and recovered 15 kg hashish and 3 kg of opium from a car near Motorway toll plaza.

The narcotics was tactfully concealed in a secret cavity of the car and was being smuggled from Peshawar to Lahore. Cases have been registered against arrested smugglers and further investigation is in progress. - APP

NKATI urges PM to reduce petroleum prices

KARACHI: Faisal Moiz Khan, President North Karachi Association of trade & industry (NKATI), while expressing deep concerns over the recent rise in petroleum prices, has requested Prime Minister Imran Khan to take back the decision and reduce the price in order to control the inflation and to reduce the cost of industrial production.

In an appeal, Faisal Moiz Khan expressed concern that the recent rise in petroleum prices would result in huge increase in industrial production cost and would have a very negative impact on local industries as well as export industries, while there will also be a flood of inflation which will affect the poor and middle class the most.

"Making it easier to do business and promote industrialization is the vision of the Prime Minister. On the contrary, the government is taking steps to make business difficult and shut down industries, raising concerns among the business and industrial community ", he pointed out. NKATI president was of the opinion that electricity is expensive, gas is expensive and now petroleum products have become expensive. How to run industries in such a situation? Because the cost is constantly rising due to government measures

Faisal Moiz Khan added that the government talks of providing facilities to industries to increase exports but in practice problems are being created instead of facilities so if the government really wants to stabilize Pakistan's economy and promote industries then reduce the prices of petroleum products, including utility charges. Otherwise, Prime Minister Imran Khan's dream of making Pakistan economically stable will never come true. - APP

Pakistan Navy maritime drill SEA-**SPARK-2022** commences

KARACHI: Pakistan Navy's major maritime exercise SEASPARK-22 opening ceremony was held here and Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi graced the occasion as chief guest.

The biennial exercise is steered to assess war preparedness and validate operational plans of Pakistan Navy against envisaged threat spectrum, especially in maritime domain, said a Pakistan Navy media release.

In the opening remarks, Deputy Chief of Naval Staff (Operations) presented the overview of the exercise.

He emphasized that challenges of Grey-Hybrid warfare and contemporary geo- strategic environment necessitate adroit response by Pakistan Navy.

He also highlighted factors impinging upon type and character of warfare in contemporary environment warranting continuous appraisal of environment and reassessment of own plans. He affirmed that Pakistan remained combat ready and fully cognizant of its responsibility to safeguard national maritime interests during peace and war times.

He stressed that exercise SEASPARK-22 would provide impetus to Pakistan's resolve of maintaining peace and stability by promoting safe and sustainable maritime environment in the region. - APP

Malaysia keen to enhance ties with Pakistan: Envoy

It was the utmost duty of universities to provide their students with the best opportunities of higher education and research for their mental and intellectual training

YOOSUF BHUTTA

GUJRAT: "Malaysia is interested to develop strong and longterm relations with Pakistan. Mutual cooperation between the two Muslim countries in social, economic and industrial sectors has been yielding positive results since 1957.'

This was stated by the Acting High Commissioner of Malaysia Mr. Deddy Faisal Ahmad Salleh (chargé d'affaires ad interim) here Wednesday while addressing a seminar on "Pak-Malaysia Relation" at Quaid-e-Azam Library Auditorium, University of Gujrat Hafiz Hayat Campus.

The event was organized by Department of Students affairs UOG and presided over by the Vice Chancellor Professor Dr. Shabbar Attique. Mr. Sallaeh said, "Education

is, in the current era, the most important way of social and economic awareness.

Modern education provides concrete foundation for the national economy of a country." Prof. Dr.



GUJRAT: Deddy Faisal Ahmad Salleh acting Malaysian High Commissioner visiting School of Art, Design and Architecture (SADA) at University of Gujrat. - DNA

IMF program aims to

Shabbar Attique, while addressing on the occasion reiterated that it was the utmost duty of universities to provide their He further said that Malaysia students with the best opportu-

nities of higher education and research for their mental and intellectual training.

was a very advanced country in

dustry. "We strive to work with various Malaysian academic institutions to create potential opportunities for the students of

Mr. Deddy Faisal Ahmad Salleh also visited the School of art design and Architecture (SADA) on

University of Gujrat with distinguished guest of acting Malaysian High Commissioner Deddy Faisal Ahmad Salleh. - DNA the fields of education and in-

GUJRAT: Participants of seminar on "Pak-Malaysia Relation" at

PBIT to participate in Pak Economic Conference

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Punjab Board of Investment and Trade (PBIT) will fully participate in three-day Pakistan Economic Conference (PEC) scheduled to be organized by Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) from March 18-20 in Faisalabad, said Mr. Ahmer Malik Chief Executive Officer PBIT. During an online meeting with Mr. Atif Munir Sheikh, President FCCI, he underlined the serious efforts made by the Government and business community for the revival of sustained economic growth. "The Faisalabad Economic Conference will play a key role in achieving this ambitious target with the help of the private sector of Pakistan. He appreciated the comprehensiveness of the agenda of the conference and said that almost all economic sectors have been covered with best available technocrats, policy makers and entrepreneurs. He said that PBIT will collaborate with FCCI for one full day so that early colonization of M3 and Allama Iqbal Industrial Estates could be ensured with viable policy interventions. Earlier Atif Munir President FCCI explained the immediate outcome of his recent meeting with provincial minister Mian Aslam Igbal and said that he was very keen to make this event a total success. He said that Federal and Provincial Ministers and more than 15 Ambassadors or HC would also participate in it in addition to the top-level part ipation from all chambers of commerce and Industry, Women Chambers and Small Chambers across the country.

CCoCPEC

approves

realignment

of KKH

ISLAMABAD: The Cabinet

Committee on China-Pa-

kistan Economic Corridor

(CCoCPEC) Thursday ap-

proved several projects in-

cluding realignment of KKH

from Thakot to Raikot, provi-

sion of utilities for CPEC Spe-

cial Economic Zones (SEZ),

implementation plan for va-

cation of PCG and PN land

at Shamba Shamail, Gwadar

and establishment of CPEC

Business & Industrial Coop-

eration Tower. The projects

were approved during a meet-

ing of CCoCPEC chaired by

Asad Umar. The Secretary in-

formed the meeting that PC-II

for the realignment of KKH

250KM was approved by the

Departmental Development

Working Party DDWP. - APP

promote economic stability NAZIR SIYAL KARACHI: Resident Representative of International Monetary Fund (IMF) to Pakistan Esther Perez Ruiz on Thursday said that IMF program aimed to promote macroeconomic stability in Pakistan, and "The IMF program will promote sustainable and comprehensive policy growth in Pakistan". Esther Perez Ruiz said this during his meeting with Sindh Governor Imran Ismail at the Governor's House here.

the governor termed the talks with the IMF team as a better understanding of IMF policies. During the meeting, the mat-

Talking to the Esther Perez,

ters of mutual interest were also discussed.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan welcomes Bill Gates at the Prime Minister's Office. -DNA

US Consulate will play its role to curb poverty

SAQIB MUSHTAQ

LODHRAN: US Counsel General Mr. William K. Makaneole met with Additional Chief Secretary South Punjab Captain (R) Sagib Zafar at his office. Political and Economic Chief American Consulate Lahore

Ms. Kathleen Gibilisco and South Punjab's Secretaries were also there in the meeting. Additional Chief Secretary South Punjab Captain (R) Saqib Zafar told while briefing about South Punjab's profile that this area is very important in regards to agriculture and economy and due to historic heritage this area provides vast opportunities for tourism. He told that South Punjab produces 98% mangoes and 93% cotton of pakistan's total production, its population consists of 34.7 million people and 58% of its labor is linked to agriculture while 9% have access to clean drinking water and 59% have sewerage facility. Captain (R) Saqib Zafar told that South Punjab Secretariat will play a revolutionary role in the development of this area and provide employment opportunities to its people resulting in reduction of unemployment, he added that separate budget has been allocated for South Punjab which will only spent on this area. Captain (R) Saqib Zafar told that now people of South Punjab would not have to travel to Lahore for their problems, South Punjab Secretariat has been given with the financial and administrative authority and with the monitoring of secretaries performance of departments will improve. US Counsel General said that US Consulate will play its role in elimination of poverty from south Punjab, adding that development and prosperity in any area brings peace, he added that Pakistan and America will continue its cooperation for mutual benefits. At this time Additional Chief Secretary South Punjab pre-

sented the US Counsel with souvenir.

IHC grants time to NAB prosecutor for preparations in Maryam's appeals

PML-N's Vice President Maryam Nawaz and her husband appeared before the division bench of IHC comprising Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Mohsin Akhter Kayani

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) Thursday granted time to National Accountability Bureau (NAB) till March 21, for preparation in appeals of Maryam Nawaz and Cap. (Retd) Muhammad Safdar in Avenfield Property reference.

PML-N's Vice President Maryam Nawaz and her husband appeared before the division bench of IHC comprising Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Mohsin Akhter Kayani. Special Prosecutor NAB Azhar Sadiq adopted the stance that he had been appointed special Prosecutor recently and he required some time to go through the case record.



He prayed the court to grant him a four weeks time for the case study.

Maryam's Counsel Irfan Qadir said that he had raised some points before the court and it had placed a question before NAB. The case proceeding in the appeals would not go for longer once the NAB gives answer of it, he added.

NAB Prosecutor said that the defence was thinking that it was a matter of just two documents, adding that he was trying his best to study the whole case in four weeks.

The Prosecutor said he had many things to speak but it was court who would take the decision on matter. Lawyer Amjad Pervaiz said that NAB Ordinance asked to conclude the case in thirty days. The court remarked that Amjad Pervaiz had been absent due to sickness and many thirty days had

passed in between. The NAB had also brought the same plea to decide the matter in 30 days. the court said.

The court said that it had also given time to Irfan Qadir for case study. The court subsequently granted time to NAB prosecutor for case study and adjourned the case till March 21. The court remarked that it would hear the case on daily basis if it consider it necessary on next

PIA office in Hyderabad closed

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has closed its office in Hyderabad due to rationalization policy and cost cutting strategy.

In a written reply to a question, Minister for Aviation Division Ghulam Sawar Khan informed the Senate on Thursday that PIA closed its booking office in Hyderabad on April 30, 2021.

In accordance with the PIA restructuring plan and in pursuit of organization cost cutting strategy, he said that rationalization of domestic station network was evaluated. The management decided on commercial grounds to close PIA offline booking offices like Hyderabad for cost cutting and HR rationalization purpose.

As part of PIA restructuring plan currently, he said there is no plan for re-opening of PIA Hyderabad Booking office in near future. - APP

FDA to lease 29 shops on Feb 23

FAISALABAD: The Faisalabad Development Authority (FDA) has decided to lease 29 shops of Gulistan Plaza on February 23, 2022. FDA Director General Rizwan Nazir, after chairing a meeting on Thursday, said that the shops were situated in an important commercial area of the city near Millat Chowk. He said that the Gulistan Plaza was sprawling over 57 Marlas where 16 shops were situated at ground floor while 13 shops were on the upper floor.

He said that the shops would be leased out through open auction for a period of 5 years initially, which could be extended and renewed for a term of two years more with the consent of both parties.

He said that the auction would be held at 10 a.m. on Feb 23 in FDA Complex and the bidders would be bound to deposit Rs 50,000 as security amount for upper floor shop and Rs.25,000 for ground floor shop before participating in the auction process. - APP

Toshakhana reference against Zardari, Gilani adjourned

ISLAMABAD: An Accountability Court (AC) on Thursday adjourned hearing till March 3, on Toshakhana reference against former president Asif Ali Zardari and ex-prime minister Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani.

AC-III Judge Syed Asghar Ali heard the corruption reference filed by National Accountability Bureau (NAB). The court also granted oneday exemption from hearing to Asif Ali Zardari and Yousaf Raza Gilani on their lawyer's request.

At the outset of hearing, a prosecution witness Malik Shakeel produced CDs containing videos about Yousuf Raza Gilani. The defence lawyers objected over the videos and said that the NAB had not previously informed them about it. - APP

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<u>LALAMUSA</u> Gulzar Ahmed Noshi 03359494788

SARA-I-ALMAGIR 0300 5428178



Namaz Timings

Fajr	. 05:27 am
Zohr	12:22 pm
Asr	04:15 pm
Maghrib	05:54 pm
Isha	07:17 pm



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Airlines

Turkish Airlines......8494949



Emergency

Rescue (Police	:)15
Bomb Disposa	l15
Fire Services	Rawalpindi/
Islamabad	1122 & 16
Emergency Am	ibulance1122
& Rescue Serv	rices.4451122
Motorway Poli	ce9266044
Motorway Polic	e9270601-20
Women Poli	ce Stations
Islamabad	9222596
Rawalpindi	9270601-20

Edhi Ambulance	115
PIAFlightInfo	114
PIACargo	.9280979
Railway Inquiry	117
Railway Exchange	270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi.	.5555489
CAA	9281092



Hospitals

CMH	5611111
MH	561116
Cantt Hospital.	9270907-11
DHQ	5556311-4
RGH	9290301-7
Holy Family	9290322-7
PIMS	9261170-79
Polyclinic	9218300-09
Shifa Internation	nal.4603666



Denartments

Dcpui	LIIICIIC
CDA	9221334-43
CDA	9208301-04
Met Office	9250360-6
RDA	5555864
TMA	5770886
Cantonment B	oard 9270151-3



Complaints

Water Tanker Service E-7, F-10 & F-11.....9204654 G-5, G-6, G-7, G-8....9203883 G-9, G-10, G-11, G-12, H-8.....9266316 Wapda Islamabad....9217579 Wapda Rawalpindi 111-309-309

Islamabad Metropolitan

Corporation9209224
Potohar Town9209224
RawalTown5773343

Wasa Water Tank

Rawalpindi.....0331-5022125

President stresses value addition of citrus produce to boost exports

Dr Alvi said Pakistan's successful mango diplomacy had already made its mark in the world and expressed confidence that the focus on citrus would also secure attention at the int'l level





ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi on Thursday called upon the citrus growers to improve the quality of their produce through value addition and use of modern technology in a bid to capture the international market.

Addressing here at the Citrus Show 2020, the president said quality packaging and preservation of citrus through cold chain logistics was important to boost citrus exports. The citrus

exhibition, jointly organized by the Ministry of Commerce, Sargodha Chamber of Commerce & Industry, and Trade Development Authority of Pakistan here at Aiwan-e-Sadr, was attended by traders, exporters, and horticulture experts of citrus.

President Alvi said several steps such as organic production and growing seedless citrus variety could not only find a niche in the international market but also help the country earn high-end revenues. He said Pakistan was rich in the production of citrus,

however stressed an effective policy to broaden the scope of exports. He said the country's citrus produce had the potential to reach out to the Central Asian market through Afghanistan and also to Europe by means of the Pakistan-Iran-Turkey cargo train. Dr Alvi said Pakistan's successful mango diplomacy had already made its mark in the world and expressed confidence that the focus on citrus would also secure attention at the international level. He also emphasized using technology to

increase per acre yield of citrus and mentioned that collaboration between universities and the market could be beneficial in chalking out of productive policies as per demands. The president said that the footprint of Pakistan in citrus

production needed to match the proportion of its population and exports. Parliamentary Secretary for Commerce Alia Hamza Malik said the ministry had constituted a working group for a doable policy to enhance Kinnow produce.

She said the focus was being laid on the production of an improved and seedless variety of Kinnow to boost exports.

President Sargodha Chamber of Commerce & Industries Shoaib Ahmed Basra said Sargodha was known as 'California of Pakistan' for its citrus orchards, 200 processing units, and four juice extraction factories. He mentioned that last year,

45,000 tonnes of Kinnow were exported and also proposed inking a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) with Thai-

Opposition miserably

fails in Parliament,

says Faisal Javed

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Sena-

tor Faisal Javed Khan on Thursday said that opposition had

failed miserably in Parliament to play a constructive role

and resorted to cheap tricks to disrupt the proceeding of

House. Talking to media persons at Parliament House,

flanked by Senator Waleed Iqbal, he said the opposition de-

liberately tried to create chaos in the house but government

tee on Information and Broadcasting said opposition's threat

to bring no confidence motion was for blackmailing govern-

ment for National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO) but they

would not succeed in their mission. He said that opposition

had made claims during legislation on Finance Bill, but faced

defeat. He thanked government allies' parties, adding that

they had always proved that they were with the government.

He said that opposition had hold public meetings, marches

He said that 'Maqsood 'Chaprasi' was the actual problem

of opposition, adding that how billions of rupees came

into the accounts of Rs15000 salary employees. He said

that Shahbaz Sharif had to answer it. He said that now

again they were talking about no confidence to blackmail

and announced resignations which were flopped.

successfully passed the legislation.

Faisal Iaved who is also Chairman S

land on citrus exports. Group Leader Sargodha Chamber of Commerce & Industries Chaudhry Amir Atta Bajwa pointed out the unavailability of a modern citrus laboratory in Sargodha and stressed the need for subsidies, from citrus grower to

industry levels. Later, the president visited the stalls of citrus with a variety of Kinnows, Mussami, Succri, Red-blood and other varieties put on display and lauded the efforts of the Sargodha Chamber of Commerce & Industry.



ISLAMABAD: SAPM Senator Dr. Sania Nishtar welcomes German BMZ delegation at Ehsaas One Window Center. - DNA

Light rain likely in GB, Puniab, KP

ISLAMABAD: Partly cloudy weather with light rain and light snowfall is likely in Potohar region, central or south Punjab, KPK, Gilgit Baltistan and Kashmir during the next 24 hours. According to the synoptic situation, a shallow westerly wave was present over upper and central parts of the country. Cold and dry weather is expected in most parts of the country during the 24 hours, cold and dry weather prevailed over most parts of the country, while very cold in hilly areas. However, rain occurred in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Kashmir. The rainfall recorded during the period was Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Cherat 06 mm, Peshawar (AP 05, City 02), Parachinar 02, Attock 01 and Kashmir: Muzaffarabad 01 mm. – APP

next 24 hours. During the last

the government for NRO. - DNA Senate unanimously passes OGRA (Amendment) Bill 2022

PPP Senator Sherry alleged that authorities are being directly given directions from the IMF

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In another setback to the opposition, the Senate on Thursday unanimously passed Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) (Amendment) Bill, 2022, the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (Second) Amendment Bill, 2022 amid protest of the opposition members.

The bills were moved by Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Ali Muhammad Khan, while the opposition members opposed the amendments in the OGRA Bill and termed it against the provincial autonomy.

Pakistan People's Party Senator Sherry Rehman alleged that authorities are being directly given directions from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Senate should not be made a party in such issues, she added. Later, the opposition staged a walkout from the house.

Taking the floor, Ali Muhammad Khan said that the government will not take any step against the constituion and the law of the land and added that the incumbent governemnt will ensure provincial autonomy. The upper house of the Parliament unanimously passed the amendments in the OGRA. Regarding the bills related to OGRA, Minister for Science and Technology Shibli Faraz said these are aimed at further empowering the regulator. It may be noted that last month, the Senate passed the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Amendment Bill with a razor-thin majority. The bill was presented by Finance Minister Shaukat Tarin amid protest by the opposition members. 44 senators, including the Senate chairman, voted in favour of the bill while 43

voted against it.

1600 cops deployed to control kite flying RAWALPINDI: The district

police, on the directives of City Police Officer (CPO), Umar Saeed Malik have deployed over 1600 cops in different city areas particularly congested localities to control kite flying and aerial firing. According to a police spokesman, the police had launched a crackdown and taking strict action against kite sellers, flyers and those involved in aerial firing while senior police officers including Senior Superintendent of Police, Operations, were monitoring the crackdown. He informed that police had arrested 690 violators besides recovering over 97,000 kites and 1800 kite flying string rolls from their possession during this season. He said that the CPO who was also monitoring the crackdown against the violators had directed the officers concerned to utilize all available resources to net the kite flying ban violators. He informed that the CPO had also appreciated police performance and directed to continue raids to take strict action against sellers and flyers. The kite flying ban violators were being dealt with an iron hand and no one would be spared, he said adding, no one would be allowed to violate the law and indulge in kite flying and selling.

The use of metal string for kite flying resulted in the loss of human lives therefore, all-out efforts were being made to stop the kite flying, he added. A special awareness campaign was also being run to control the ban violation, he said. He informed that Punjab Inspector General of Police. Rao Sardar Ali Khan had issued orders to speed up the crackdown against kite flying and aerial firing. - APP

LSM growth jumps 16.7 pc in December

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Large Scale Manufacturing Industries (LSMI) production grew by 16.7 percent during December 2021 compared to the previous month of November 2021, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Thursday.

On year-on-year basis, the LSM growth witnessed an increase of 3.8 percent in the month against same month (December) of the preceding year, whereas on average, the LSM grew by 3.4 percent during July-December (2021-22) as compared to same period of the previous fiscal year.

Solo exhibition begins at Tanzara art gallery

Tanzara Gallery takes pleasure in presenting 'Life and some other beautiful things' a solo exhibition by Shanghai based artist Irfan Cheema

PWAI, PAL organizes

"Zikr-e-Faiz"

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Progressive

Writers Association Islama-

bad (PWAI) in collaboration

with Pakistan Academy of

Letters (PAL) on Thursday

organized an event titled

"Zikr-e-Faiz" in connection

with 111th Birthday of Faiz

Ahmad Faiz. Eminent schol-

ar Amer Sindh presided over

the ceremony while Salima

Hashmi was guest of honour

on the occasion. Speaking

on the occasion Chairman

PAL Dr. Yousuf Khushk,

Haris Khaleeq, and Masheel

Fatima shed light on the life

and literary contributions

of Faiz Ahmad Faiz, said a

Dr Anwar Ahmed, Arshad

news release issued here.

Mahmood, Arshad

heed, ex Chairman PAL Dr.

Qasim Bughio, Akhtar Us-

man, Dr. Salahuddin Dar-

wesh, Dr. Arshad Mehraj,

Faqeer Sain, Wasif Arshad,

Najma Rehana, Farheen

Khalid, Mahafia Sheikh,

Fatima Usman, Tahir Islam

Askari and others paid trib-

While Dr. Anwar Ahmad,

Rahat Saeed, Dr. Najeeb

Jamal, Dr. Shah Muham-

mad Marri and Prof. Noor

ul Amin Yousafzai attended

the event virtually via zoom.

The speakers said Faiz

continually was one of

the best modern Urdu

poet, adding, his work was

written in fairly strict lit-

erature while his poems

maintained a casual, con-

versational tone, creating

tension between the elite.

ute to Faiz Ahmad Faiz.

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Tanzara Art Gallery Thursday organized a solo exhibition under the titled 'Life & some other beautiful things' by Irfan Cheema aiming to showcase the hidden talent of artistic work. The exhibition will continue till February 23 under complete Standard operating procedures (SOPs). Tanzara Gallery takes pleasure in presenting 'Life and some other beautiful things' a solo exhibition by Shanghai based Pakistani artist Irfan Cheema who is known for his timeless still life paintings ,said a press release issued here. He is a classical realist painter, but his paintings are more than an imitation of what is seen. He has the magic of capturing the essence of the vignette that he replicate son canvas. His paintings which may all be described as beautiful make references to beauty in its various guises and attributes such as pattern and decoration nature and sensuality clarity of colour luminosity and convincing detail and to symbolic references of femininty and temporality. Beauty seems to be almost embedded within the very subject he paints. His work overall celebrates nature life and heritage of places.





Textile

exports

likely to touch

\$21b mark

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Information and

Broadcasting Farrukh Habib on Thursday cited prudent economic policies of Prime

Minister Imran Khan as a

main reason behind revival

of the textile sector playing

crucial role in boosting the

'Textile industry was in

tatter when Prime Minis-

ter Imran Khan came into

the power. Textile exports

jumped to \$10.9 billion

with 25% increase in seven

months of the current finan-

cial year due to the best pol-

icies and by the end of the

fiscal year they are expect-

ed to reach \$21 billion," the

country's exports.

Briefs

Dr Faisal expresses pleasure on visit of Bill Gates

ISLAMABAD: Special Assis tant to Prime Minister on National Health Services, Regulations, and Coordination Dr Faisal Sultan on Thursday expressed deep pleasure on the first-ever visit of Microsoft owner Bill Gates to Pakistan.

In a tweet on the arrival of American business tycoon, Dr Faisal said," It is a pleasure to welcome Bill Gates on his first-ever visit to Pakistan." He said that the planned engagements of Bill Gates included a review of progress on polio eradication, a visit to the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) and Ehsas Program as well as meeting the President and the Prime Minister and the health leadership of the provinces. - APP

Babar Awan distributes 'Insaf Sehat Cards'

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to Prime Minister and Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Zaheer-ud-din Babar Awan on Thursday distributed Insaf Sehat Cards among the lawyers of Islamabad Bar Association. Speaking at the distribution ceremony here, the minister said about 5,500 lawyers of Islamabad and their families would benefit from the facility.

Awan said the facility was being extended on the directions of the prime minister to provide coverage to every deserving citizen of Pakistan, under which the eligible person would be entitled to an annual healthcare worth Rs 1,000,000.

Awan highlighted three important milestones of the government. The first was the universal health coverage under the SehatSahulat-Programme of Prime Minister Imran Khan, he said. "It is a step towards a welfare

state," he remarked. The second important landmark, he said, was the effective handling of the Covid-19 pandemic. Pakistan's response to the global pandemic received praise from all over the world, he added. Awan said that Rs 400 billion were utilized under different schemes to provide direct relief to people all across the country during

Dr Mazari: No development without women's participation

the contagion. - APP

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Human Rights Dr. Shireen Mazari on Thursday said that women empowerment and protection of their rights is a central pillar of Pakistan development paradigm. She said this while addressing virtually the third extraordinary session of the Ministe rial Council of the Women Development Organization of the OIC. She said the constitution of Pakistan guarantees fundamental rights to both men and women in the light of Islamic injunctions and protects women against discrimination and exploitation. She said Pakistan is a signatory to several international commitments on gender equality and women's rights. - APP

Administrator MCI assures to address issues of traders

Muhammad Ijaz Abbasi, former President ICCI and Convener MCI Committee of ICCI, said that all taxes should be collected from the current financial year

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of traders led by Muhammad Ijaz Abbasi, former President and Convener of MCI Committee of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) held a lengthy meeting with Hamza Shafqat, Administrator MCI and Deputy Commissioner Islamabad to discuss the key issues of markets. Ajmal Baloch President All Pakistan Anjuman-e-Tajiran, Khalid Chaudhry former Senior Vice President ICCI, Sardar Tahir Mehmood President Estate Agents Association, Tahir Abbasi Chairman, Ahmad Khan President & Malik Naeen Secretary General F-10 Markaz, Asad Aziz President Jinnah Supermarket & Abdul Rehman Siddiqui Secretary General, Tahir Ayub Secretary General Wholesale Fruit Market, Ashfaq Chatha Former Vice President ICCI, Chaudhry Muhammad Ali Executive Member ICCI, Raja Hassan Akhtar President Blue Area, Shehzad Shabbir Abbasi President Supermarket, YasirAbbasi from I-8 Markaz, Chaudhry Mukhtar, UmaisKhattak, Raja Majeed Convener ICCI Administration Committee and



Saif-ur-Rehman Khan Convener ICCI Police Committee were among the delegation. Talking to the delegation, MCI Administrator Hamza Shafqat announced the formation of a five-member committee which would discuss and take decisions on trade license & board tax issues and would give suggestions to the Prime Minister for revocation of trade license. About the CDA

Magistrate, Hamza Shafqaat said it is a fact that he has no notification for MCI so he should stop the hearing till the issuance of notification and not exceed the penalty given for the summary hearing in the law. He directed that at present the current vear's tax should be levied while no institution other than DMA has the authority to collect the taxes. He said that the board

tax has the same rate within the ICT limits and directed to collect professional tax from the current financial year.

Muhammad Ijaz Abbasi, former President ICCI and Convener MCI Committee of ICCI, said that all taxes should be collected from the current financial year. He said that the business community has reservations about placement of pushcarts in markets under Ehsaas Program and urged that the government should allocate a separate space for them by allotting them to locals only, instead of putting them in markets. He said that it was illegal for the union councillors to collect trade and board taxes from the traders which should be stopped and action should be taken against the selfmade contractors.

Ajmal Baloch, President, All Pakistan Anjuman-e-Tajiran said that implementation of Ehsaas Pushcarts program threatens security in Islamabad, which should be reconsidered. He urged that encroachments from markets should be removed in cooperation with concerned market associations. The representatives of various markets also briefed the Administrator MCI about their key issues and gave suggestions for their solution.

Senate passed resolution

for women

empowerment

ISLAMABAD: Senate on Thursday unanimously passed a reso-

lution recommending the government to take initiatives for em-

powerment of women and make them equal players in decision

making related to climate change and sustainability. The resolu-

tion moved by Senator SeemeeEzdi commended the efforts of

women and girls leading efforts in climate change related matters

to build a more sustainable future for all. It acknowledged that

the women were effective and powerful leaders and change

maker for climate adaptation and mitigation. The resolution

also appreciated that the barriers were being removed by the

parliament and the government to create linkages between

In connection with the 30th anniversary of Kojhlay incident

in Azerbaijan, Senate also passed a resolution urging the

international community to bring peace in the region. The

resolution moved by Senator Kauda Babar endorsed to con-

gratulate Azerbaijan for getting its occupied territories liber-

ated. The resolution reaffirmed Pakistan's eternal support to

the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. - DNA

gender, environment and sustainable development.

minister tweeted. - APP IRSA releases 128226

ISLAMABAD: The Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 128226 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 36133 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in the Indus River at Tarbela Dam was 1411.01

feet, which was 19.01 feet

higher than its dead level of

1,392 feet. Water inflow and

outflow in the dam was re-

cusecs water

corded as 14100 and 59000 cusecs respectively. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1140.70 feet, which was 90.07 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet whereas the inflow and outflow of water was recorded as 7807 and 55000

cusecs respectively. – **APP** PMC to address issues of Balochistan's students

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Medical Commission Council on Thursday decided to make the final policy for the regularization of students already enrolled in three newly recognized medical colleges of Balochistan. According to PMC, the council and Chief Secretary Balochistan discussed the matter of regularization of students inducted in the three public medical colleges of Balochistan prior to their recognition.

In the Council meeting, the Chief Secretary Balochistan, Secretary Health lochistan, and the Principals of the three newly recognized medical colleges gave a detailed briefing to the Council on the issue of regularization of students who were irregularly inducted in three public medical colleges of Balochistan. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Federal minister for law and justice Farogh Nasim presenting the Criminal Law Amendment Bill 2022 to speaker National Assembly, Asad Qaiser. – DNA

firmly with govt: Kanwal Shuzab

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Secretary of Planning, Development and Reforms Kanwal Shuzab on Thursday said the government was in contact with its allies and had complete faith in them who she claimed stood united, firmly with the government. Opposition's multiple sittings with political parties are nothing more than futile efforts against the government, she said while talking to a private news channel. The parliamentary secretary said: "Every party has political right to have meetings with others but we have faith in the unity of our allies with the government.'

She vowed to continue fighting against the corrupt mafias of the country till the last breath of every worker of her party. She also said that due to opposition's poor policies

the country was facing huge economic loss. She also pointed out the government's initiative to uplift poor people in hard situation brought about by the pandemic and also termed 'Ehsaas Programme' one of the world's biggest overty alleviation programme. She also appreciated Health facility Card for every family. "About one milbenefiting anlion people are nually form this facility which is unprecedented. The economy is ishing on right positively flourdirection indicators are positive", she con-

Allies stand united, UPBC hails UK decision to assist UN for Afghan fund critical moment for the in-

ISLAMABAD: UK-Pakistan Business Council Chairman Mian Kashif Ashfaq on Thursday hailed the the decision of UK government for co-hosting an upcoming United Nations' virtual summit for raising \$4.4 billion fund to help address the growing humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. Talking to a delegation of think tank led by Mian Muizzuddin Mahmmod, here he said that international aid conference will be organized next month to help alleviate the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. He said the virtual pledging conference was aimed at helping the UN raise US \$4.4 billion for Afghanistan, the largest amount it has ever requested for a single country. The UN has repeatedly warned of the looming humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan and has called on the international community to support the people of Afghanistan in this difficult time, he added. He said UPBC "welcomes donors from around the

globe to join together to save the lives and futures of Afghans." He said last month, the UN launched an appeal to raise \$4.4 billion in aid to help over 24.4 million Afghans needing urgent humanitarian support to survive.

Mian Kashif said that donor countries, UN agencies and members of the Afghan civil society are expected to join hands in the virtual event. Speaking on the occasion Muizzudin Mahmood said that the conference was a ternational community to step up support in an effort to stop the growing humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. He said the scale of need was unparalleled and consequences of inaction will be devastating,". He said last year, the UK committed £ 286 million to support Afghans. Following the collapse of the former government. Afghanistan's central bank's assets were frozen by US and the international development

assistance was cut off. - APP Asim Abbasi lauds Khushhal Khan for his exceptional work

ISLAMABAD: Asim Abbasi, a widely praised director of blockbuster projects like Cake and Churails, praised Khushhal Khan for his exceptional work. Paki stan's proud filmmaker AsimAbbasi has proven himself with his body of work that clearly speaks for his principles. His projects are generally loved for strong story-lines and well-crafted characters. Asim's film Cake and his recent web series titled Churails have portrayed women in strong roles. His projects challenge the hypocrisy of patriarchal societies that vanquish women and their rights. AsimAbbasi praised Khushhal Khan, a model turned actor, who has been the talk of the town in recent times with his eye-catching ad campaigns for various brands. Khushhal first came under the spotlight during a clothing campaign, which made him a 'national crush'. He has also done drama serial Qissa MeherbanoKa and Bebasi, as well as tele-film AikHai Nigar. Recently, Asim Abbasi took to Instagram and wrote with a picture of Khushhal, "Perhaps the single biggest joy in what I do is getting to work with an eclectic mix of vulnerable, perceptive and ultimately incredible human beings we call 'actors'. Real people who embody the souls of fictional characters and in the process render themselves emotionally bare in front of strangers". "No words of mine will ever do justice to their talent or their hard work, but this is just my way of saying thank you to all those who are a part of our new series for Zindagi and Zee5. I am honoured that he said yes to me," he added. - APP

AIOU's Matric/FA exams to begin from March 1

Special teams have been constituted to supervise and monitor examination process. There is a 'zerotolerance' policy against any kind of unfair practice

ISLAMABAD: Final exams of Matric, I.Com and FA programs offered in semester Autumn 2021 of the Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) will begin across or workplaces. All possible the country from March 1 sity (AIOU) will begin across the country from March 1 (Tuesday) and will continue till April 12. According to the 🔼 Controller Examination, Dr. O Muhammad Ajmal Choudhury, roll number slips are being dispatched to all the students at their a `zero-tolerance' policy against any postal addresses and also uploaded on students' CMS accounts in exam and grade tile. Students can access their cms account through enrollment.aiou.edu.pk.

Username and passwords have already been shared with them. As per the instruc-

efforts have been made to nesure transparency in the entire exams' process. Special teams have been consti-

tuted to supervise and monitor kind of unfair practice. Strict vigilance system is enforced during the exams' process. The students are directed to follow COVID-19 SOPs, wear face masks and maintain social distance in the examination halls. They are also advised to bring their CNIC. - APP

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05

Environmental woes

AHORE'S distinction as the cultural capital of Pakistan may be well known but it's also infamous as a den for playing havoc with mother nature. If the sporadic smog crisis wasn't enough, a latest study conducted by Britain's University of York declared the Ravi River as the most polluted river globally. Certain pharmaceutical drugs, caffeine and other toxic waste have reportedly been found in the river which implies the level of danger for surrounding settlements. On the other hand, the government is adamant to develop a riverfront development project on Ravi's basin which might generate economic prosperity but the environmental cost would be insurmountable. Pakistan is already amongst the most water-stressed countries in the world which are at the brink of drought and famine if sustainable measures aren't taken under the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to contain the impending consequences. One of the key reasons is a population boom which resulted in horizontal developments of unplanned nature to emerge in some instances that caused higher environmental damage. Ideally, vertical housing and corporate developments should have been promoted with countermeasures in place in case of natural calamities such as earthquakes.

While national and provincial legislations such as National Water Policy and Punjab Water Act are in place, they mostly look good on paper given the nature of inefficient and corruption-ridden governance. Lahore's groundwater is already at a critically low level and any further misuse of scarce resources shall prove detrimental.

Other cities such as Karachi have their stories to tell which point out how resources are mismanaged. It all points towards a crisis which has the potential to lead to a civil conflict or even military skirmishes with India over scarce resources.

While Prime Minister Imran Khan is amongst the leading voices globally when it comes to tackling climate change, his stance on Ravi's urban development project needs immediate reconsideration for the sake of ecological factors.

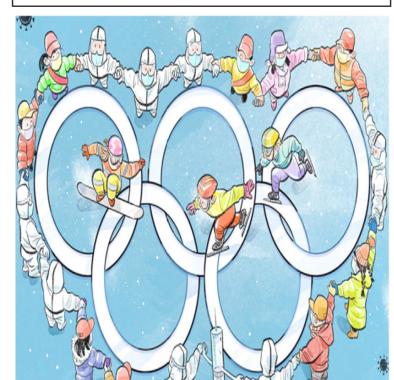
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Off: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad



Hand in hand

Polluted waters

Thas not been long since Punjab was under dense fog, especially in and around Lahore. Now we find that not just the air but the river flowing through Lahore is also the world's most polluted waterway. It contains active pharmaceutical ingredients posing a threat to the environment, local flora and fauna and people's health. This revelation – if we can call it so – the University of York has made in a study on pharmaceutical pollution of the world's rivers. The study has detected pharmaceutical particles such as caffeine, elements of drugs used for diabetes and epilepsy, nicotine, and even paracetamol in the river.

The Ravi, written about by poets and painted by artists, has been reduced to a drain full of human and industrial waste. An unbridled dumping of effluent has been going on for long, flouting all laws that various governments enacted but failed to enforce. One of the most significant causes of this water pollution is industrial waste emanating from factories on both sides of the river. The Ravi is not alone in its misery; other major and minor waterways across the country have been facing the same problem. It appears that both federal and provincial governments have not been implementing relevant laws to prevent water pollution in the country. This is neither rocket science nor a difficult task if the relevant departments and ministries were serious about taking action against the culprits. There are numerous waste disposal laws in place and if implemented they can eliminate - or at least reduce – pollution of ground and river waters across the county. On top of it all, despite the increasing pollution, the government decided to build an entire new city on the river basin of the Ravi - euphemistically naming it the Ravi Riverfront Urban Development Project. Yes, India is also responsible for diverting drains towards Ravi, but no excuse can absolve the authorities responsible in Pakistan for keeping rivers clean. If India has diverted Hudiyara drain to River Ravi, the government must take up this issue internationally. Now, especially after this new report, Pakistan has solid ground to advocate its case against pollution emanating from across the border. But most important is the control of our own polluting industries that contaminate the river basin. Environment protection agencies and civil society organisations must take this report seriously and put pressure on the government to implement all relevant laws in letter and spirit. The lives of our future generation depend on how we act now in this moment.

Accelerate sustainable actions to combat impact of Covid-19

Zahra Ali Khan



The US, India and Brazil have seen the highest number of confirmed cases, followed by the UK, Russia and Turkey

HE new Covid SARS-CoV-2 (COV-ID-19) pandemic has been recorded as extraordinary in late history, leaving a worldwide impact including high paces of mortality and severe psychological deterioration, economic recession, and supported social confinement for billions of individuals. The impact this emergency has had on populace psychological well-being, both in the short-and long term is obscure. There is negligible amount of proof with regards to the intense stage emotional wellness effects of huge scope pandemics across networks. Assembling early proof of the effects of COVID-19 is crucial for illuminating psychological well-being administration conveyance as the pandemic and its lengthy impacts proceed.

The long hauling novel corona virus disease emerged as the deadliest and the most unprecedented pandemics in the annals of global crisis, causing worldwide unrest, fear, and expiration of countless human lives. As per the present reports according to WHO, corona virus is affecting more than 219 countries, with a total of 415.5 million confirmed cases, including 5.8 million reported deaths across the globe, these may not include unreported cases due to mild symptomatology and 71,640,365 new cases. The US, India and Bra-

zil have seen the highest number of confirmed cases, followed by the UK, Russia and Turkey. Very few places have been left untouched.

The widespread morbidity and fatalities associated with the recurrent waves have led to a mass economic recession, exhaustion of medical equipment and resources, occupational pressure alongside educational distress, and a myriad of psychological implications due to unmet needs and agonizing National and International measures that infringe on personal freedoms to combat the disease are among the key stressors that undeniably augment the widespread emotional distress and run the risk of psychological illnesses associated with Covid-19.

Thereof, the deadly virus marks an unmanageable public health crisis and declared as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern, unfamiliar in the last century, the corona virus pandemic has reported to impact the psychological resilience of an overwhelming majority of individuals across the globe besides being catastrophic for physical health. The 2019 pandemic has toppled the natural course of existence for practically all the nations in the world. The resultant strategic instructions of social isolation, nationwide lockdowns and stay-in place (mass home confinement) directives have instigated significant effects in terms of mental health including loneliness, stress, anxiety, depression, frustration and uncertainty. The current statistics of COVID-19 show that the psychological effects of contagion and quarantine is not restricted merely to the fear of contracting the virus. Factors such as separation from loved ones, loss of opportunity, vulnerability with regards to the progression of the disease, andpervasive feelings of helplessness have surfaced to cause collective hysteria, panic, and elevated anxiety amongst the populations ranging from mild to severe mental health problems.

Public health emergencies impinge on the health, safety, and welfare of both individuals (causing insecurity, confusion, emotional turmoil, and stigma) and communities (owing to monetary losses, work and school closures, shortage of resources for testing and treatment, and lacking conveyance of

necessities). These impacts decipher into a scope of emotional retorts, unhealthy behaviors (such as excessive substance use), and resistance to public health mandates (such as home confinement and vaccination) in individuals who acquire the illness and in the overall population. Broad research in disaster mental health has established that emotional turmoil is omnipresent in affected populations — an inference certain to be reverberating in populations affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Lastly, spiritual health is another aspect of well-being to acknowledge, more steadfastness in prayers and faith is a prominent hallmark of bolstering resilience and inner peace. It is observed that those who dynamically engaged in these strategies and withstood their relationships managed to overcome the challenges to mental health imposed by the COV-ID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile media headlines can be emotionally disturbing, contact with pandemic-related news should be limited and monitored. Because parents usually underrate their children's distress, receptive discussions should be persuaded to tackle children's reactions and concerns. Health education related to Covid-19 ought to be enhanced utilizing online platforms. Telemedicine & Telecounselling should be implemented in areas where mental health services are inadequately represented. Government officials, medical professionals, mental health practioners should provide appropriate information to mitigate the impact of anxiety, frustration, and negative emotions which signify barriers to the appropriate management of social crisis and psychological consequences related to pandemic. Executing community-based reforms to sustain resilience during the COVID-19 crisisis the need of hour. The psychosomatic effect of fear and anxiety needs to be clearly identified as a public health priority for both authorities and policy makers who should implement behavioral strategies to ease the burden of disease and dramatic mental health concerns of this outbreak.

-The write is a Regular contributor towards SDGs, Human Rights Activist, & at present an M.Phil Scholar in Psychology. Email: zahra.i.akhan@gmail.com

The West – united on Ukraine, divided on Russia

Marwan Bishara

The Biden administration reckons the mistake that should not be repeated is not Iraq, but Georgia, which Russia, albeit provoked, invaded in 2008. Or for that matter, Ukraine in 2014, when an undeterred Russia moved in and annexed Crimea

FTER months of military buildup and weeks of intensive diplomacy, the crisis in Ukraine is at a critical juncture. It may turn towards a military confrontation or towards a negotiated resolution.

Either way, Ukraine and the rest of Europe are likely to pay the price. They would have to make the big concessions for peace and the greater sacrifices in war.

That is why, leading European powers France and Germany are trying hard – harder than either Russia or the United States – to end the crisis peacefully and to bridge the differences between the nuclear superpowers, but without appeasing the Kremlin or angering the White House. Like the US, EU countries have vowed to take massive punitive measures against Russia in case of an attack on Ukraine.

But unlike Washington, Brussels is avoiding threats and ultimatums in favour of appealing to Russia to lift military pressure from Ukraine's borders and to accept a diplomatic roadmap to peace and security. Though they are the world's third and fourth-largest weapons exporters, France and Germany have thus far refrained from sending arms to Ukraine to avoid provoking or rather angering Moscow.

This has once again put the two continental powers at odds with the US and the UK, which have been enthusiastic suppliers of arms to Ukraine, as British Prime Minister Boris Johnson follows in his predecessor Tony Blair's footsteps, becoming the US president's own English poodle.

Yet, both sides have been super careful to tone down their differences to avoid the kind of diplomatic showdown witnessed on the eve of the war against Iraq in 2003. Paris and Berlin proved Washington and London wrong and the blowback from the invasion of Iraq was a total nightmare for Western unity, security and credibility.

But the Biden administration reckons the mistake that should not be repeated is not Iraq, but Georgia, which Russia, albeit provoked, invaded in 2008. Or for that matter, Ukraine in 2014, when an undeterred Russia moved in and annexed Crimea.

By raising the alarm, US President Joe Biden does not want the West or NATO to be caught off guard again, or to live with Putin's fait accompli. For the US president, "Putin has no soul" and therefore cannot be trusted.

By contrast, the more pragmatic Europeans, notably the Germans, do not

think of Russian souls and spirits; they think of Russian gas and nukes. Europe is largely dependent on Russian energy sources, and is in a short range of its nuclear missiles. The EU is also Russia's largest trading partner, accounting for more than a third of its total trade.

It is in that context that France helped broker the ceasefire between Russia and Georgia in 2008, and established, along with Germany, the "Normandy Format" in 2014 to facilitate face to face negotiations between Russia and Ukraine, which paved the way for the Minsk agreements in the framework of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Although these were welcome developments to avoid further war at the time, there is a widely held belief that Georgia and Ukraine were coerced to sign unfavourable accords under Russian military threat, all of which explains why Moscow is so adamant and Kyiv is so hesitant about their implementation. Today, as the US clenches its fist and the EU extends a hand to Russia, the Kremlin may wonder if they are playing good-cop bad-cop in order to gain time, arm Ukraine, and defuse Russia's momentum. Or, more likely, that their disagreements are real and could be exploited in Moscow's favour.

Putin made his position crystal clear in a 2007 landmark speech at the Munich Security Conference 16 years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, accusing the US of "having overstepped its national borders in every way" and denouncing its almost "uncontained hyper use of force" in a world where no one feels safe.

And for the past 15 years, the logic of Putin's strategy from Georgia to Syria through Ukraine has been to counter that of the US. It is no wonder, he sounds sceptical of US strategic designs to the point of disdain.

Putin's nuanced approach to Western interests has led him to engage Europe on Ukrainian security, while insisting, to France's chagrin, on engaging America, and only America, on issues concerning Russian and by extension European security.

Europe may be helpful in Ukraine, but only the US can provide Russia with the necessary guarantees regarding NATO's expansion, missile deployment, and global security.

It is perhaps in this spirit that Russia now says it is pulling back troops from the borders, signalling a possible diplomatic opening on its own terms – one that could further divide the West.

The European powers may well insist that their subtler strategy is bearing fruit and demand that the US give diplomacy room to succeed.

But Biden, who thus far has rejected Putin's core security demands, is sure to push for more pressure on Russia and, regardless of the outcome, insist that the Europeans abandon all plans for strategic autonomy and get behind the US in a united front against Russia and its new best friend, China.

Either way, US-led NATO, which until recently was deemed irrelevant, even "braindead", is back at the centre of Western security architecture thanks to Putin's bellicosity.

Squeezed between two imperialist powers and divided among themselves, the Europeans should not let their desire for a third way between Russia and the

US become a distant dream.

-Courtesy: Al Jazeera

GCC holds first meeting with Afghanistan's de facto rulers

Dr. Abdel Aziz Aluwaisheg



GCC countries have been at the forefront of humanitarian efforts in Afghanistan

Gulf Cooperation Council delegation on Monday met for the first time with representatives from the de facto authorities in Afghanistan, aka the Taliban, in Qatar. Previously, representatives from individual GCC member states had met with the group in various capacities, mostly to discuss the delivery of humanitarian assistance, security and logistics. While the mere fact that a meeting such as the one that took place in Doha was an event in itself, the participants managed to exchange valuable information and

get important messages across. Paradoxically, since the war in Afghanistan ended, the country has descended into a humanitarian crisis because of economic isolation, the drying up of financial resources and the inability to provide basic government services. At the Doha gathering, GCC representatives stressed the importance of addressing the urgent humanitarian needs of the people of Afghanistan, as international reports depict a grim reality. According to the UN World Food Programme, Afghanistan is becoming the world's largest humanitarian crisis, with its needs surpassing those of Ethiopia, South Sudan, Syria and Yemen. Tens of millions of lives are at stake. The WFP found 22.8 million people could face acute risk, while 8.7 million face emergency levels of hunger, indicating a serious risk of widespread famine. The UN estimates that 97 percent of Afghans could fall

into poverty during 2022. GCC countries have been at the forefront of humanitarian efforts in Afghanistan. The King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center has maintained a regular flow of aid to the country, as have relief agencies in other GCC countries. At the Doha meeting, GCC representatives expressed their readiness to contribute further to mobilizing international and regional resources to provide humanitarian assistance and improve economic conditions in Afghanistan. They

also addressed some of the challenges fac-

ing humanitarian work, including ensuring the security of aid convoys to enable them to deliver aid to their intended recipients. Another issue that the GCC representatives communicated was the need for Afghanistan to remain closely engaged with the international community and to listen to its expectations and concerns. This applies especially to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, UN bodies, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, whose political, security and economic advice can be instrumental in getting Afghanistan the help it needs. If there is any delay in living up to the international community's expectations and dealing with its concerns or in carrying out the obligations the de facto authority has made regarding combating terrorism and respecting human rights, including the rights of women and children, Afghanistan's troubles may intensify.

The meeting stressed the importance of continued engagement in contributing to preserving Afghanistan's security and stability and meeting the humanitarian needs of the country's people. However, this engagement did not imply political recognition of the new order in Afghanistan. It provides for cooperation on practical issues, especially humanitarian assistance and combating terrorism, while getting first-hand insights into developments on the ground and progress made in the different issues discussed in Doha.

Ooha. -**Courtesy: Arab News**

Bill Gates appreciates...

From Page 01

tirelessly to ensure polio never paralyses a child again. During the meeting,

the prime minister thanked

the Bill & Melinda Gates

Foundation for its continued

support and partnership

with the Government of Pa-

kistan for the eradication of

The prime minister under-

lined that the government

is fully committed and de-

termined to eliminate this

debilitating disease from

PM Imran Khan asserted

that Afghanistan, being the

primary source of polio in-

cidence in Pakistan's two

bordering provinces, re-

quires urgent international

support to avert the hu-

manitarian crisis. "Pakistan

is providing full support to

40 million Afghan people

in need of basic ameni-

ties," the prime minister

informed the philanthropist.

During the meeting, the

prime minister also direct-

ed deputy commissioners

of the districts adjoining Af-

ghanistan borders, particu-

larly the southern districts

of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, to

remain vigilant and proac-

tive against the spread of

The task force paid tributes

to the 36 frontline workers

and 14 law enforcement

personnel who lost their

lives while administering

the polio vaccine to chil-

dren across the country, the

statement from the PM Of-

the poliovirus.

the poliovirus.

the country.

Briefs

No-trust move...

From Page 01 hold the Opposition responsible if it doesn't respond to their concerns.Continuing her criticism of Prime Minister Imran Khan, the PML-N leader said that the premier starts speaking ill of other countries whenever he visits a country.

"He ruins the [friendly] relations with another country on his way back to Pakistan," she said.According to Maryam, Pakistan stands alone in the international community and not even its friends are willing to help."Imran Khan didn't only destroy the economy, but also the foreign policy [of Pakistan]. He went to China to ask for money but he couldn't even get that." Maryam requested PM Imran Khan to avoid making foreign visits. She said that the premier should be "locked inside a room of the Prime Minister's House" for now.Maryam asked all the parties, including the political allies of the ruling party, to step forward for the people's cause because it is a battle between the people and power.

Whatever has happened recently has reminded me of the last days of [former president] Musharaf's regime, Maryam said. "I recall that day when the judges and chief justice were pulled by the hair and dragged on Shahrah-e-Dastoor," Maryam said referring to Mohsin Baig's arrest.

"When I look at Imran Khan's situation, I remember Musharraf's regime. Mohsin Baig was good in your eyes when he collected Rs1 billion for you but when he criticised [the government], you started leaping

Russia staging...

From Page 01 exchanged fire on Thursday across a frontline that divides them, in what West-

ern officials described as a possible pretext created by Moscow to invade. Biden ordered Secretary of State Antony Blinken to change his travel plans at the last minute to speak at a United Nations Security Council meeting on Ukraine. "The evidence on

the ground is that Russia is moving toward an imminent invasion. This is a crucial moment," U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, told reporters.

Russia denies planning to invade its neighbour and said this week it was pulling back some of the more than 100,000 troops it has massed near the frontier. Washington says Russia is not withdrawing, but in fact sending more forces.

"We see them fly in more combat and support aircraft. We see them sharpen their readiness in the Black Sea," Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said at NATO headquarters in Brussels. "We even see them stocking up their blood supplies."

"I was a soldier myself not that long ago. I know firsthand that you don't do these sorts of things for no reason," said Austin, a retired Army general.

Zelensky admits...

From Page 01

citing resistance within the alliance. "We as a country would like to join NATO and have reached out to them for years," he told the German daily Bild.

"But the process has stalled. There are causes and reasons for that. Not only Russia is against Ukraine joining." Zelensky said "individual NATO member countries support Moscow in its position", calling it an "open secret".

He declined to name the countries, saying he was still hopeful they would come around.

"We don't have it easy with these countries and don't want any risks or diplomatic conflicts," he said.

Zelensky said the Ukrainian people should be able to decide whether the country ioins NATO but that a referendum at this point would make little sense. "The road into NATO and the EU is a very long one. Ukraine needs some security guarantees along the way," he said, asking for the support of NATO

member states. - APP

Inter-band competition concludes at PAF complex

Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force was the Chief Guest at the closing ceremony

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: PAF Inter-Band Competition 2021-22 concluded at PAF Complex, Islamabad. Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force was the Chief Guest at the closing cer-

General discipline, dress and instruments inspection, marching in columns and drawing different patterns were part of threeday annual Musical Fiesta. Four PAF Brass Band Units displayed dexterity of professionalism and created magic with their tunes. Moreover, in connection to Diamond Jubilee cele-

brations of independence of Pakistan, a special saga was performed by all participating units. While playing tunes of national and folk songs, all Band Units drew collectively the digit "75 surrounded by Crescent." Besides, Brass and Pipers Bands from Sister Services, Student Bands of Saleem Nawaz Fazaia College, PAF Base Masroor and Fazaia Inter College, PAF Base Minhas also participated as guest performers.

The Chief Guest awarded trophies and prizes to Winner Band, Best Band Master and Best individual performers. The Chief Guest also appreciated performance and artistic pursuits of all the participants.



Sensational Henry slays SA with 7 wickets



SPORTS DESK

OVAL: New Zealand's Matt Henry made a memorable return to Test cricket in the opening match against South Africa and the 30-year-old said it was "surreal" to match a benchmark set by Richard Hadlee, who cheered him on at the Hagley Oval on Thursday.

Henry's seven for 23 blew away South Africa who were bundled out for 95, their lowest against New Zea-

land, and put the home side in the box seat. It was a stunning display of pace bowling by Henry, playing his first Test in eight months only because Trent Boult is away on paternity leave.

Only Ajaz Patel (10-119) and Hadlee (9-52) have returned better Test figures by a New Zealander. Hadlee. who was present at the ground to cheer Henry, had also claimed 7-23 against India in 1976. "You've got to kind of pinch yourself a little bit when you hear those stats and to be

able to share that with Sir Richard Hadlee is pretty special," Henry said. "It was a pretty surreal mo-

ment really. World Test champions New Zealand finished day one on 116-3 and are eyeing a decisive first-innings lead after Henry routed South Africa. The right-arm quick said his knowledge of the venue came in handy. "I think just playing here at Hagley and having that experience and knowing what my lengths were and how to operate [helped]. As a bowling group, I think we bowled really well together and we were able to create pressure at both ends and not really let them go anywhere, which is probably key to how we got the wickets."

This is Henry's 15th Test since his 2007 debut against England. Being in and out of the squad had not helped, but Henry said his positive outlook had kept him motivated. "It's not always easy at times, but you try not to focus too much on those external things you can't control, making sure I'm still in that mindset of just trying to keep getting better.

That's led me moment - where I can keep coming in and stay positive and not get too caught up in those external things

Bayern snatch draw at Salzburg in UCL last 16

News Desk

AUSTRIA: French winger Kingsley Coman spared his side's blushes with a late equaliser as Bayern Munich laboured to a 1-1 draw away to Red Bull Salzburg in the Champions League last-16 first leg on Wednesday.

Coman prodded the ball in at the far post in the last minute of

normal time to cancel out Junior Adamu's first-half opener and save Bayern from a

first away defeat in the competition since 2017. Bayern arrived in Austria looking to bounce back from their shock defeat to Bundesliga minnows Bochum on Saturday, but there were early signs of the same defensive wobbles which had plagued them at the weekend. A mistake from Niklas Suele opened up a chance for Brenden Aaronson after just a few minutes, as Salzburg snapped at the heels of the Bayern back line. The visitors also had chances at the other end, but continued to look vulnerable and Salzburg deserved their lead on 21 minutes. A soaring long ball from Mohamed Camara opened Bayern up on the counter-attack, and Adamu curled the ball in with an elegant first-time finish. Adamu had come on as an early substitute for the injured Okafor, and he and his fellow forwards continued to unsettle the Bayern defence before the break. The hosts had a penalty appeal waved away just before half-time, before sitting back and soaking up pressure in the second half.



fice said. President confers...

From Page 01 Washington, Bill Gates is a co-founder of Microsoft Corporation, the world's largest personal-computer software company. Currently, he co-chairs the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation with Melinda French Gates, supporting a wide range of public health projects, granting aid to fight transmissible diseases such AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, as well as widespread vaccine programs to eradicate polio.

The Foundation is playing a critical role for the elimination of polio in Pakistan as well as supporting the financial system through various interventions.

It focuses on eliminating global inequities and increasing opportunities for those in need through programs addressing global agricultural and economic development, medical research and public health initiatives in developing countries. In 1975, Bill Gates started Microsoft with a vision of "a computer on every desktop and in every home" which has now been realized in many parts of the world.

Parliament going...

From Page 01 Lahore High Court Bar Association. Bilawal Bhutto said Pakistan was founded by Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who was a lawyer; late prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto gave the country its first constitution. "There could be no democracy without the rule of law," he said, adding, "Therefore, the supremacy of the constitution in the

country is a must.' Bilawal said his mother late Benazir Bhutto and his father former president Asif Ali Zardari were implicated in false and fabricated cases. "But later, courts set them free which vindicated their innocence,' he claimed. He went on to say that his grandfather ZAB's hanging was a judicial murder. "But he still lives in people's hearts," he added. Bilawal stated that no nation can prosper without the rule of law because it acts as a bridge between the people and the government of the country. The PPP leader said that it was Zulfikar Ali Bhutto who gave Pakistan democracy and the Constitution. Democracy is not possible without law, he added

The PPP chairman further said that his party believed in rule of law and that was why they played an important role in the restoration of the judiciary. Bilawal said that no nation can

prosper without the rule of law because it acts as a bridge between the people and the government of the country. PPP chairman further said that our party believes in rule of law that is why we played an important role in restoration of judiciary.

PM for further expanding Pakistan-Austria ties

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Thursday emphasized the need to further expand and deepen bilateral ties between Pakistan and Austria in diverse sectors, including higher education, renewable energy, Information Technology and tourism.

The prime minister said this as he had a telephone call with Austrian Federal Chancellor Karl Nehammer.

Their conversation focused on review of bilateral ties, situation in Afghanistan, and peace and stability in the region. Stressing on the importance of economic dimensions of Pakistan-Austria relations, the prime minister appreciated Austrian investments and commercial collaboration with Pakistan. He stated that Pakistan-Austria Fachhochschule-Institute of Applied Sciences and Technology in Haripur, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, was an exemplary manifestation of bilateral partnership, and desired enhanced collaboration in the field of higher education. As regards Afghanistan, the prime minister stressed that the international community must take urgent steps toward addressing the humanitarian crisis and preventing an economic collapse in the neighbouring country. He also highlighted the need for practical engagement to help realize the goals of a peaceful and stable Afghanistan. The chancellor thanked the prime minister for efficient handling of the situation and evacuation of Austrians and others from Afghanistan. - APP



LAHORE: Islamabad United's Azam Khan celebrating his half-century against Zalmi. - DNA

Mehmet, Ivan move in World Jr C'ships final

SPORTS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Mehmet Onur Turgut of Turkey and Ivan Iutkin of Russia moved in the final of the ITF Pakistan - Elaan - Syed Dilawar Abbas Memorial World Junior Tennis Championships here at PTF-SDA Tennis Complex on Thursday.

In the first semi-final of Boys Singles, talented Mehmet Onur was in fine touch and prevailed over Hasheesh Kumar of Pakistan. Both the players exhibited a brilliant combination of down the line and cross-court shots from the baseline till the score reached 5-5 all by holding their own serves but in the 11th game, Turgut fought bravely and was able to break the game of Hasheesh Kumar and built up the winning lead 6-5 and then in the 12th game Turgut wrapped up the set 7-5.

In the second set, Turgut started the set aggressively and broke the first game of Hasheeh Kumar, and built up a winning lead 3-1. 5th game of Kumar was the longest game of the set which was marked by long rallies and cross-court shots and Kumar reduced the lead to 3-2.

At this stage, Turgut changed the pace of the game and broke the 9th game of Kumar to seal his position in the Boys Singles final by winning the match 7-5 6-3. The match lasted 1 hr 51 minutes.

Ivan Iutkin continued his winning pace and confirmed his position for the final by defeating the 3rd seed Sherazhetdinov Ruslan

of Russia in a straight-set win 6-3 6-3. In the first semifinal of girls singles top-seeded, Romania Andra Izabella Sirbu whitewashed her opponent, Seo Hyeon Park of Korea, without conceding a single game 6-0 6-0 and will vie for the top honor to play final of girls singles. In the second semi-final, unseeded Korean Sa Rang Lim outclassed 8th seed Chsherbakova Tatyana of Kazakhstan in a straight-set win 6-2 6-0. In the first doubles semifinal, Semi Zeb Khan & Hasheesh Kumar of Pakistan moved in the final with imposing victories

from Bortnichek Nikita of Russia and Kanbargimath Dev of Romania in a straight-set 6-4 6-0 by playing high caliber and remarkable tennis. In the second semi-final top seed, Talavar Yunes of Iran and Tuna Arial Kayra of Turkey struggled hard to win their battle against Pakistani duo Muhammad Talha Khan and Muhammad Huzaifa Khan in a thrilling two-set match. Iranian and Turkish pair played aggressive took a lead 1-0 after winning the first set at 6-4.

In the second set, both the teams played excellent tennis and by holding their respective serves reached 5-5 games all. Talavar and





Tuna played consistent tennis and broke the 11th game of Huzaifa to build up the winning lead 6-5 and in the 12th game Tuna served excellent and did not allow their opponent to stay in the match and winding up 7-5. The match lasted 1 hr 5 minutes. In the Girls Doubles event; unseeded Eun-

soo Lee (KOR) & Sa Rang Lim (KOR) made the major upset by beating the top seed in a straight-set and other unseeded pair Taira Abildayeva (KAZ) & Tatyana Chsherbakova (KAZ) beat the second seed in a well-contested three sets match.

Boys Singles (semifinals): Ivan Iutkin (RUS) beat Ruslan Serazhetdinow (RUS) 6-3 6-3; Mehmet Onur Turgut (TUR) beat Hasheesh Kumar (PAK) 7-5 6-3.

Girls Singles (semifinals): Andra Izabella Sirbu (ROU) beat Seo Hyeon Park (KOR) 6-0 6-0; Sa Rang Lim (KOR) beat Tatyana Chsherbakova 6-2 6-0.

Boys Doubles (semifinals): Sami Zeb Khan (PAK) & Haseesh Kumar (PAK) beat Nikita Bortnichek (RUS) & Dev Kanbargimatch (ROU) 6-4 6-0; Yunes Talavar (IRI) & Aril Kayra Tuna (TUR) beat Muhammad Talha Khan (PAK) & Muhammad Huzaifa Khan (PAK) 6-4 7-5.

Girls Doubles (semifinals): Eunsoo Lee (KOR) & Sa Rang Lim (KOR) beat Andra Izabella Sirbu (ROU) & Melisa Ugur (TUR) 7-5 6-3; Taira Abildayeva (KAZ) & Tatyana Chsherbakova (KAZ) beat Munisa Ashurbekova (UZB) & Olga Sorochkina (RUS) 5-7

Business / World



Briefs

Japan eases border controls amid criticism

TOKYO: Japan announced Thursday it will ease its tough COVID-19 border controls by increasing the number of people allowed to enter each day and reduce quarantine requirements following criticism that its current policy is unscientific and xenophobic.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said the daily entry cap will be raised to 5,000 including Japanese citizens and foreign residents, from the current 3,500 beginning March 1. The decision is good news for foreign scholars, exchange students and business travelers who have been unable to enter, but does not cover tourists.

He says quarantine requirements for entrants will be shortened to three days from the current seven, and those with proof of a negative COV-ID-19 test and a booster shot can skip self-isolation. Japan has banned nearly all non-resident foreign entrants since early in the pandemic. The country, which saw a significant decrease in infections in the fall, briefly announced an easing in November but quickly reversed the decision after the omicron variant emerged in other countries. Kishida on Saturday said he was considering easing border measures based on a scientific assessment of the omicron variant, infection levels in and outside Japan and quarantine measures taken by other countries.

Most of Japan is currently under virus-related restrictions. Infections only recently started to show signs of slowing, likely because of delayed booster shots. - APP

HK hospitals hit 90% capacity

HONG KONG: Hong Kong's hospitals reached 90% capacity on Thursday and quarantine facilities were at their limit, authorities said. as the city struggles to snuff out a record number of new cases by adhering to China's "zero tolerance" strategy. To ease the strain on the city's healthcare system officials said they would take a different approach to hospitalization and isolation policies and allow some patients to be discharged sooner. The move comes amid reports of patients being treated on beds out-

working-class neighborhood of Sham Shui Po. Hong Kong reported 6,116 new coronavirus infections on Thursday. Any person in the city who is infected with COVID-19 must be admitted to a hospital or community

side a hospital in the city's

isolation facility. Under the new approach, people who are infected with COVID-19 but present mild symptoms in hospitals and isolation government-run facilities will be allowed to leave after just seven days if they test negative on the seventh day and do not live with anyone in a high-risk group, such as senior citizens, pregnant women or immunosuppressed people. - APP

Israeli missiles strike Syrian town

DAMASCUS: Israel has fired several surface-to-surface missiles targeting sites south of Syrian capital Damascus, Syrian state news agency SANA reported.

The shelling struck a town south of Damascus on Wednesday evening, causing material damage.

This is the second Israeli aerial strike on Syria this month, after it targeted anti-aircraft batteries on February 9 in response to what it said was a missile fired from Syria.

A Syrian soldier was killed and five wounded in the attack near Damascus earlier this month. "The Israeli enemy carried out a strike with several surface-to-surface from the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights, targeting Zakiya town at about 11:35pm (21:35 GMT), SANA reported, citing a military source. A war monitor said the target of Wednesday's shelling was a Syrian army post.

"The shelling targeted a regime military post," Rami Abdel Rahman, who heads the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, told AFP news agency. The UK-based monitor relies on a wide network of sources inside Syria. - APP

Uzbekistan-Pakistan: a course towards practical cooperation

The issue of developing a "Roadmap" for the practical implementation of terms of the Agreement on transit and trade, signed during the visit of the Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to the Republic of Uzbekistan was considered

News Desk

TASHKENT: A meeting was held at the Ministry of Investment and Foreign Trade of the Republic of Uzbekistan with a delegation of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan headed by First Deputy Minister of Commerce Muhammad Saleh Farooqi.

During the meeting, issues of deepening Uzbek-Pakistani cooperation in investment, trade, economic, transport and logistics areas were discussed.

In particular, measures were discussed to speed up the coordination of the draft Agreement on Preferential Trade between the two countries

The issue of developing a "Roadmap" for the practical implementation of the terms of the Agreement on transit and trade, signed during the visit of the Prime Min-



ister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to the Republic of Uzbekistan (on 15-16 July 2021), was considered.

Further steps were discussed on the practical implementation of the project for the construction of the trans-Afghan railway corridor "Termez - Mazar-i-Sharif - Kabul - Peshawar".

An agreement was reached on organizing visits of Pakistani business delegations to Uzbekistan to deepen industrial cooperation.

Following the meeting, the parties agreed to maintain active interaction in all areas of cooperation considered. During the visit of the Pakistani delegation, additional meetings are planned with the leadership of the Ministry of Transport, the Central Bank, the State Customs Committee, other ministries, departments, industry associations and commercial banks of Uzbekistan.

China tells US to stop 'bullying' in trade, rejects accusations

BEIJING: US allegations that China is causing harm to workers and violating trade commitments are inconsistent with international economic and trade rules, the Chinese government has said. "China's economic achievements in the past 40 years are due to its successful reform and opening-up policy," Commerce Ministry spokesman Gao Feng said on Thursday.

Gao's remarks come on the heels of a new assessment report released by the US Trade Representative's office on Wednesday, which accused China of "violating, disregarding and circumventing WTO rules to achieve its industrial policy objectives." The annual report said the US needed to take new strategies and update its domestic trade tools to deal with China's "state-led, non-market policies and practices." Gao hit back. "We believe, as a member of the World Trade Organization, that the US is obliged to abide by WTO rules, instead of creating a new set under the name of pursuing new strategies to practice unilateralism, protectionism, and bullying.'

He said that his government hopes the US would "adopt rational and pragmatic economic and trade policies toward China" and would bring China-US relations back to the right track of stable development. The US House of Representatives has passed a sweeping legislation aimed at increasing American competitiveness with China and boosting US semiconductor manufacturing. - DNA

Well-known int'l travellers visit liberated Shusha

Foreign Desk

BAKU: In the run-up to the 30th anniversary of the Khojaly genocide, famous travelers from 21 countries have started their visit to Azerbaijan's liberated lands with a trip to Shusha. Azertag has reported.

The travelers began their journey by visiting the Shusha fortress walls. They were told that the fortress, built by Karabakh's ruler, Panahali Khan, had long protected the city from invasions and was a symbol of invincibility. During the occupation, Armenian vandals vandalized the fortress walls. Following the liberation of Shusha from occupation, restoration work was

carried out in the fortress. The visitors examined the shot-down statues of famous Azerbaijani individuals - KhurshidbanuNatavan. Bulbul, and UzeyirHajibayli - in Shusha's central square. Reza Deghati, a world-renowned photographer, told guests about the events he witnessed during the First Karabakh War and informed visitors about the situation in Shusha before and after the Armenian occupation. The travelers then went to YukhariGovhar Agha's mosque. Guests were informed that religious monuments, including mosques, were vandalized by Armenians during the 30-year occupation. Repair

and restoration work in

these mosques began im-

Belarus could host

nuclear weapons due

to threat: Lukashenko

Foreign Desk

MINSK: Belarusian leader Alexander Lukashenko said

Thursday his country could host nuclear weapons if it faces

an external threat as tensions soar between ally Russia and

the West over Ukraine. "If necessary, if such stupid and

mindless steps are taken by our rivals and opponents, we

will deploy not only nuclear weapons, but super-nuclear and

up-and-coming ones to protect our territory," Lukashenko

He also said that Belarus is considering buying several Rus

sian S-400 surface-to-air missile systems to place them near

the capital Minsk, as Reuters reported. Earlier, Belarusian

Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei said that "not a single'

Russian soldier will remain in the country after the mas-

sive joint maneuvers by Minsk and Moscow on Ukraine's

border end. "Not a single (Russian) soldier or a single unit

of military equipment will stay on the territory of Belarus

after the drills with Russia," Makei told a press conference

in the capital Minsk. He said the Defense Ministry and

Russia this week announced an end to some military

drills near Ukraine's borders, including those in Bela

rus. But the West remains fearful of a possible attack

on Ukraine, saying it has yet to see evidence of real

de-escalation. NATO has called Russia's drills in Belarus

particularly alarming, saying they marked a "dangerous'

moment for Europe. Makei hailed a phone call between

Ukraine's and Belarus's defense ministers this week as

"positive," saying it had helped to "ease tensions."

Lukashenko had made this clear.

said, according to the state-run Belta news agency.

mediately after the liberation of Shusha.

Later, the guests visited the house museum of People's Artist Bulbul in the city of Shusha, who made significant contributions to the development of Azerbaijani musical culture and was instrumental in the formation and development of the professional vocal school. They were also informed about the museum's activities and history. The last stop on the trip to Shusha was Jidirduzu, where visitors marveled at the stunning scenery of the surrounding mountains. Azerbaijan marks Victory Day on November 8, when Shusha, known as the crown

of Karabakh, was liberated

nia accepted its defeat and Azerbaijan's historic victory ended six weeks of fighting in Karabakh. Given the liberation of Jabrayil, Fuzuli, Zangilan, Gubadli, Shusha, five settlements, about 300 villages, strategic heights, as well as Aghdam, Kalbajar and Lachin, every step of the nation's path to victory, which began on September 27, can be seen as a page of pride. In all, 2,908 Azerbaijani soldiers got martyred in the war and six servicemen are still missing. During the legendary battle of Shusha, highly trained and skilled Azerbaijani special forces servicemen scaled cliffs

and liberated Shusha from a

Armenian occupation.

In November 2020, Arme-

after almost three-decade brutal occupation. Iran needs nuclear energy, not nuclear bomb: Khamenei

TEHRAN: Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Thursday said Tehran will continue to develop "peaceful" nuclear capacities, dismissing claims that the country seeks a nuclear bomb. His remarks came in a televised address to mark the anniversary of 1978 uprising in the northern Tabriz city against the

Pahlavi rule. Khamenei said Iran's nuclear energy program was designed to "preserve the country's independence" even as talks continue between Tehran and world powers in Vienna to salvage the 2015 nuclear deal.

"We too will be in urgent need of peaceful nuclear energy sooner or later. If we do not think about this today, tomorrow will be too

empty then," he said, adding that the world is becoming "increasingly reliant on nuclear energy.

The Iranian leader stressed

that Iran's nuclear program was "peaceful", dismissing claims made by Western countries that Tehran is seeking a nuclear bomb as "absurd and senseless". "We seek peaceful use of nuclear energy. They know this, but they want the Iranian nation to face difficulties when it needs nuclear energy in the future," Khamenei said. Khamenei said apart from ongoing efforts in Vi-

the impact of sanctions. His remarks came a day after Iran's lead negotiator in Vienna, Ali BagheriKani, announced that the parties

were "closer than ever" to

enna to lift sanctions, Teh-

ran will continue efforts

aimed at boosting domestic

production and neutralizing



clinch an agreement, with a caveat that "nothing is agreed until everything is agreed". "Our negotiating partners need to be realistic, avoid intransigence and heed lessons of past four years," Kani said, adding that it was the "time for their (US and Europeans) serious

decisions". The marathon talks underway since last April resumed in November under the new government in Tehran, which has adopted a tougher stance, conditioning the revival of the landmark deal on the removal of sanctions, verifications and guarantees.

MKO trafficked 400 own members to Europe TEHRAN: An Albanian historian and journalist says the coun-

try's police have alerted the US embassy that members of the so-called Mujahedin-e-Khalq Organization (MKO), an anti-Iran terrorist cult, is involved in various criminal activities in Europe, including human trafficking, with possible links to the Daesh Takfiri terrorist group. Olsi Jazexhi, citing Albanian media reports, said in a tweet on Thursday that some MKO operatives, headed by the terrorist group's leader, Maryam Rajavi, and based in a camp near the capital, Tirana, have attempted to traffic over 400 of the group's own members to France. Jazexhi added that a number of the terrorist cult's members have been detained for trafficking people from the Middle East to Europe, who were probably Daesh members. "Good news for Iran, bad news for #FreeIran, #MaryamRajavi terrorists in #Albania. Albanian police have alerted @USEmbassyTirana that the mojaheeden have trafficked 400 #mojaheden to #France and probably members of DAESH to Europe". - Agencies



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaiser addressing the stakeholders meeting organized by Pak-Afghan joint chamber of commerce and industry. - DNA

Australian, UK PMs slam China over 'rights violations'

China claims Taiwan as its breakaway province, but the former has been insisting on its independence since 1949 and has established full diplomatic relations with at least 15 countries also called on China to protect which the former British colony

WEB DESK

LONDON: The prime ministers of Australia and the UK on Thursday reiterated grave concerns over alleged human rights situation in China's Xinjiang, and called on Beijing to respect the rights of the Muslim minority in the region. According to a joint statement, Scott Morrison met virtually his British counterpart Boris Johnson and discussed bilateral relations

and the situation in China and the

Indo-Pacific region. The two lead-

ers expressed grave concerns

over "credible reports" of human

rights violations in Xinjiang, and

the rights, freedoms and high degree of autonomy for Hong Kong enshrined in the Sino-British Joint Declaration and the Basic Law. Several countries have and (a) political virus.

accused China of ethnic cleansing of Uvghurs in Xinjiang. Beijing, however, denies any wrongdoing, dismissing the allegations as "lies In Hong Kong, Beijing introduced the National Security Law in 2020 in response to massive pro-democracy protests. Critics say the law reduces the special

administrative region's autono-

my, and violates "one country,

two systems" principle under

was handed back to China. The UK and Australian leaders also reiterated their support to Taiwan to participate in international organizations as a member, which China opposes.

China claims Taiwan as its breakaway province, but the former has been insisting on its independence since 1949 and has established full diplomatic relations with at least 15 countries.

Morrison and Johnson opposed any unilateral actions that could escalate tension in the region, reaffirming their stance against Beijing's "attempt to dominate" the disputed South China Sea.

"The leaders recognized the importance of countries being able to exercise their maritime rights and freedoms in the South China Sea consistent with the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea," the readout said.

Last year, Australia, the US, and the UK signed the AUKUS security pact, which is seen as another attempt to counter China's expanding economic and military influence in the region. It will allow Australia build nuclear-powered submarines using technology provided by the US

China says the deal will undermine regional peace and stability, and intensify arms race.

The leaders welcomed the entry into force of the Exchange of Naval Nuclear Propulsion Information Agreement, making it possible for the UK and the US to share naval nuclear propulsion information with Australia.

Australia is also part of the Quad, a strategic grouping with the US, Japan and India said to be aimed at reducing Chinese domination in Asia-Pacific. The two leaders also expressed grave concerns over the current situation in Mvanmar, where the military took power last year, and called for the immediate cessation of violence against civilian populations and release of all the detainees.

'PKK. Daesh unite against Turkey

ANKARA: The PKK and Daesh terrorist groups unite against Turkey and even exploit migrants for their aims, Interior Minister Süleyman Sovlu said Thursday, Speaking to Ankara bureau chiefs in the capital, Soylu underlined that even though terrorist groups continue to engage in human trafficking and oil trade, Turkey has stepped up security at its borders and has not allowed terrorist elements or ammunition to cross.

It has been reported several times that the PKK's Syrian wing, the YPG, and Daesh cooperate, with the former freeing members of Daesh from prisons, endangering the lives of the local people. "Our capacities are strong both within our borders and across," Soylu said. Moreover, the minister underlined that some nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) of Europe and other countries are being used as a shield to conduct espionage while some members of these NGOs also engage with the PKK in Syria frequently.

Saving that Turkey will not allow these aid activities to be exploited, Soylu emphasized that the necessary authorities have been warned. Those fleeing Syria's areas controlled by the YPG, first go to Atmeh, then to Idlib and then try to come to Turkey, he elaborated. - APP

France announces Mali troop pullout after decade

PARIS: France announced on Thursday that it was withdrawing troops from Mali due to a breakdown in relations with the ruling junta, after nearly 10 years of fighting a militants insurgency. The Mali deployment has been fraught with problems for France. Of the country's 53 soldiers killed serving in West Africa, 48 of them died in Mali.

"Multiple obstructions" by the ruling junta meant that the conditions were no longer in place to operate in Mali, said a statement signed by France and its African and European allies The decision applies to both 2,400 French troops in Mali, where France first deployed in 2013, and a smaller European force of several hundred which was created in 2020 with the aim of taking the burden off the French forces.

"We cannot remain militarily engaged alongside de-facto authorities whose strategy and hidden aims we do not share," President Emmanuel Macron told a news conference, saying that he "completely" rejected the idea that France had failed in the country. Macron said that French bases in Gossi, Menaka and Gao in Mali would close but vowed that the withdrawal would be carried out in an "orderly" manner. – APP

EU summit looks to boost ties with Africa

BRUSSELS: EU and African leaders meet for a two-day summit starting Thursday, seeking to reboot ties with pledges of major investment in the face of competition from China and Russia. Relations have been ham-

pered by a raft of problems: from disputes over coronavirus vaccine supplies, to curbing illegal migration, a wave of coups in Africa, and the growing clout of Russian mercenaries in Africa.

"Our common ambition, Africans and Europeans, for this summit, is to achieve a renewed, modernised and more action-oriented partnership," said Senegal's President Macky Sall, who currently chairs the African Union. President Emmanuel Macron of France, whose country holds the European Union's rotating presidency, hopes the first joint summit since 2017 can burnish his grand ambition of forging an "economic and financial New Deal with Africa".

The EU is aiming to convince the 40 African leaders in Brussels that Europe is their "most reliable partner" by fleshing out an investment initiative that aims to mobilise 150 billion euros (\$170 billion) of public and private funds over the next seven years. The scheme is the first regional part of the EU's Global Gateway - a \$300-billion-euro worldwide investment blueprint meant to rival China's Belt and Road initiative. - APP



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Briefs

Pak Navy drill SEASPARK-22 commences

DNA

KARACHI: Pakistan Navy's major maritime exercise SEASPARK-22 opening ceremony was held here and Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi graced the occasion as chief guest.

The biennial exercise is steered to assess war preparedness and validate operational plans of Pakistan Navy against envisaged threat spectrum, especially in maritime domain, said a Pakistan Navy media release. In the opening remarks, Deputy Chief of Naval Staff (Operations) presented the overview of the exercise. He emphasized that challenges of Grev-Hybrid warfare and contemporary geo- strategic environment necessitate adroit response by Pakistan Navy. He also highlighted factors impinging upon type and character of warfare in contemporary environment warranting continuous appraisal of environment and reassessment of own plans.

He affirmed that Pakistan Navy remained combat ready and fully cognizant of its responsibility to safeguard national maritime interests during peace and war times. He stressed that exercise SEASPARK-22 would provide impetus to Pakistan's resolve of maintaining peace and stability by promoting safe and sustainable maritime environment in the region.

The exercise SEASPARK-22 will

be conducted in Arabian Sea along Pakistan Coast. All naval platforms and assets of Pakistan Navy, Special Forces and Pakistan Marines detachments along with other elements of Pakistan Maritime Security Agency (PMSA), Pakistan Army and Pakistan Air Force will participate in the exercise. The exercise is being attended by representatives of Ministries of Defence, Maritime Affairs, Interior and National Security Division.

Saudi army chief on 'historic ' first visit to India

News Desk

NEW DELHI: The Saudi Arabian army chief paid a "historic and landmark" first visit to India this week, according to a press release from the Indian Ministry of Defence. Saudi Arabia Land Forces Commander Lieutenant General Fahd Bin Abdullah Mohammed Al-Mutair arrived in India on Monday and ended his three-day trip on Wednesday, according to the statement. The press release noted it was the first-ever visit by a serving Royal Saudi Land Forces Commander to India and marked the "deepening bilateral defence cooperation" between the two countries, adding that it aimed to further bolster cooperation.

The Saudi chief met Indian Army Chief Manoj Mukund Naravane in New Delhi on the second day of his visit and was presented a ceremonial guard of honour. The two army chiefs later had "significant bilateral discussions" with the Indian general briefing his counterpart on security aspects, the Indian defence ministry said.

The Indian army's Additional Directorate General of Public Information also said the two "discussed ways to further enhance the bilateral defence cooperation". The press release noted that the relationship between India and Saudi Arabia had been growing due to common interests of economic prosperity, eliminating terrorism and mitigating the effects of climate change. "Defence diplomacy forms one of the major tenets of the overall relationship," it added.

Swiss president tests positive as curbs lifted

WEB DESK

GENEVA: President Ignazio Cassis has tested positive for Covid-19, the government said on Thursday – the same day Switzerland lifted almost all remaining coronavirus restrictions despite high case numbers.

Wednesday's "test came back positive and the president went into self-isolation this morning as soon as he learned of the test result," a government statement said. "Mr Cassis has no symptoms and is in good health."

The former cantonal doctor, aged 60, who holds the annually-rotating Swiss presidency alongside his foreign affairs brief, will return to his office next week. Cassis struck an upbeat tone on Wednesday as he announced Switzerland was joining European countries including Austria, Britain, the Netherlands, Denmark and Norway in dropping almost all of Covid-19 restrictions. "The light is definitely there on the horizon," he told a press conference, adding it was time to "learn to live with the virus". "We shouldn't be afraid of a return to normal, but we shouldn't be too enthusiastic either," he said.



ISLAMABAD: Spouses of Ambassadors of Turkey, Nepal, South Korea, European Union, Indonesia, Yemen, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Brunei, Syria, Palestine visited Art Gallery located in F 9 Park to witness an exhibition organized by Hunarkada. – DNA

NAB establishes "Pakistan Anti-Corruption Academy"

Honorable Mr. Justice Javed Iqbal, Chairman NAB said that NAB is an apex anti corruption organization of the country which has assigned a gigantic task of eradication of corruption from country

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Justice Javed Iqbal, Chairman NAB chaired a meeting to review performance of Training and Research Division of NAB at NAB Headquarters. During the meeting, it was informed that on the directions of Honorable Justice Mr. Javed Iqbal, Chairman NAB, NAB has established its own state of the art "Pakistan Anti-Corruption Academy (PACA)" at NAB Headquarters as NAB always accords high priority for training/capacity building of its Investigation Officers on regular basis on modern lines as training is continuous process which is an effective tool for improvement and maintaining the quality of Investigation Officers.

Honorable Mr. Justice Javed Iqbal, Chairman NAB said that NAB is an apex anti corruption organization of the country which has assigned a gigantic task of eradication of corruption from the country. He said that this requires an extremely dedicated and highly trained manpower to undertake this responsibility. He said that NAB attaches great importance to Human



Resource Development of its officers especially investigation officers.

Accordingly, he said that Pakistan Anti Corruption Academy (PACA) has been established by NAB which will act as a hub of disseminating and practicing the knowledge in the field of anti-corruption. The Academy will offer standardized and tailor-made training, seminars, conferences, opportunities for dialogue and networking, and will act as an anti-corruption think-tank to

empower professionals for the future white collar crimes challenges. It will provide a new, holistic approach to anti-corruption education and research, delivers and facilitates anti-corruption training for practitioners from all sectors of governance, and will provide technical support and assistance to a wide variety of stakeholders.

He said that Pakistan Anti Corruption Academy (PACA) draws on an unwavering drive towards excellence,

innovation, and a commitment to rendering itself accessible to sister institutions across the globe by using multi-faceted training methods, tools and techniques. He said that corruption is a major hurdle in the process of development and progress. PACA will strive to develop a hallmark and culture and practice of integrity and accountability.

He said that "Pakistan Anti-Corruption Academy (PACA)" has been mandated with 5 core functions including Training & Capacity Building of officers of NAB and others in the field of Financial Crimes Investigation, Forensic Examination, and Prosecution; Carrying out research and reformation projects propose improvement based on need assessment, system analysis research and latest good practices in fields of financial crimes and prevention of corruption, Training & Research in Collaboration with International and National Institutes; Forensic Examination Development and Curriculum Development & Accreditation of Investigators in the field of financial crimes and anti-corruption

Tarin asks FBR to settle PPMA issues at priority

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister on Finance and Revenue Shaukat Tarin held a meeting with delegation of Pakistan Pharmaceuticals Association headed by its chairman Qazi M. Mansoor Dilawar at Finance Division.

Chairman PPMA shared about the problems being faced by the Pharmaceutical manufacturers particularly the concerns pertaining to refund of sales tax. These unresolved matters result in unnecessary delays and thus impact overall working efficiency of PPMA. Furthermore, they requested for the resolution of the mentioned issues. Federal Minister on Finance and

Federal Minister on Finance and Revenue Shaukat Tarin commended the contribution of pharmaceutical manufacturers. It was accredited that this sector has substantial role in the economic development of the country. He assured that all such reservations of PPMA will be resolved at earliest time possible. The Finance Minister further directed FBR to carry out all possible measures for settlement of the issues of pharmaceutical industry. The PPMA delegation thanked the Finance Minister for ensuring the full support for resolution of their issues.

Red warning issued as UK braces for 'Storm Eunice'

LONDON: Britain's meteorological service on Thursday issued a rare "red weather" warning with the approaching Storm Eunice packing wind gusts of 100 miles (160 kilometres) per hour and set to cause "danger to life". The impending storm forced Prince Charles, the heir to the throne, to postpone a trip to South Wales on Friday "in the interests of public safety", his office said. The storm is currently barrelling its way across the Atlantic, and is expected to cause "significant disruption and dangerous conditions due to extremely strong winds" when it makes landfall on

Friday, the Met Office said. Ireland's meteorological office also issued an alert for Storm Eunice, warning of "severe and damaging winds" and the possibility of coastal flooding. Another storm, Dudley, caused transport disruption and power outages when it hit Britain on Wednesday, although damage was not widespread. The government announced on Thursday that it was holding a meeting of its emergency "COBR" committee to dis-

cuss the response to the two storms. The Met Office warned that roofs could be blown off, trees uprooted and power lines brought down when Eunice arrives, with southwest England expected to bear the brunt. Roads, bridges and railway lines are also likely to be closed, causing delays and cancellations to bus, train and ferry services as well as flights. – Agencies

15 years on, Samjhauta Express victims seek justice

ISLAMABAD: Despite lapse of 15 years, the Indian government continues to deny justice to the families of victims of the Samjhauta Express terrorist attack in total disregard to the clear evidence available.

On February 18, 2007, an improvised explosive device (IED) blast was carried out in the Samihauta train, which ran between New Delhi and Lahore, at Panipat in Haryana. The incident had claimed 68 lives, including 43 Pakistani nationals, 10 Indian citizens, and 15 unidentified persons. About 12 others, including 10 Pakistanis and two Indians, were also injured in the attack. Initially a Muslim group was blamed for the incident, but later on the National Intelligence Agency (NIA) arrested Kamal Chauhan of the Hindu extremist organization Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) in New Delhi. Chauhan was an explosives specialist, who had planted the bomb in that train. The investigations revealed that the

Iraqi envoy,

interior minister

discuss ties

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Iraq

Hamid Abbas Lafta called on Interi-

or Minister Sheikh Rasheed Ahmad

here on Thursday. Pakistan-Iraq bi-

lateral ties and issues of mutual in-

terest came under discussion during

Provision of facilities for tourists es-

pecially 'Ziareen' were also discussed

in the meeting. They stressed the

need for enhanced liaison between the

interior ministries of both countries

for visa facilitation and security co-op-

eration. The ambassador said there

was need of hour to further promote

and strengthen the Pak-Iraq relations

which were based on historic, brother-

Sheikh Rasheed said Pakistan con-

demned terrorist acts around the

world, including in Iraq. Pakistan it-

self remained victim of terrorism and

sacrificed lives of 80,000 people in-

cluding personnel of law and enforcing

agencies in war against terrorism, he

added. He said Pakistan would en-

hance travel facilities to the intending

'Ziareen' to Iraq. - DNA

hood and mutual trust, he added.

the meeting, said a statement.

said Hindu activist and several other persons had been involved in the blasts at Ajmer Dargah, Hyderabad's Makkah Masjid and Malegaon. The Hindu chauvinists also confessed their involvement in these acts of terror. The Head of Maharashtra Police Inspector General Hemant Karkare and several political commentators had called it "Hindutva Terror" or the "Saffron Terror". Later, Hemant Karkare was targeted and killed during the 2008 Mumbai operation.

It was also reported that Swami Aseemanand, an RSS leader, was found guilty before a judicial magistrate for his involvement in the attacks on Samjhauta Express, and mosques in Malegaon in Maharashtra state and Andhra Pradesh's state capital Hyderabad, besides a Muslim shrine in Ajmer in Rajasthan. Indian Army Col Prohit himself had

Indian Army Col Prohit himself had confessed to have trained Hindu terrorists to initiate an armed conflict between Pakistan and India. – APP

BRT declared Gold Standard Service

From Our Correspondent

PESHAWAR: BRT Peshawar ranked as GOLD Standard Service by International BRT Standard Committee The Peshawar Bus Rapid Transit System with its unprecedented services to the citizens of Peshawar is ranked as Gold Standard Service by the technical committee of BRT Standard, which is the highest internationally recognized standard that any BRT system can achieve.

The Technical Committee of The BRT Standard comprises of globally renowned experts on BRT, that evaluates world-class bus rapid transit BRT based on international best practices. In this regard, a formal ceremony was organized at the Chief Minister Office, which was graced by Honorable Provincial Minister Higher Education Mr. Kamran Khan Bangash, Member Provincial Assembly Syed Fakhar Jehan, Additional Chief Secretary, Secretary Transport, CEO TransPeshawar, CCPO Peshawar, DG PDA, Deputy Commissioner Peshawar, MD KPUMA, member of International BRT standard committee, representatives of ADB and AFD, and other dignitaries.

The Honorable Minister Mr. Kamran Bangash stated that it is a matter of great honor for the City of Peshawar, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Prime Minister Imran Khan's Government, that Pakistan has achieved the world highest possible ranking in Bus Rapid Transit and become the 1st in the sub-continent, 3rd Asian and 7th country worldwide to receive Gold Standard Service Ranking Award. Peshawar BRT is recipient of this award due to its passenger-oriented services, bus routes based on passenger needs, adopting clean technology for buses, improving safety, promoting non-motorized traffic and utilization of all possible and maximum resources to facilitate the public at large.

Four dead as storms pummel Europe

WARSAW: At least four people were killed as severe storms lashed central Europe on Thursday, with winds of up to 181 kilometres per hour causing

widespread travel disruption.

In Poland, gusts of up to 125 kilometres per hour (80 miles per hour) seriously damaged more than 500 homes, felled hundreds of trees and left 324,000 households across the country without power overnight.

Police said two people died and two were injured after storms toppled a large crane at a construction site in Krakow. Another person was killed by a tree that fell on his car in the west of the country. In northern Germany, a 37-year-old driver was killed by a falling tree near the town of Bad Bevensen.

The Czech Republic was also hit, with more than 300,000 households left without power and extensive traffic disruptions as fallen trees blocked roads and railways. The strongest winds with gusts of 181 kph were recorded on Snezka, the highest Czech mountain, in the north.

Three children were taken to hospital with injuries after a car accident in the southwest of the country. Wind lifted the bonnet of a car, causing the driver to swerve and crash into another car head-on. Gales also damaged or destroyed roofs across the country. – APP

Moscow expels deputy chief of US mission

WASHINGTON: Russia expelled the number two US diplomat in Moscow on Thursday as tensions built over the threat to invade Ukraine, the US State Department said.

"We can confirm that Russia expelled US Deputy Chief of Mission (DCM) to Russia Bart Gorman," a State Department spokesperson said. "Russia's action against our DCM was

unprovoked and we consider this an escalatory step and are considering our response," the spokesperson said. "Now more than ever, it is critical that our countries have the necessary diplomatic personnel in place to facilitate communication between our governments," the official said. – APP



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Iraq Hamid Abbas Lafta calls on Federal Minister for Interior,