



# Islamabad POST

Friday, February 18, 2022

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Price Rs. 20

### Bill Gates appreciates Pakistan govt for Anti-polio efforts

Detailed News On Page-01

### Belarus could host nuclear weapons

Detailed News On Page-07

### Pak-Iraq ties needed to be bolstered

Detailed News On Page-08



## Briefs

### Fawad seeks alternative solution

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hussain on 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

MANDI BAHAUDDIN: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Farrukh Habib said that Opposition Leader in National Assembly Shehbaz 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 Maqsood Chhapras'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 Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Political Communication Dr. 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

## 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 Hilal-e-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

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## 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

Continued on Page 06

### Zelensky admits Ukraine's NATO bid has 'stalled'

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

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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

## 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

WHATEVER 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.

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 launches scholarship complaint portal

### says the portal will ensure transparency in the scholarship process

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan has launched Scholarship Complaint Portal for early redressal of complaints by the students on scholarship. Addressing the launching ceremony in Islamabad on Thursday, he said the primary objective of the portal is to establish an exclusive facility for students getting education 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 provide opportunity to the segments lagging behind to grow.

He said a panel of academics will monitor the portal and new subjects and disciplines will be added for scholarships as per market demand. The Prime Minister emphasized on exploiting revolution in information technology for progress of the country. Speaking on the occasion, Minister for Federal Education Shafqat Mahmood said the government has increased the number of scholarships for post graduate and undergraduate students, which is unprecedented in the history of Pakistan. He said the government has established twenty-eight new universities and allocated 123 billion rupees for higher education.

## No-trust move the only option, says Maryam

### Asks all the parties to step forward for the people's cause

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 no-trust motion is a risk that must be taken," Maryam said while speaking to the media in Islamabad. She said that the people would



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### Parliament 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



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## Environmental woes

LAHORE'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.

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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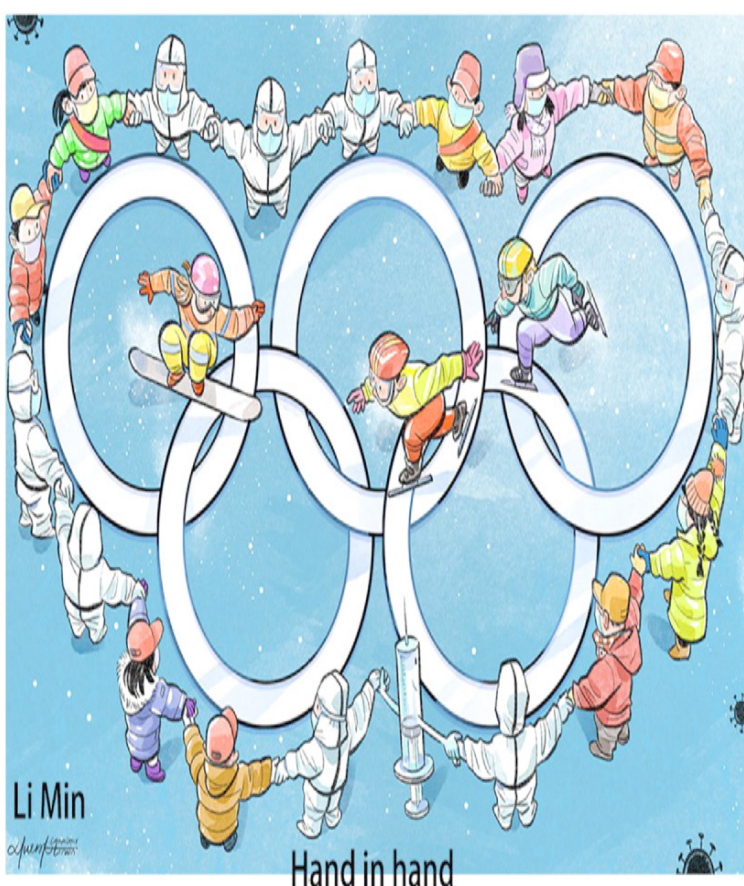
Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 02 Issue: 242

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## Polluted waters

IT has 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 country. 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

THE new Covid SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-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 5.8million 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 topped 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, and pervasive 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 COVID-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 & Telecounseling should be implemented in areas where mental health services are inadequately represented. Government officials, medical professionals, mental health practitioners 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 crisis 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.khan@gmail.com

## 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

A 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.

—Courtesy: Arab News

## 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

AFTER 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 "braintead", 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





**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 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 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-Mutairi 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 to highlight system weakness and 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.

**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 Samjhauta 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

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 "Safron 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 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.

**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 Dilwar 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 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 barreling 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 discuss 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

**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

**Iraqi envoy, interior minister discuss ties**

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Iraq Hamid Abbas Lafta called on Interior Minister Sheikh Rasheed Ahmad here on Thursday. Pakistan-Iraq bilateral ties and issues of mutual interest came under discussion during the meeting, said a statement. Provision of facilities for tourists especially '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-operation. The ambassador said there was need of hour to further promote and strengthen the Pak-Iraq relations which were based on historic, brotherhood and mutual trust, he added. Sheikh Rasheed said Pakistan condemned terrorist acts around the world, including in Iraq. Pakistan itself remained victim of terrorism and sacrificed lives of 80,000 people including personnel of law and enforcing agencies in war against terrorism, he added. He said Pakistan would enhance travel facilities to the intending 'Ziareen' to Iraq. – DNA



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Iraq Hamid Abbas Lafta calls on Federal Minister for Interior, Sheikh Rashid Ahmad. – DNA