



Islamabad POST

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Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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Legendary Australian spinner Shane Warne dies at the age of 52

Detailed News On Page-08

Women education, skill development vital: Amb. Tugio

Detailed News On Page-08



Amb. Sajjad visits special economic zone

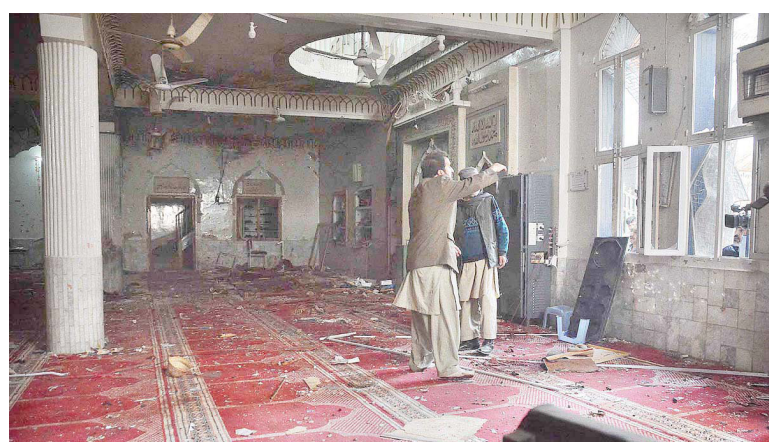
Detailed News On Page-07



Swiss, Azeri envoys condemn blast

57 martyred in mosque explosion

President, PM, Shaikh Rashid, CM KP Mahmood Khan terms the incident tragic; culprits to brought to justice



PESHAWAR: A view of Masjid Kucha Risaldar blast spot. – APP

SHAMIM SHAHID / DNA

PESHAWAR / ISLAMABAD: A powerful explosion inside a mosque here Friday martyred at least 57 worshippers and injured nearly 200 at Kocha Risaldar near Qissa Khwani bazar, Lady Reading Hospital spokesman, Muhammad Asim said. Swiss Ambassador to Pakistan Mr. Benedict in his Twitter message condemned the blast and expressed solidarity with the victims' families. Ambassador of Azerbaijan Khazar Farhadov in his Twitter

message also condemned the incident and share grief of the victim families. Talking to media persons here, the spokesman said that 30 bodies were brought to the hospital and 50 injured. He said conditions of 15 patients were critical. Emergency has been enforced in hospital and doctors on leave were called for duties. Police said the explosion ripped through a central mosque at Kocha Risaldar at Qissa Khwani where people were gathered for Friday prayers. Special Assistant to the Chief

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Blast part of 'big conspiracy'

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hussain Friday said the Peshawar blast, which claimed the lives of dozens of innocent people, was part of a 'big conspiracy against the country and vowed to thwart all inimical designs of the anti-state elements effectively.

"In the past, we have effectively tackled such conspiracies, and now too by the grace of Allah Almighty, the enemies of Pakistan will fail," the minister said in a tweet. Meanwhile, in a statement, Fawad strongly condemned the blast and expressed grief over the loss of precious lives in the tragic incident. He prayed for the departed souls and the early recovery of the injured. The minister said the investigation into the incident was being carried out, following which its details would be made public.

DNA



ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi welcoming the President of Uzbekistan Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev on his arrival at Aiwan-e-Sadr. – DNA

Uzbek President wraps up 2-day visit

It was Mirziyoyev's first visit to Pakistan

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: President of Uzbekistan returned home Friday at the conclusion of his two-day state visit to Islamabad. The Uzbek president during his stay in the capital met President Dr Arif Alvi and Prime Minister Imran Khan.

Editorial on Page 5

A number of agreements and Memoranda of Understanding were signed between the two countries during the visit of the Uzbek president. President Mirziyoyev marked the historic commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Uzbekistan. Pakistan and Uzbekistan are linked through a common faith, shared history and cultural affinities. The two countries have been closely collaborating at regional and international fora, especially at the UN, OIC, ECO, and SCO.

US official meets Afghans in UAE

NEWS DESK

DUBAI: A senior United States diplomat apologized to thousands of Afghans stranded in the United Arab Emirates and promised to speed repatriation for some to the US, months after the fall of Kabul to the Taliban last year. While pledging to do all his government could, the diplomat who spoke to journalists on Friday after speaking to the Afghans, acknowledged still not being able to answer what would happen to some

Continued on Page 06

Russian strike on Chernihiv leaves 47 dead

Top Russian general killed; Russia seizes Europe's biggest nuclear plant; top Russian general killed

CENTRELINE REPORT

CHERNIHIV: Forty-seven people have been killed following a Russian air strike in the northern Ukrainian city of Chernihiv, regional authorities said Friday. "On March 3, 47 people (38 men and 9 women) were killed by a Russian air strike on a residential area in Chernihiv," local authorities said on Facebook. Russian invasion forces also seized Europe's biggest nuclear power plant on Friday in what Washington called a reckless assault that risked catastrophe, although a blaze in a training building was extinguished and officials said the facility was now safe. Combat raged elsewhere in Ukraine as Russian forces surrounded and bombarded

Continued on Page 06

NATO rejects Ukraine no-fly zone

BRUSSELS: NATO allies rejected Ukraine's demand for no-fly zones on Friday, saying they were increasing support but that stepping in directly would lead to a broader, even more brutal European war so far limited to Russia's assault on its neighbour. Ukraine, a former Soviet republic that wants to join the European Union and Western military alliance NATO, is not a currently a member of either. Support so far has come

Continued on Page 06

Ukraine crisis: Saudi MBS offers to mediate

NEWS DESK

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman said on Thursday that the Kingdom was ready to exert all efforts to mediate between parties in the Ukrainian conflict. Speaking during a phone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Prince Mohammed "clarified the Kingdom's stated position" and said it supports efforts that leads to a political solution to end the crisis and achieves security and stability, Saudi Press Agency reported. "With regard to the impact of the Ukraine crisis on energy markets, he

reiterated the Kingdom's keenness to maintain the oil market's balance and stability," the statement said. Prince Mohammed also stressed the role of the OPEC+ agreement in this and the importance of maintaining it. The two sides also discussed relations between their two countries and ways of enhancing them in various fields. The crown prince also spoke to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine and during their phone call affirmed the Kingdom's support for everything that contributes to de-escalating the crisis and its readiness to mediate, and Saudi Arabia's support for all international efforts aimed at resolving the crisis politically.

Briefs

Japanese envoy expresses condolence

DNA

ISLAMABAD: WADA Mitsuhiko, Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, strongly condemns the bomb blast in the mosque in Peshawar today and has expressed deep grief and sorrow over the loss of precious human lives in the tragic incident. The Ambassador also offers its heartfelt sympathy to those wounded in the attacks and wish their early recovery. Japan accuses terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, committed for whatever purposes, and reiterates that no act of terrorism can be justified.

Barrister Saif, Kamran meet victims

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to the Chief Minister for Information and Public Relations, Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif and Minister for Higher Education, Kamran Bangash visited Lady Reading Hospital where and inquired about health of the injured blast victims. They visited different wards of the hospital and met with injured. They directed hospital administration to provide best medical treatment to the patients.

Holiday Notice

The offices of daily Islamabad POST shall remain closed on Saturday on account of weekly off therefore there will be no newspaper on Sunday. – Editor

Long march to continue till ending govt: Bilawal



STAFF REPORT

KHANEWAL: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that their long march will not stop till ending the Imran led government. Bilawal after reaching Khanewal addressed the party workers and participants of his Karachi to Islamabad long march on Friday evening. Just before his speech, a can-drone hit Aseefa Bhutto who got injured at her head and immediately shifted to Multan for medical treatment. Bilawal told the workers that the daughter of Shaheed Bibi is so

Continued on Page 06

Aseefa hit by drone camera

STAFF REPORT

KHANEWAL: PPP leader Aseefa Bhutto-Zardari was injured after a drone camera struck her at the party's anti-government march in Punjab's Khanewal on Friday, video footage aired on television showed. The video showed Aseefa, who was standing atop a container alongside her brother and PPP chief Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, lurching backwards as she attempted in vain to get out of the drone's way. The drone, which was mounted with a camera, was being used for the media coverage of the march, media reported, adding that Aseefa went inside the container after the device hit her. Following the incident, Bilawal's security staff got hold of the drone operator, according to media, which quoted Bilawal as saying that it was not clear whether the incident was an accident or the consequence of a deliberate act.

EU envoys' press release unacceptable: FO

European Union and those countries that signed the letter 'behaved in a non-diplomatic' manner; Danish ambassador's Tweet was 'unnecessary'

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has expressed deep concern over the press release issued by the European Union (EU) Pakistan. Foreign Office spokesman Asim Iftikhar Ahmed said in a weekly press briefing on Friday that "it is not right to use such language against any country." He expressed concern over the use of non-diplomatic language in press releases against Pakistan. He said that embassies of European countries should not be part of such a move. "This attitude is unacceptable. Pakistan has conveyed its concern to European embassies," he said. The Foreign Office spokesman said that Pakistan had met the ambassadors of different countries and protested against it. In a joint press release issued on March

2, EU representatives in Islamabad called on Pakistan to condemn Russia's ongoing actions against Ukraine. The Foreign Minister is also reaching out to his counterparts as I noted in my opening remarks. He spoke to the Hungarian Foreign Minister today and will be talking to other counterparts in coming days. Responding to reporters, he said that Pakistani embassies in Ukraine, Hungary and Poland were working hard for the evacuation of Pakistani migrants from war-torn areas. He said that Pakistan was committed to the basic principles of the United Nations Charter: the right of the people to self-determination, non-use or threat of use of force, the sovereignty of states and territorial integrity and conflict. He added that these principles should be universally respected. Responding to a question about Danish ambassador's Tweet, he said, 'I think it is a tricky tool - the social media platforms and one has to be careful in

Pakistan requests for 'humanitarian corridor'

ISLAMABAD: As many as 1,470 Pakistani students have been evacuated from Ukraine, Pakistan's ambassador in the war-hit country Dr Noel Khokhar said on Friday. Sharing details of the evacuation of Pakistani nationals from Ukraine, he said two students are on the Hungary border and will be evacuated as soon as possible. The envoy said the embassy has safely evacuated 98 per cent of the Pakistanis from Ukraine. "Now only those few (around 30) Pakistanis are left in Ukraine who are stuck in areas of intense fight," he added. He said he has approached both Ukraine and Russia with a request to open "a humanitarian corridor" to enable the embassy to evacuate the remaining Pakistanis. On March 3, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi held a telephonic conversation with Vice President of the European Commission and High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borell. The two exchanged views on the current situation in Ukraine and the Emergency Session of the United Nations General Assembly. FM Qureshi recalled that Prime Minister Imran Khan had regretted the latest situation between Russia and Ukraine, and had shared Pakistan's hope that diplomacy could avert military conflict. – DNA

using them. Our Ambassadors also use twitter abroad, but I think we use that in a responsible manner and the important thing is that there are always certain diplomatic norms and protocols that we understand are to be followed. It is not usual diplomatic practice to say such things through media, and we have made that clear." The Foreign Office spokesman added that Pakistan was deeply concerned about the recent developments. He hoped that all efforts would be made to avoid further escalation of military and political and economic tensions, including violence and loss of life, which could pose an unprecedented threat to international peace and security and global economic stability. He hoped that the talks between the representatives of the Russian Federation and Ukraine would be successful in ending hostilities and normalizing the situation.



LAHORE: CM Punjab Adviser on Information Hassan Khawar presenting a souvenir to visiting UK delegation. Renowned journalist Mazhar Barlas is also seen in the picture. — DNA

Ehsan Bhutta posted new commissioner Gujranwala



YOOSUF BHUTTA

GUJRAT: The Punjab government on Thursday transferred secretary implementation and coordination wing of the Services and General Administration Department (S & GAD) Mr. Ehsan Bhutta and posted him as the Gujranwala division commissioner in his own scale and pay against a vacant post.

Messages pour in after Peshawar blast

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Following the deadly suicide attack in Peshawar on Friday, condemnations pour from across the country including political parties. A powerful bomb exploded inside mosque in the city of Peshawar on Friday, martyring at least 30 worshippers and wounding some 80 others, many of them critically. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Higher Education Kamran Bangash said on social networking site Twitter that he had reviewed the situation and inquire after the health of those injured in the blast at Lady Reading Hospital (LRH). On the other hand, country's political leadership strongly condemned the terrorist activity in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. President Dr Arif Alvi condemned the blast at Jamia Masjid Imamia at Qissa Khani Bazaar in Peshawar and expressed deep sorrow over the loss of precious lives. The President expressed sympathy to the families of the martyrs and prayed for the forgiveness of the martyrs and prayed for speedy recovery of the injured. Prime Minister Imran Khan has also strongly condemned the Peshawar blast. While expressing regret over the loss of precious lives and directed immediate medical aid to the injured and demanded a report on the incident. According to sources, Federal Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid called on Prime Minister Imran Khan. During the meeting, Sheikh Rashid briefed the prime minister on the security situation and detailed consultations were held on national security issues.

Kite seller held with kites

MULTAN: Jalilabad police arrested a kite seller and recovered kites and chemical thread from his possession during a raid conducted here on Friday. According to police sources, kite seller Muhammad Asif was arrested by the police. The police also recovered 300 kites and chemical thread from his possession. The criminal used to deliver kites at different markets of the city despite strict ban on kite selling and flying. Case has been registered against the outlaw, police sources added. — APP

'Free-trade' mechanism to enhance Pak-Iran mutual trade

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: Consul General of Iran in Peshawar, Hamid Raza Ghomi said the Islamic Republic of Iran is devising a holistic mechanism to carry out free-trade with Pakistan which would help cement mutual economic and trade relations between the two brotherly Islamic countries. While talking to President Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) Hasnain Khurshid Ahmad here at the Chamber's House said Pak-Iran were enjoying cordial relations owing to common culture, religion and Muslim countries, according to an official communique issued here on Friday. SCCI senior vice president Imran Khan Mohmand, former president Faiz Muhammad Faizi, former senior vice president Ziaul Haq Sarhadi, first Consul Iranian Consulate Peshawar Hossein Maliki, PS to Consul General Peshawar Intiaz Ali, Spokesman Dr Fazal Azeem, executive member Ghulam Bilal Javed were also present during the meeting. Both sides agreed to make joint efforts to enhance bilateral trade and economic relations. He said the mutual trade and economic ties between the two brotherly Islamic countries had also much improved after enforcement of the Transport Internationaux Routier (TIR) system. Ghomi informed that his country had worked on a joint mechanism to carry out free trade with Pakistan if the policy would be implemented, so it could easily achieve the set target of five billion dollars mutual trade target between the two countries. However, he said the option of barter trade

was also available to cement the mutual relationship between Iran and Pakistan.

On the occasion, the Iranian envoy suggested signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) between Sarhad Chamber and Mashhad Chamber of Commerce, Industries and Mines in Iran to launch joint initiatives for promotion of bilateral trade between the two countries.

Following an agreement between SCCI and Iranian Diplomat, the chamber has sent a MoU draft, signed by its president Hasnain Khurshid Ahmad to Mashhad Chamber of Commerce, Industries and Mines in Iran. Earlier, the SCCI chief emphasized that joint efforts should be made to enlarge mutual trade and economic relations between Pakistan and Iran.

Hasnain Khurshid pointed out that it was making it quite difficult to achieve mutual trade targets owing to lack of proper banking channels between the two countries.

He stressed the need for early completion of the Pak-Iran Gas pipeline project. An ambitious five billion dollars mutual trade target was being set between Pakistan and Iran, but in the last year, 504 million dollars trade was carried out between the two countries, the SCCI chief noted. However, he expressed optimism that after the constitution of commission or mechanism of free trade, it would be assisted to achieve the afore-stated set Pak-Iran mutual trade target.

Furthermore, he emphasized upon exchange of business delegation, holding of joint exhibitions, signing of agreements between chambers and taking benefits from each other's experiences and launching of joint ventures to cement bilateral trade relations between Pakistan and Iran.

DC for clearing dues of the contractors

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Deputy Commissioner / Administrator Metropolitan Corporation Ali Shehzad has directed the officers of MPC to prepare the pending bills of contractors within three days and make payments to them within 7 days. He issued this order while hold meeting with the contractors at Iqbal Hall Metropolitan Corporation. Chief Corporation Officer Zubair Hussain, Metropolitan Officers Infrastructure, Finance, Deputy Director Development Tahir Mehmood, Assistant Director Technical Hassan Shabbir, Assistant Metropolitan Officer Infrastructure, Superintendent Infrastructure Branch, Sub Engineers and contractors were also present. During the meeting, the contractors apprised the Deputy Commissioner / Admin-

istrator of the Metropolitan of some issues, on which the Administrator urged the Chief Officer and the Metropolitan Officers to immediately resolve the issues.

He urged the contractors to complete public welfare development schemes as soon as possible so that relief can be provided to the citizens. He clarified that the contractors are part of the district administration team and no hindrance will be tolerated in the timely payment of their bills, in this regard, if there is any problem, contact the Deputy Director Development. He asked the contractors to ensure transparency in the development work. Contractors of MPC thanked the bold decision of Deputy Commissioner and appreciated his good deeds and assured to complete the work on development projects at lightning speed.

Young boy killed in Taliban soldier firing

The victims included brother of a bridegroom were parts of a wedding procession and almost participants were celebrating the even with music through their vehicle recorders

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: A young boy was killed and another injured when a Taliban soldier opened firing against occupants of a motorcar near to Asadabad Headquarter of border Kunar province of Afghanistan late on Thursday afternoon. The victims included brother of a bridegroom were parts of a wedding procession and almost participants were celebrating the even with music through their vehicle recorders. Reports from across the border reveal that

along with other fellows were part of a wedding procession and enjoying music in their motorcars. The wedding procession while crossing over a check post near village Sheen Korak, came under firing by a Taliban soldier. As a result Qari Yaseen lost his life on the spot whereas another young boy sustained serious injuries. Soon after the deadly act, picture of killed young boy stated below 20 years went viral through social media. The viral picture resulted generating of too criticism against Taliban government from all over the world So far Taliban officials didn't issued any reaction on this incident.

A senior journalist from Kunar Afghanistan has confirmed the incident and said that the concerned Taliban soldier escaped after the violent act. Taliban officials initiated investigations and making attempts to hush off the reaction.

Taliban after coming into power on August 15th 2021 announced stock of restrictions against music's, women visits to Bazars and travelling to far flung areas etc. Taliban also shutters girls' schools and colleges. Besides the Taliban officials are also focusing attentions on victimization of rivals on political, ideological and religious reasons.

Nadeem Chan wants PM to take 'bold decisions'

STAFF REPORT

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Nadeem Afzal Chan on Friday said he is in contact with Prime Minister Imran Khan, but not willing to hold any public office. Talking to a private television channel, after resigning from the cabinet, Nadeem Afzal Chan said yet he has not decided from which party he will contest upcoming general polls. He said the establishment must have been neutral now as everyone is saying so now. "Many things can happen when the establishment plays a neutral role." Responding to a query, Nadeem Afzal Chan said only strong people are remembered in history, not the weaker ones. He advised PM Imran Khan to take 'bold decisions' with courage so that he can be remembered in the country's history.

Opposition making futile attempts: Buzdar

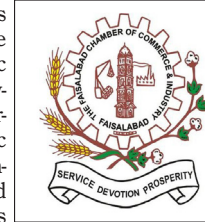
LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar on Friday said that the opposition was making futile attempts for a no-confidence move as the government had a visible majority in the number game. In a statement, the CM asserted that no-confidence move would not succeed even if all the opposition parties got united, adding that the opposition alliance should not boast about no-confidence as its member parties had already expressed distrust over it. Regrettably, the opposition had negated the national interests for personal objectives, he maintained and reiterated that the government would complete its constitutional term as it was not threatened by the opposition parties. Opposition's political plays had already remained unsuccessful and it would also face defeat in future, the CM concluded. — APP

FCCI for addressing Plastic Industry problems

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: Increased use of plastic in industrial and domestic sectors has transformed it to a full-fledged industry which would soon become the second largest sector of the economy after textile, said Mr. Atif Munir Sheikh, President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI). Addressing the Annual General Body Meeting (AGM) of the Faisalabad Plastic Association (FPA), he said that in the current era of unprecedented inflation, plastic has replaced costly metals and it is being used to manufacture cheapest industrial and domestic products for everyday use. "However, he said that despite its importance, the problems of the Plastic Industry have neither been identified nor redressed", he said and added that just a few years ago this association was created to bring all stakeholders on one platform. He said that FCCI is the mother organization of all trade bodies and we would encourage FPA to forge liaison with FCCI for the resolution of its immediate problems. He also requested the office bearers of the FPA to convince their members to get the membership of FCCI so that they could play their role in the mainstream trade politics. President FCCI also briefed them about the first ever "Pakistan Economic Conference" (PEC) scheduled to be held here from March 18-20 in Faisalabad. He said that this conference would pave the way for the direct involve-

ment of FCCI in policy making at the federal and provincial levels. He said that it would be one of the major business related events in this region and the business fraternity must contribute its role to make it a total success. Mian Javed Iqbal, leader of the National Group said that Faisalabad is poised to make speedy progress within the next coming years and we must develop its infrastructure accordingly on scientific basis to commensurate it with its steady pace of development. He said that the legendary businessmen of Faisalabad are bracing themselves to launch mega projects on Public, Private Partnership (PPP) mode. "Among these products include roads, airport, theme park, international level hotel and hospital etc", he said and added that the development of this city is our collective responsibility and we must fulfill it with a new commitment and vigor.



Earlier Rana Ibrar Ahmad, founding president of the FPA pinpointed the problems confronted by the businessmen dealing in plastic and hoped that FCCI would play its mandated role to resolve the issues of this specific sector on top priority basis. The meeting was also attended by Mian Kashif President FPA, Chaudhary Saleem General Secretary, Mr. Imran Mehmood Sheikh SVP FCCI, Rana Fayyaz Ahmed VP, Naseem Shahid Mughal Chairman All Pakistan Plastic Manufacturing Association, Mian Tanveer Ahmad and other businessmen also participated in this meeting.

Cleaning campaign initiated in Govt. educational institutions

YOOSUF BHUTTA

GUJRAT: A special cleaning campaign has been launched in government educational institutions of the province on the directive of Chief Secretary Punjab, here Thursday. On the inaugural day, Deputy Commissioner Dr. Khurram Shehzad along with teachers and students participated in the cleaning campaign of Government Zamindar High School and the lawn of the school was cleared. CEO Education Mr. Chaudhry Aurangzeb, DO Secondary Miss Rukhsana Qadeer, principal Mr. Tariq Attiq were also present on the occasion. To raise awareness of hygiene among the students under the 18-point welfare program of the Chief Secretary Punjab, led by the Deputy Commissioner, officers of the Education Management Team, teachers and the Green Champion students reached the lawns of the school by marching in the form of a rally. They

cleared the green area and made it clean and beautiful by picking leaves and other rubbish. The students of Government Zamindar High School, in the presence of the Deputy Commissioner and teachers, pledged that they would continue to work voluntarily to keep their institution, their city and country clean in future. Deputy Commissioner highly appreciated the commitment of the students to participate in the cleaning campaign and said that cleanliness has been given the status of half faith in Islam. He further said, "This campaign will be extended to educational institutions across the country." He urged the teachers to keep educating the students about the importance of cleanliness so that they would develop passion in this regard.

Tareen likely to fly home in couple of days

DNA

LAHORE: Estranged PTI leader Jahangir Tareen has decided to immediately fly back home in the light of the fast-changing political situation in the country. They said Tareen is likely to return to the homeland in the next two to three days. A meeting of the lawmakers belonging to the Jahangir Tareen group will be convened upon his return from London to make a final decision on whether or not to support the opposition's proposed no-trust move against the Imran Khan government, the sources said. They said majority of the MNAs are willing to support the opposition, however, they have given Jahangir Tareen the authority to make a final call.

People have rejected Bilawal's "long march"

The people in Badin, Talhar, Matli and Tando Muhammad Khan had given decision in favour of Pakistan Tahreek Insaf

HYDERABAD: Foreign Minister and Senior Vice Chairman Pakistan Tahreek Insaf (PTI) Shah Mehmood Qureshi on Friday said the people of Multan had outrightly rejected the long march of Bilawal Bhutto Zardari due to which he had to change the timing of his speech. Addressing a press conference at Mirza Farm, Badin before proceeding towards Matli and Tando Muhammad Khan, he said Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) was exposed in Sindh due to its wrong policies and now the people were considering not to vote for them in upcoming elections.

He said the people in Badin, Talhar, Matli and Tando Muhammad Khan had given decision in favour of Pakistan Tahreek Insaf as they accorded unprecedented welcome to the "Huqooq Sindh March". He said people belonging to Kolhi community were protesting against PPP in Matli while Bhand community had protested in Nawab Shah where Zardaris had brutally murdered their men who were protecting their agriculture lands.



Qureshi alleged that provincial ruling party was involved in victimizing political opponents because they had refused to bow down before the feudal lords. Describing Zardari as a thief, he urged the people to rise against cruelty of the feudal government of Pakistan People's party in Sindh.

Expressing his gratitude to the people of Sindh for giving respect and positive response to the "Huqooq Sindh March", Qureshi said they had to take PTI's manifesto to each and every street of the province, so that people could get rid of the Zardaris. Federal Martine Minister Ali Haid-

er Zaidi, SAPM Arbab Ghulam rahim and other party leaders also addressed the public meetings in Talhar, Matli and Tando Muhammad Khan. Later, Huqooq Sindh March proceeded to Tando Allahyar where a big public meeting would be held in the evening. — APP

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

MARCH

March 01/ Bosnia	National Day
March 03/ Bulgaria	National Day
March 06/ Ghana	Independence Day
March 12/ Mauritius	National Day
March 17/ Ireland	St. Patrick's Day
March 20/ Tunisia	Independence Day
March 21/ Namibia	National Day
March 25/ Greece	National Day
March 26/ Bangladesh	National Day
March 27/ Myanmar	Armed Forces Day



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55-member ICCI business delegation visits Dubai Expo

Rizwan Tariq, Director, Pakistan Pavilion at Dubai Expo warmly welcomed the ICCI and took them on a tour of various stalls of the Pakistan Pavilion

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A 55-member business delegation led by Muhammad Faheem Khan, Vice President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), visited the Pakistan Pavilion at Dubai Expo 2020 and lauded the efforts of Rizwan Tariq, Director, Pakistan Pavilion, for organizing an excellent exhibition of Pakistani products. Chaudhry Muhammad Masood, Muhammad Naveed Malik, Ashfaq Chatha, Ahsan Bakhtawari, Saif-ur-Rehman Khan, Chaudhry Muhammad Ali, Zia Khalid Chaudhry, Malik Najeeb, Akbar Siddique Chughtai, Imran Minhas, Fayyaz Ahmed, Kashif Akram, Zulqarnain Abbasi, Raja Waheed, Azhar Abbasi, Faizan Shehzad, Hassan Minhas, Akhundzada Adil, Shahid Abbasi,



Gulsher Sajid, Shiraz Elahi, Malik Abid, Shakeel Abbasi, Nasira Ali, Nageena Khaliq and others were in the delegation. Rizwan Tariq, Director, Pakistan Pavilion at Dubai Expo warmly welcomed the ICCI and took them on a

tour of various stalls of the Pakistan Pavilion. Expressing his views on the occasion, Vice President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Muhammad Faheem Khan praised the unique design of Pakistan Pavilion at Du-

bai Expo and appreciated the efforts of the organizers in making excellent arrangements. He said it is very important for Pakistan to participate in such exhibitions as it will give an opportunity to the business community to in-

roduce Pakistani products globally and improve prospects for further increasing the country's exports. He said that members of ICCI would also try to showcase their products at the next editions of Dubai Expo's Pakistan Pavilion.

The ICCI delegation members expressed keen interest in the various products displayed at the Pakistan Pavilion and appreciated the unique designs of stalls. Rizwan Tariq, Director, Pakistan Pavilion at Dubai Expo, gave a detailed briefing to the ICCI delegation on the occasion. He said that Pakistan Pavilion is one of the top five pavilions of Dubai Expo due to its unique design which is an honor for Pakistan. He said that Pakistan Pavilion has been divided into seven different sections including history, culture and tourism. He said that so far more than one million people have visited Pakistan Pavilion at Dubai Expo 2020 which showed its popularity in visitors. He thanked the ICCI delegation for visiting the Pakistan Pavilion and extended them all possible cooperation for their successful visit.

Prices of tomatoes, eggs, other food items go down

ISLAMABAD: The prices of various food items went down during the week ending on March 3 as compared to the previous week, according to the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI) data released by Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) here Friday. According to the data, the commodities that witnessed decrease in prices on Week-on-Week (WoW) basis included tomatoes and eggs, the prices of which declined by 27.06 percent and 7.18 percent respectively. Other products that witnessed decrease in prices included, diesel (6.43%), petrol (6.23%), garlic (3.27%), pulse Moong (0.96%), pulse Masoor (0.69%), onions (0.40%), wheat flour (0.35%), sugar (0.27%), potatoes (0.20%), pulse mash (0.16%) and gur (0.10%). - APP

Rupee gains 33 paises against dollar

ISLAMABAD: Exchange rate of Pakistani rupee strengthened by 33 paises against the United States (US) dollar in the inter-bank trading on Friday and closed at Rs 177.50 against the previous day's closing of Rs 177.83. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of US dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 177.6 and Rs 179.1 respectively. Similarly, the price of the euro was appreciated by 34 paises and closed at Rs 195.42 against the previous day's closing of Rs 197.25. The Japanese Yen remained unchanged to close at Rs 1.53, whereas a decrease of Rs 1.73 was witnessed in the exchange rate of British Pound, which was traded at Rs 236.45 as compared to its last closing of Rs 238.18. - APP

Amin-ul-Haq condemns Peshawar's blast

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Syed Amin-ul-Haque on Friday strongly condemned the bomb blast at a mosque in Koocha Bazar in Qissa Khwani Bazaar Peshawar. In a message, the minister termed the attack on worshippers in the mosque during Friday prayers as a cowardly act of terrorists. He stressed the need for unity and solidarity to defeat the anti-state elements in the country. - APP

Services' exports increase by 18.82%

ISLAMABAD: The exports of services from the country witnessed an increase of 18.82 percent during the first seven months of the current financial year (2021-22) as compared to the corresponding period of last year, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. The exports of services during July-January (2021-22) were recorded at US \$ 3944.91 million against the exports of US \$ 3320.17 million during July-January (2020-21), showing growth of 18.82 percent. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed calls on Prime Minister Imran Khan. - DNA

NVTTC trains over 74,737 people in various fields

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning Development and Special Initiatives, Asad Umar was informed on Friday that the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC) has so far trained over 74,737 people in various fields of modern technology. The minister was chairing a high-level meeting to review "Skills for All" project under PM Kamyab Jawan Programme, said a press release issued here. The meeting was attended by Dr. Shabnam Sarfraz, Member Social Sector and Devolution, Planning Commission, Chairman, NAVTTTC, Syed Jawad Hassan, Sajid Baloch, Executive Director (NAVTTTC) and others Key officials. The aim is to empower the youth of the country in various fields related to technologies. Out of the total 35,268 were trained in High-Tech Technologies (Cyber Security, Artificial Intelligence, Cloud Computing, Internet of Things, Digital Marketing etc). In addition, 39,469 youth have been trained in conventional technologies such as electrician, welder, plumber, beautician, domestic tailoring etc. He further shared that 71% trained skilled youth under the scheme are employed. This includes 20% of those who have been free lancing. Similarly, the meeting was informed that 23,000 youngsters skilled in informal sector have been certified under Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). National Employment Exchange tool and workforce database has been developed and made fully functional. The Minister appreciated the achievements and suggested to explore avenues of scaling up the skill trainings to benefit the youth. "Our top priority is to train youth so they would be able to get jobs in various fields, said the minister. The meeting also discussed the next phase of the project targeting one million jobs through skill development programs.

IHC seeks report over raid at lawyer's house

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Friday instructed the Islamabad Police to submit its inquiry report till March 7, regarding a raid at the house of senior advocate Pervaiz Zahoor. Chief Justice Athar Minallah heard the case filed by Pervaiz Zahoor through his lawyer Barrister Shoaib Shaheen. The petitioner's lawyer pleaded that around 50 police personnel raided the house late night at 3:00am and arrested two kids of his client. The police had conducted the raid without any warrants, he added. The court immediately summoned SSP Operations and SHO of Kohsar Police Station. SSP Operations Faisal Kamran adopted the stance that the police conducted the raid after it received information about the sale of liquor in the said house. The chief justice remarked that how the police could breach privacy of a house. This was a democratic country which was running under a constitution, he said. - APP

Three day seminar on youth development held at NUML

ISLAMABAD: Department of International Relations, National University of Modern Languages (NUML) Islamabad organised three-day thematic seminar on 'Youth Development through Engagement in Civic Activities' from 2-4 March. The seminar comprised on-campus interactive sessions with eminent speakers held in Main Campus and Rawalpindi Branch of NUML and civic engagement through field activities that took place at various sites in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Speaking on the inaugural session, a Motivational Speaker Mr. Zafarullah Khan said that civic engagement has three contours namely knowledge, communication, and empathy for others. He advised the students that they should think big and become active and effective members of the society. An analyst Mr. Abid Iqbal Khari underlined the importance of Non-Governmental Individuals (NGI) saying that even 1 percent can bring change as did Abdul Sattar Edhi and Dr. Ruth Pfau. Stressing on the need of character building, he said that students should learn, earn, and return to the society. Rector NUML Major General Muhammad Jafar HI (M) (Retd) informed the audience that NUML is promoting and institutionalizing the civic activities. Students

have opportunities to evolve leadership role through these activities. He underscored that power to think positively is the real strength of the youth. Appreciating the diversity of identities in Pakistan, he said that regional identities are important, but youth should take pride in and give top priority to their Pakistani national identity. Ms. Shandana Gulzar Khan, a parliamentarian, said 'leaving no one behind' is the essence of the SDGs. Further, she said that youth is the most important segment of the society in terms of pursuing the SDGs in Pakistan. She concluded that the Pakistani youth does not have the luxury to be tired of making efforts in this regard. Presenting findings and recommendations of the seminar, Prof Dr Riaz Shad, Head of IR Department, highlighted the need to establish more platforms both at state and society level for civic service. He recommended that universities being most important forum for the youth, should establish societies for civic service. Mr. Suhail Awan said that renowned Pakistani economist Dr Mehboob ul Haq popularised the concept of human security worldwide. Pakistan youth should play their role in promoting human security through engagement in civic activities. - DNA

Short story: Vengeance and Crime (2)

M. ABDUR-REHMAN

A FEW months pass, Lukas did not often write letters to his family since his return. A group of scholars and students in the university and residency arranged an evening visit to the orchestra. Though, hesitant at first, Lukas accepted the insistence and went along. He was having a good time, except for the unusual stares and glares of the people there. He came to know, that his mother was famous around town. He felt devastated. He knew who was behind it. It was his friend David's father. Lukas just couldn't take it, anymore. He bought a bottle of stolicchnaya, and roamed around with it the whole night, wanting to escape to oblivion. He collapsed near a church. He could have frozen to death, if it was not for the street

cops who took him to the police-station. Lord, knows why he was found lying drunk near a church. Perhaps he tried heading for it. The police wanted to question him and send him home. They saw his picture on the billboard as the prime suspect of recent kidnappings and killings of several children. He was thrown into the cell and tortured for an eternity. He was beaten, water-boarded, electrocuted, deprived of food and water, and had his nails plucked out. They did this to have him confess. He was innocent. They didn't have any proof, other than rumors, based on prejudice. He tried committing suicide twice, resulting in failure. However, he was let go. Lukas, left for Lithuania, but not home. He went to an unknown location in the forest, spending a few months at an abandoned wooden-cabin. He took the "liber-

ty" of that time contemplating. He threw his life away and changed to someone or something totally opposite. A total 'reincarnation'. He was not the same "creature" anymore. He finally gave in to be what the world wanted. Ready to walk on his mother's footsteps, he led a new and unfortunate life. His family came to know what he recently had been through in St. Petersburg. They tried searching for him. His mother eventually died out of grief, and Natalia led an unsuccessful suicide attempt. Out of despair, she had to marry someone else. It was 5 years since, the tragedies. Lukas had located himself to a town near Vilnius. He worked a small time job, by the day and his "real" job by the night. He sat watching the television, broadcasting the most viral news of the week; disappearances and murders of men and women between the ages of 17 to

43. The person behind it all, they called him, Velnias (Devil). He felt amused yet proud. Why? Because it was him. Spending the last almost 5 years, with his cunning, and the knowledge about the law, Lukas had never been caught. He would kill and butcher them, like his mother did, leaving no trace behind. Sometimes he would throw the dismembered parts or bodies, like a bait; to spread fear or to taunt the authorities. You could see it wasn't just about retribution; he enjoyed it, due to some (hidden), twisted reason. He felt the power over his victims and with time grew voracious in his serial murdering and butchering appetite. That being said, he felt no remorse. As a matter of fact he was on his "night" job at that very moment. The law is the guarantee to maintaining the functionality of a society. Without it, society may collapse. It is responsible for

providing justice, giving the right sanctions and supporting public opinion. Given that, it is the highest form of norms, therefore failing to abide by it results in serious, negative, formal consequences (-sanctions). The primary question of the story is; who is responsible for Lukas, or who created a monster such as him? Did he inherit those traits from his mother? Was it the alienation from the society? Was the corrupt law or the justice system responsible for him? How can a benevolent young man turn to a life of serial-killings? Are all these reasons a culmination to his creation (transformation)? Secondly, if the court fails to provide justice to the loved ones of the victim(s), what can be the solution? The very question Lukas asked his mentor, Mr. Mikhael. The part which concerns the decisions to these questions is left upon the readers.

Briefs

2-day crafts festival starts today

ISLAMABAD: The management Serena Hotels in collaboration with Nomad Gallery would organize a two-day Crafts Festival from March 5, promoting arts and crafts of the country. Maleeha Lodhi likely to be the chief guest in the inauguration ceremony of two-day festival, said a Founder Director Nomad Gallery Nageen Hyat. The festival aimed to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Islamabad Serena Hotel and would celebrate the International Women Day. The festival would be held at Bazaar Court Serena Hotel. The visitors will see live craftsmanship of the local craftsmen and to buy handicrafts lovingly made ranging from regional textile, handmade jewelry, block printed items, arts and crafts. — APP

China to relocate export industry in SEZs

ISLAMABAD: The Chinese companies have showed keen interest to relocate their industry in Special Economic Zones (SEZs) under the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) that would help boosting Pakistan's export in coming years besides creating thousands of new jobs for locals. The main sectors in which the Chinese companies are going to establish their industries in Pakistan include textile, footwear, pharmaceutical and IT sectors, official sources in CPEC Authority said. The sources said that recent visit of Prime Minister Imran Khan to China would help further expediting the pace of work on CPEC projects in the country.

According to the sources, the Chinese are also going to establish a metal and paper recycling project in Gwadar for the purpose of export. Similarly, another company would establish Special Economic Zone on Lahore-Kasur road where industries related to cotton and dairy sectors would be established. Further Pakistan would train the youth in the field of artificial intelligence in Information Sector (IT) sector as there is the biggest opportunity in this sector to fetch huge foreign exchange reserves. Meanwhile a Chinese textile industry constructed near Lahore has exported its produce worth of US\$ 60 million, while as many as 2000 Pakistanis are working in the industry in one shift. — APP

10.1m mobile phone sets manufactured locally

ISLAMABAD: Cellular companies, operating in Pakistan, have locally manufactured around 10.1 million mobile phone sets after the introduction of Mobile Manufacturing Policy to encourage local production.

As per Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) Annual Report 2021 released recently, the authority has so far issued mobile device manufacturing authorizations to 30 companies, attracting investments to the tune of US\$120 million and created 2,000 jobs. The world's leading brands like Samsung, Xiaomi, Oppo, Vivo, Nokia, Tecno, ZTE, etc. are now being manufactured in the country. Pakistan made history by exporting its first-ever smart phone consignment to the UAE under the 'Manufactured in Pakistan' tag, said a news release issued here.

Since the implementation of Device Identification Registration and Blocking System (DIRBS), the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) has blocked about 26.03 million fake and replica mobile devices. Recently, 175,000 international mobile equipment identity (IMEI) devices reported stolen were also blocked. About 880,780 IMEI devices identified as cloned, duplicated against 5.28 million MISDN banned on network. As per report, the telecom sector of Pakistan remained at the high growth trajectory and generated highest-ever revenue of Rs 644 billion during the financial year 2020-21 as compared to Rs 592 billion previous year. — APP



ISLAMABAD: A woman takes interest in pieces of art during a workshop on women empowerment held at the Indonesian embassy. — DNA

DNA

PNCA organizes puppet show today

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) on Saturday showcased a Puppet Show aimed at entertaining the audience along with family and friends. He show featured folk dances, stories, theme-based speeches, and skits for children and adults. The colorful puppet show revolved around current issues including gender disparity, contrariety in education, and environmental challenges and there will be an exclusive show for kids as well, which ensured infotainment according to the theme. Due to COVID-19, the puppet shows were being canceled, but the shows were scheduled four times a month as a regular feature by the National Puppet Theatre (NPT) of PNCA. Such events provide the required boost to puppetry and help people, especially the younger generation to become aware of it, said a press release issued here. The traditional art of puppetry was dying and PNCA has been struggling so long to revive this art adding that such events help in reviving this traditional art form. The art of puppetry and puppet shows have long been a part of Pakistani culture. The importance of puppetry was such beautiful and colorful art and an effort to bring back this art form can be useful both for entertainment and education purposes. — APP

Police hold open court on facebook live

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad police on Friday held a facebook open court (kutcheri) to give the residents direct access to the police high ups as per the vision of Prime Minister Imran Khan. Inspector General (IG) police Islamabad, Muhammad Ahsan Younus responded to the public queries via facebook live and phone calls. Senior Superintendent of Police (Operations), AIG (Operations), SP (Headquarters) SDPO (Kohsar) and other senior police officers were also present on the occasion. Speaking to the citizens, the IG said police were striving to redress public issues at the earliest. He said purpose of open forums was aimed at bridging gap between police and the public. People from across Pakistan presented their proposals to the IG. Most of the issues related to traffic, delay in registration of First Information Report, activities of land-grabbers, drug-peddlers, and police attitude. Responding to request of a resident of Khanna, Burma town IGP directed the deployment of an Eagle Squad for patrolling at the area. The facebook live open court (kutcheri) continued from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. in which hundreds of citizens and police employees shared their views.

PTC wins four prestigious CSR awards

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tobacco Company Limited (PTC) was awarded with four prestigious awards for their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives in the categories of Clean Energy Transition, Responsible Investment, Community Impact and Environment - Carbon footprint reduction. The prestigious CSR Awards, registered with the IPO, Government of Pakistan, was presented to Pakistan Tobacco Company Limited at a 11th Annual Int'l CSR Summit and Awards ceremony held in Karachi. The decision of the panel was ratified by the executive board of The Professionals Network (TPN) and Ethical Business Update (EBU a digital magazine). Madeeh Pasha, Corporate Affairs Manager, MESA & NA received the award on behalf of the company alongside Mr. Shahpar Mehboob, Regional Manager Sindh & Baluchistan. While commenting on the occasion Madeeh Pasha said that we are honored to be the award winners for the four highly vetted CSR categories in this year's 11th Annual Int'l CSR Awards. This is a proud achievement and a testimony to our commitment and efforts towards our Environment, Social & Governance (ESG) agenda. — APP

Speakers discuss resurgence of Taliban in Afghanistan

Embassy of Japan, IPRI held a webinar titled "Afghanistan and South Asia"

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of Japan and Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) jointly organized a webinar titled "Afghanistan and South Asia" on Friday, March 4 to deliberate upon the various perspectives concerning existing situation in Afghanistan as well as to exchange views and knowledge on other subjects of regional and international interest. Mr. AOKI Kenta, Research Fellow, Middle East Institute of Japan, and Mr. KASAI Ryohei, Visiting Researcher, Center for South Asian Studies, Gifu Women's University, Japan, were speakers from Japan. AOKI deliberated upon "Resurgence of Taliban and Its Implications to Japan and Pakistan" Whereas Mr. KASAI spoke on "Japan's Efforts in South Asia in an Age of SDGs, Pakistan's Development Potential and Geostategic Opportunities, Japan's Role in Pakistan's Comprehensive Development".

The speakers from Pakistani side included Amb (R) Asif



Durrani, Senior Research Fellow IPRI, who spoke on topic "Post-Taliban Afghanistan", Dr. Maria Saifuddin Effendi, Asst. Professor, Peace & Conflict Studies, NDU, Islamabad, covered "Pakistan-India Relations and Kashmir", whereas Mr. Rafullah Kakar, CPEC/PPP Unit, Government of Balochistan lectured on "Regional Connectivity and CPEC".

Mr. Haroon Sharif, Former Minister of State & Chairman Board of Investment, Ex-Regional Advisor to World Bank Group for South and Central Asia and Mr. Abubakar Siddique, Senior Correspondent covering Pakistan and Afghanistan for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) also joined the webinar as discussants.

As this year marks the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Pakistan, the webinar would help promote and develop not only intellectual exchange between the two countries but would also contribute towards further enhancing mutual understanding and exchange of information and knowledge on issues of regional and global importance.



ISLAMABAD: Participants of special workshop on facilitating citizens access to information with Chief Information Commissioner Mohammad Azam at the Information Service Academy. DG ISA Saeed Javed is also seen in the picture. — DNA

Pak, Uzbek PTA to open opportunities: UBG

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The leaders and members of UBG have said that the Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) between Pakistan and Uzbekistan was long desire of the business community which has been accomplished in the recent visit of President of Uzbekistan. They said that PTA signed by the head of states of both the countries has consid-

erably enhanced the confidence of the business community which will lead to promotion of bilateral trade & economic relations and encourage them to enter into joint ventures in various potential sectors hitherto unexplored. They further said that the reciprocal visit of President of Uzbekistan long awaited is vibrant indication to bring the business community of both countries more closer which will consequently result in enhancing of the volume of bilateral

trade. Further commenting on the visit of President Uzbekistan they said that Pakistan considers Uzbekistan as a gate way to Central Asian Countries particularly Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan. Improvement in bilateral trade will be beneficial for both the countries as Pakistan can penetrate in Central Asian region having trade potential of US \$ 90 billion while Uzbekistan can drive benefits from Gwadar port and huge potential market of Pakistan.

AIOU launches alumni membership drive

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open (AIOU) has launched its Alumni Association Membership Drive to register thousands of its graduates serving in various capacities in public and private sectors of Pakistan or doing their own business and playing their role in the process of national progress and development. AIOU students from matriculation to PhD are eligible to get themselves registered in alumni association and seek unique benefits of the membership. Registration form is available online on the university website (www.aiou.edu.pk). Registration

form is also available at AIOU regional centers located throughout the country. Filled registration form must be dispatched to the Directorate of Students Affairs, AIOU. Online filled form must be sent at director_sac.aiou.edu.pk. The primary objective of this association is to provide a platform to AIOU graduate to collaborate, share their success stories as well seek practical help and guidance from their mutual experiences and expertise. This association would be critical in reaching the objective of sustainable growth of the university. For any further information, following numbers can be contacted: 051-9057813, 051-9057812.

'Pakistan cannot progress till PTI is in power'

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader and special assistance to Chief Minister Sindh for Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Housing Cell Nawab Ali Wassan said that Pakistan could not progress until the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) led incumbent government was in power. He gave this statement while commenting on PPP's long march. The PPP leader said that the three years of the incumbent gov't of PTI forced people of Pakistan to protest. He said that the PPP was going to send the "selected government" packing with the help of people's power. Nawab Ali Wassan further stated that the PPP had taken to the streets for the rights of Pakistanis. He urged more people to join the long march in Islamabad and help them send the "puppet government" home. He added that the PPP had given the provinces their rights in the form of the 18th amendment and the party's planned march represented the issues of all provinces.

ISC's annual advisory board meeting

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The India Study Centre (ISC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) organized "ISC's Annual Advisory Board Meeting" on Thursday, March 3, 2022, to review the performance of the Centre and to provide overall policy directions for the current year. The members of the ISC advisory board attended the meeting. In his welcome remarks, Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, Director General, ISSI, apprised the board on the workings of the five centres of excellence at the ISSI that have contributed towards the aim of producing quality work, achieving synergy, the relevance of issue areas and narrative building. He said that ISSI did 190 events throughout the year 2021 and has



extended outreach to 43 think tanks internationally. The theme that ISSI is following for the year

2022 is "National Security - Expanding Horizons." He further appreciated ISC for producing excel-

lent work for over two years. While giving the Performance Review of ISC, Malik Dr. Saif Malik,

Director ISC, apprised the advisory board about the vision and functions of the Centre. The vision of ISC is to contribute focused research and quality policy input through in-depth analysis and dialogue on issues of strategic significance for the region. He apprised the advisory board that the Centre organized 14 major events in 2021 including seminars, webinars, workshops, roundtables and Monday Retreat. He also talked about ISC vision 2020-2023 and gave a review of 2021 activities. The ISC research activities included issues briefs, research papers, op-eds and confidential briefs. This was followed by interactive discussion in which the advisory board members appreciated the work of the ISC and gave suggestions to improve the Center's research, activities and outreach.

No trust move against the govt

POLITICAL climate in Pakistan is getting hostile with the each passing day. The opposition parties claim to have gathered enough support to send the government packing. Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) on Thursday claimed that 38 government members would support the no-confidence motion against Prime Minister Imran Khan. According to sources, the list of 38 government members of the assembly was sent to former prime minister and PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif. The PML-N has also assured 10 parliamentarians of giving party tickets in the next elections. A senior leader of the PML-N claimed that 16 members of the National Assembly were with him. The senior PML-N leader also claimed that the PML-N has divided the like-minded members of the government in three phases. According to sources, lawmakers belonging to Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), Awami National Party (ANP), Balochistan National Party-Mengal (BNP-M) and others have signed the no trust motion. As per draft, the country is in a state of economic crisis and there is no road map to get the country out of this. There is also political instability and uncertainty in the country and government has also failed at foreign policy front. The draft states that the Leader of the House has lost the confidence of the majority of the members. On the other hand Chairman Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari gave Prime Minister (PM) Imran Khan an ultimatum of five days to resign from office and dissolve assembly. Addressing the public in Bahawalpur on Thursday, the PPP Chairman said that people want to get rid of PM Imran Khan. He added that the mission of Benazir Bhutto will be continued and fulfilled. We will solve the problems of the people by forming a people's government. Allies should not side with puppets, we will hold transparent elections this year. The government is still determined that it was not going anywhere. The recent meeting of Prime Minister Imran Khan with PMLQ leadership, during his recent visit to Lahore, seeks to give an impression as if the danger were gone but political analysts say the danger is still there. Jehangir Tareen group continues to pose serious challenges to the government. Maulana Fazl says in next two days no trust move shall be tabled. The best option available with the government is to focus on masses welfare and try to deliver as much as it can.



Uzbek President concludes his visit

PRESIDENT of Uzbekistan returned home Friday at the conclusion of his two-day state visit to Islamabad. The Uzbek president during his stay in the capital met President Dr Arif Alvi and Prime Minister Imran Khan. A number of agreements and Memoranda of Understanding were signed between the two countries during the visit of the Uzbek president. President Mirziyoyev marked the historic commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Uzbekistan. Pakistan and Uzbekistan are linked through a common faith, shared history and cultural affinities. The two countries have been closely collaborating at regional and international fora, especially at the UN, OIC, ECO, and SCO. It was Uzbek president's first ever visit to Pakistan after becoming the President of Uzbekistan. He took over the charge of the Presidency after the demise of Islam Karimov who was the first President of Uzbekistan after the country got independence in 1992. Since then Uzbekistan has been on the move. The country, under the dynamic leadership of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev has made huge strides in all fields, especially in the field of trade and economy. As regards the infrastructural development the country had done marvels. After having been to Uzbekistan on a couple of occasions, I can surely say Uzbekistan happens to be the apt example of modernity and religious tolerance. The country can rightly boost off its religious tourism potential and that is what the Uzbek president talked about during his joint press take-out with the Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan. He expressed hope to further deepen cooperation with Pakistan in the field of religious tourism. Both sides agreed for the early resumption of flights. Uzbek air used to operate from Lahore to Tashkent twice a week but it was discontinued due to Covid pandemic. Ostensibly, closure of the air link badly affected the tourism industry on both sides but it is good sign that leaderships of both countries, after realizing the difficulties of people, have now decided to re-open this route. The step is likely to further deepen people to people cooperation between the two countries. On Afghanistan both sides agreed to work together because peace in Afghanistan is directly linked to peace in Pakistan and Uzbekistan. In addition, all energy project between the two countries can only be made operational when there will be complete peace there. Let us hope for even deeper bilateral ties.

Saudi Arabia and Indonesia: Clashing visions of 'moderate Islam'

James Dorsey

In line with accepted dogma, Mr. Bin Salman said he could not change rules enshrined in the Qur'an, viewed as God's word, but was free to reinterpret the majority of Islamic legal provisions derived from reported sayings and deeds of the Prophet Mohammed

TWO diametrically opposed visions of moderate Islam have emerged as major Muslim powers battle to define the soul of their faith in the 21st century in a struggle that is as much about geopolitics as it is about autocratic survival and visualisations of a future civilisation and world order. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Yahya Cholil Staquf, the newly elected chairman of the central board of Indonesia's Nahdlatul Ulama, the world's largest Muslim civil society movement, expressed their duelling visions in separate but almost simultaneously published interviews. While the timing of the interviews was coincidental, they neatly laid out the parameters of a rivalry among major Middle Eastern and Asian Muslim-majority powers to dominate the discourse of Islam's place as the world transits into an as yet undefined new world order.

Unsurprisingly, the visions expressed by the two leaders mirror the struggle epitomised by the Russian invasion of Ukraine between an autocratic, civilisationalist, and a more democratic and pluralistic vision of the world in the 21st century. At the heart of the differences between Messrs. Bin Salman and Staquf lie questions about whether Islam needs reform or a return to basics, who has the authority to interpret or reinterpret the faith, and what constitutes proper Islamic governance. Speaking to The Atlantic, Mr. Bin Salman left no doubt that the authority to interpret Islam was his and his alone. A law graduate from King Saud University who prides himself as a student of Islamic jurisprudence who bent Saudi Arabia's religious establishment to his will, Mr. Bin Salman laid out the principle of the autocrats' notion of moderate Islam: absolute obedience to the ruler. "In Islamic law, the head of the Islamic establishment is wali al-amr, the ruler," Mr. Bin Salman said. For good order, Mr. Bin Salman added that "Saudi Arabia is based on pure monarchy," and he, as crown prince, would preserve the system. To remove himself from it would amount to a betrayal of all the monarchies and Saudis beneath him. "I can't stage a coup d'état against 14 million citizens," Mr. Bin Salman said. He was asserting that most Saudis supported not only the monarchy but also one-man monarchical rule. Mr. Bin Salman was also insisting that he decided what implementation of Islamic law entailed and that he had the authority and power to interpret the faith as he saw fit. In line with accepted dogma, Mr. Bin Salman said he could not change rules enshrined in the Qur'an, viewed as God's word, but was free to reinterpret the majority of Islamic legal provisions derived from reported sayings and deeds of the Prophet Mohammed.

"He's short-circuiting the tradition," Middle East scholar Bernard Haykel told The Atlantic. "But he's doing it in an Islamic way. He's saying that there are very few things that are fixed beyond dispute in Islam. That leaves him to determine what is in the interest of the Muslim community. If that means opening movie theatres, allowing tourists, or women on the beaches on the Red Sea, then so be it." Mr. Bin Salman has no doubt given tradition short shrift. He has introduced social rather than religious changes of traditions that were tribal, not religious in origin, even if they were religiously packaged. The crown prince's views clashed with an opposed vision of what Indonesia's Nahdlatul Ulama calls the need to "recontextualise" Islam to bring its legal concepts and philosophy into line with the 21st century. Recontextualisation would involve revising "obsolete" elements of Islamic jurisprudence that are supremacist or discriminatory. These include concepts such as the kafir or infidel and dhimmi or people of the book like Jews and Christians who enjoy protected but second-class status under Islamic law; and slavery which has been abolished across the Muslim world in secular law but has yet to be removed from the Sharia. The clash of visions was evident in Mr. Bin Salman's definition of authority and his rejection of the notion of a 'moderate Islam.' Mr. Bin Salman insisted "that the term would make terrorists and extremists happy." In the crown prince's mind, it suggests that "we in Saudi Arabia and other Muslim countries are changing Islam into something new, which is not true," he said. "We are going back to the core, back to pure Islam," as practiced by the Prophet Muhammad and his four successors. "These teachings of the Prophet and the four caliphs—they were amazing. They were perfect." Mr. Bin Salman's insistence that 7th cen-

tury Islam was perfect explains why he has not anchored his wide-ranging social reforms that have lifted major but not all restrictions on women and modern-day entertainment in religious rather than only secular law. Yet, it is religious, not Saudi law, that pious Muslims beyond the realm of Saudi jurisdiction will look at. It's a void that Nahdlatul Ulama hopes to fill. The group says it has started to do so when in 2019, a gathering of 20,000 Islamic scholars declared the legal category of the kafir or the infidel to be obsolete and no longer operable under Muslim law. The term was replaced with the word muwathinnun or citizen to emphasize that Muslims and non-Muslims were equal before the law. "The word 'kafir' hurts some non-Muslims and is perceived to be theologically violent," Nahdlatul Ulama cleric Abdul Moqsih Ghazali said at the time. The movement has since yet to tackle other legal concepts that it has identified as "obsolete." Nonetheless, Mr. Staquf, who was elected chairman in December noted that Nahdlatul Ulama's founder, Haji Hasyim Asy'ari, had conceived the movement as a vehicle for "consolidating the universe." At the time, that meant a vehicle to fill the void created by the abolition of the caliphate by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the general-turned-statesman who carved modern Turkey out of the ruins of the Ottoman empire. For many Muslims, the caliphate underpinned Islamic civilization. "From the existing records, Nahdlatul Ulama was established to forge a new path for future civilization, to replace the old civilizational construct that was lost," Mr. Staquf told Indonesia's Kompas magazine. Rooted in the history of Indonesian Islam and Nahdlatul Ulama, Mr. Staquf branded the group's religious precepts as 'humanitarian Islam.' The group projects it as an alternative to state-backed, less developed, less tolerant,

and less pluralistic notions of moderate Islam as propagated by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates as well expressions of political Islam represented by Turkey, Iran, and the Muslim Brotherhood. Mr. Staquf has one advantage few other Muslim religious reformers have. Indonesia and Nahdlatul Ulama have their own religious authorities that they believe rival those of the Middle East. As a result, Nahdlatul Ulama scholars feel no need to take their cue from seats of Islamic learning like Al Azhar in Cairo or the Islamic University of Medina. Unlike Mr. Bin Salman, Mr. Staquf sees his role as returning to the vision of Abdurrahman Wahid, a widely respected and visionary former leader of Nahdlatul Ulama and onetime Indonesian president. Affectionately known as Gus Dur, Mr. Wahid sought to forge "a new path towards the development of a new civilization," said Mr. Staquf, a prominent Islamic scholar in his own right and disciple of Mr. Wahid. "We must strive to establish a universal consensus that respects the equal rights and dignity of every human being." Mr. Bin Salman may have more drama to show in his efforts to define 'moderate Islam' and control its narrative than does Mr. Staquf in the opening salvos of what amounts to a battle for the soul of Islam. However, in the ultimate analysis, it may be Mr. Staquf as part of a broader endeavour that has a more significant impact on the reform of Islam as such rather than the reform of only one Muslim-majority state. — Dr. James M. Dorsey is an award-winning journalist and scholar, a Senior Fellow at the National University of Singapore's Middle East Institute and Adjunct Senior Fellow at Nanyang Technological University's S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies.

How much damage will sanctions do to Russia?

Sergey Aleksashenko

The freezing of the CBR's assets and accounts in the G7 countries means that it is left with gold reserves worth \$127bn held in Russia and renminbi reserves worth \$70bn. Both are useless from the point of view of maintaining stability in the domestic foreign exchange market

OVER the past week, Western countries have ramped up sanctions against Russia in response to its invasion of Ukraine. The measures are the toughest since those imposed on Iran in 2010 and North Korea in 2013. Russia is the largest economy and the largest country globally, by population, against which such strong sanctions have ever been implemented. Western leaders know that they will not immediately stop the war, but hope that they would inflict enough damage on the Russian economy to help de-escalate the conflict. So how tough are the sanctions? They are much tougher than those previously imposed on Russia in the aftermath of the annexation of Crimea and the start of the war in Eastern Ukraine in 2014, but I would

not call them "nuclear". That is, they could damage the Russian economy but not obliterate it, given some major loopholes purposefully left by the sanction architects. What follows is my insight into how the current package of sanctions will and will not hurt the Russian economy and why. **Sanctions on the Central Bank** Undoubtedly, the most powerful blow to the Russian financial system is the imposition of sanctions on the Central Bank of Russia (CBR), which plays a crucial role in the domestic foreign exchange market. The CBR has enormous foreign exchange reserves amounting to \$640bn and it traditionally regulates the level of the rouble exchange rate. The freezing of the CBR's assets and accounts in the G7 countries means that it is left with gold reserves worth \$127bn held in Russia and renminbi reserves worth \$70bn. Both are useless from the point of view of maintaining stability in the domestic foreign exchange market. From February 24 to March 2 the CBR loaned 4.4 trillion roubles (3.4 percent of GDP) to banks as part of its efforts to maintain stability in the financial system. The sanctions against the CBR affected the domestic foreign exchange market immediately after they were announced on Sunday. By the end of that day, the selling rate of dollars in exchange offices of banks had risen by at least 45 percent compared with Friday. In the next days, the gap between selling and buying rates in the banks' offices was between 20 and 50 percent. Starting from Sunday night, the CBR and the government issued several new regulations imposing currency control. Exporters now have to sell 80 percent of foreign exchange earnings for roubles. Foreigners cannot sell Russian stocks and bonds and

transfer coupons and dividends to their accounts, while residents and non-residents from 43 countries (that imposed sanctions on Russia) cannot transfer funds to their accounts with banks outside Russia. A side-effect of the sanctions on the CBR is the freezing of assets belonging to the Ministry of Finance, current accounts and funds of the National Welfare Fund. But it does not seem that this will have any effect on the current economic situation. However, the devaluation of the rouble will certainly affect consumer inflation, which may grow by an additional 4-5 percent for a 40-50 percent increase in the value of the dollar. By the end of February, consumer price inflation in Russia exceeded 9 percent, with food inflation exceeding 12.5 percent. Devaluation of the rouble, potential problems with imports, and general political uncertainty may undermine a business's desire to take risks and result in lower growth in agriculture, lower supply, and even higher food inflation. In addition, disruptions in the payment system may lead to disruptions in the supply of imported goods to Russia, further accelerating inflation by reducing supply. **SWIFT and foreign payments** The EU and the US have put on their sanctions list a number of Russian banks and major companies. This will result in Russia's largest bank, Sberbank, which holds 33 percent of the banking system's assets, being unable to make its payments and those of its customers denominated in dollars. Its correspondent accounts with US banks will be blocked and the bank had to pull out of the European market. Four other banks, VTB, Otkritie, Novikombank, and Sovcombank will face the same fate. In addition, the US blocked 13 major Russian companies and banks from accessing

its capital markets and banned US investors from buying new issues of Russian government bonds in their initial public offerings and on the secondary market. The G7 countries also decided to disconnect several Russian banks from the SWIFT system. Disconnecting banks from the SWIFT system does not limit their ability to make foreign exchange payments. It only slows down payments and makes them more expensive. **Foreign debt** Another significant aspect of the Western sanctions is the ban on the access of Russian banks and companies to Western capital markets. As a result, there will be a substantial outflow of foreign investors from Russia; predictions by various experts range from \$30bn to \$50bn of investments lost in a year. The ban will also affect banks' ability to repay foreign debt. If the official statistics are to be believed, Russia's foreign debt is not too large. As of October 1, it was \$478bn or 27 percent of GDP. However, from the point of view of its impact on the economy, it is not so much the amount of debt that matters, but the schedule for its repayment and the share of short-term debt. In the next 12 months, Russian banks and companies will have to repay more than \$100bn. This is a hefty schedule, and many Russian borrowers counted on refinancing old debts. Now, this opportunity will be closed for many of them. This means that the Russian economy will have to channel substantial financial resources to repay foreign debt. The only way to do this is to use domestic savings, undermining already weak economic growth. It is too early to assess how much the Russian economy will slow down, but it is clear that the recent IMF projection of 2.8 percent growth is unrealistic. **Technology and aviation industry**

Sanctions are also restricting Western exports of technology, equipment, and components to Russia, which could affect Russian imports of machinery, equipment, and technological goods. These sanctions will seriously impact the technological level of the Russian economy. Russia has traditionally been an importer of advanced technology, used in all kinds of technologically complex products, from vacuum cleaners to nuclear-powered icebreaker ships. Many military products will be impossible to produce in Russia if sanctions remain in place. A critical restriction that will substantially impact the current situation, but which is likely to be short-lived, is the closure by EU countries of their airspace to Russian aircraft, including business aviation. Flights to Europe are essential for Russian airlines because they are more profitable; they actively use transit flights from Asian countries to European countries. This restriction will affect the most affluent Russians who fly to Europe for business or leisure. Russian authorities have imposed similar bans on European airlines, which means a real Iron Curtain 2.0 for Russian citizens. There are also more symbolic sanctions, including those targeting specific individuals with visa bans and asset freezes, severing business ties, cancelling sports competitions and cultural events, restricting the reach of Russian state media, etc. They may not affect the economy of the country, but will increase the feeling of international isolation that the country will suffer as a result of the war. The Russian economy is going down the ice chute, and no one knows today when this downward spiral will end. It is safe to say that the economy will slow down sharply and the standard of living will fall, but it is premature to give any quantitative estimates today. — Courtesy: Al Jazeera

Briefs

Ukraine's
Yastremska
into Lyon
semi-finals

LYON: Ukraine's Dayana Yastremska reached the Lyon WTA semi-finals on Friday, a week after escaping the Russian bombing of her Odessa home city and said she is "motivated" to win the title for her country. The 21-year-old eased past fifth-seeded Italian Jasmine Paolini 6-4, 7-6 (7/3), dedicating her win to her grandmother who was celebrating her birthday back in Ukraine. "I feel so much support from everybody," said Yastremska who is into her first semi-final since Hamburg last July.

"Maybe in a tough moment I can hear and especially feel how people are supporting me here, and that's another win for Ukraine."

Yastremska, who has won three WTA titles but none since May 2019, also played doubles in Lyon with 15-year-old sister Ivanna on Monday. She has played every match with a Ukraine flag draped around her shoulders. "I'm really happy to have reached the semi-finals because it's been a long time since I've been there," she added. "It was very difficult to play, very moving especially the second set which was really very close but I always remained very motivated to win." Yastremska arrived in Lyon on Saturday and spoke of being "woken up by bombs" when Russia invaded Ukraine last week, before embarking on an arduous journey to France. Her father and mother remained in the Black Sea port city of Odessa after saying goodbye to their daughters when they crossed the Danube by boat to reach Romania. — APP

Russian
strike on...

FROM PAGE 01

several cities in the second week of the assault launched by Russian President Vladimir Putin.

A high-ranking Russian general has been killed during fighting in Ukraine, in what experts say will be a bitter blow for Russian leader Vladimir Putin. Andrei Sukhovetsky was the commanding general of the Russian 7th Airborne Division and a deputy commander of the 41st Combined Arms Army, and by far the most senior Russian figure to have died in the conflict so far.

A military source said Maj Gen Sukhovetsky had been killed by a sniper. A presidential adviser said an advance had been halted on the southern city of Mykolayiv after local authorities said Russian troops had entered it. If captured, the city of 500,000 people would be the biggest yet to fall.

The capital Kyiv, in the path of a Russian armoured column that has been stalled on a road for days, came under renewed attack, with air raid sirens blaring in the morning and explosions audible from the city centre.

The U.S. Embassy in Ukraine called the Russian assault on the Zaporizhzhia plant a "war crime". Pentagon spokesperson John Kirby said it showed how reckless the Russian invasion has been.

Although the nuclear plant was later said to be safe and the fire out, officials worried about the precarious circumstances.

NATO rejects
Ukraine...

FROM PAGE 01

mainly in the form of far-reaching sanctions on Russia, with EU members on Friday saying more financial punishment was yet to come. "We are not part of this conflict," NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg told a news conference. "We have a responsibility as NATO allies to prevent this war from escalating beyond Ukraine because that would be even more dangerous, more devastating and would cause even more human suffering."

Jens Stoltenberg warned the war in Ukraine will lead to more deaths and destruction over the coming days as he appealed to Putin to withdraw all Russian troops without conditions.

"The days to come are likely to be worse, with more deaths, more suffering and more destruction," Stoltenberg told reporters at NATO's headquarters in Brussels. — News Desk

Australian tour, historic day
for Pakistan cricket: PCB

ICC Chief Executive Geoff Allardice said an historic Test series was going to be played between Pakistan and Australia. "The tour of Australia is also important for the Pakistan World Test Championship"

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Faisal Hasnain on Friday termed the Australian team touring Pakistan after a gap of 24 years and playing the first Test at Pindi Stadium, Rawalpindi, as an historic day for Pakistan cricket, saying the cricket fans have waited for two decades to see the Kangaroos and Green-shirts play.

"I am proud to have the Pindi Stadium officials sitting with me. Pakistani cricket fans welcome the Australian cricket team to Pakistan. It is such an important day in the history of Pakistan cricket as Pakistani cricket fans have been waiting for 24 years to see Australia play here," he said in a presser along with International Cricket Council (ICC) Chief Executive Geoff Allardice and Chief Executive Cricket Australia Nick Hockley.

He said top quality cricket would be seen in the Pakistan-Australia series. "Australia's visit to Pakistan is not only important

Fawad thanks Australia

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Husain Friday expressed excitement over the resumption of Pakistan's home cricket series with Australia after a gap of almost 24 years. The minister, expressing his gratitude to Australia on the first day of the first test match being played in Rawalpindi, said, "Thank you Australia for making this March beautiful for us." Fawad in a tweet sharing his sentiments

for cricket, but also for cricket between the two boards. Today is the new beginning of cricket ties between the two teams," he said and added this series would send a positive message to the world.

ICC Chief Executive Geoff Allardice said an historic Test series was going to be played between Pakistan and Australia. "The tour

of Australia is also important for the Pakistan World Test Championship."

He said cricket fans would get to see an interesting match between both teams. However on the death of renowned Australian cricketer Rod Marsh, he said he was saddened to hear the news of his death who passed away on Friday.

CA Chief Executive Nick Hockley said today was an historic day in Pakistan for which we have worked tirelessly. "Australia has received historic welcome in Pakistan, thanks to PCB and cricket fans here. CA, Todd Greenberg, chairman of the Australian Players' Association and the Australian players have been waiting for a long time for the tour of Pakistan. We also worked tirelessly to see this tour happen," he said and added the security in Pakistan was excellent.

"I am proud to be in Pakistan and relations between Pakistan and Australia will further improve. Seeing the preparations of cricket in Pakistan, the confidence has increased even more and the friendship between both the nations will also be enhanced," he said.

"The people of Pakistan love cricket immensely. We know that the spectators will reach the stadium and support the players." Meanwhile, he also paid condolences on the sad demise of Rod Marsh. — APP



RAWALPINDI: Pakistan's player Imam-ul-Haq celebrates after scoring a half-century (50 runs) during the first day of the first Test cricket match between Pakistan and Australia at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium. — APP

Imam's ton
put Pakistan in
early control

SPORTS DESK

RAWALPINDI: Recalled opener Imam-ul-Haq cracked a brilliant maiden century Friday as Pakistan finished the opening day of the first Test against Australia on a commanding 245-1 in Rawalpindi. The 26-year-old left-hander marked the first Test by Australia in Pakistan for 24 years with 132 not out, leaving the tourists frustrated on a dry and flat Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium pitch. Australia have not toured Pakistan since 1998 for security reasons.

At the close Friday, veteran batsman Azhar Ali was unbeaten on 64, having added 140 for the unbroken second wicket after Pakistan won a crucial toss and opted to bat. Haq put on a confident 105-run stand for the opening wicket with Abdullah Shafique as Australia used eight bowlers, but only spinner Nathan Lyon (1-87) managed a scalp in 31 tireless overs. Shafique miscued a lofted shot off Lyon in the penultimate over before lunch for 44.

Shafique was shaping well after getting a life on 21 when Travis Head dropped a sharp chance at leg slip off Lyon, who extracted spin from the outset.

Shafique hit three boundaries and a six during his enterprising knock. That brought Azhar to the crease, and the Pakistanis dominated the Australian attack — forcing skipper Pat Cummins to use part-time spinners Head, Steven Smith and Marnus Labuschagne, but to no effect.

West Indies beat
New Zealand in
World Cup opener

MOUNT MAUNGANUI: Host nation New Zealand lost the opening match of the Women's Cricket World Cup in dramatic fashion Friday when the West Indies claimed three wickets in the final over. New Zealand finished three runs short of the West Indies' total of 259 as Hayley Matthews' 119 powered the Caribbean women to a shock victory at Mount Maunganui's Bay Oval.

Kiwi captain Sophie Devine responded with a defiant 108 but Deandra Dottin took 2-2 in the final over and helped run out rookie Fran Jonas to claim a last-gasp win. New Zealand opted to bowl after winning the toss, with Devine saying her players were excited about the "once in a generation" chance to play the one-day showcase on home soil.

"It would be silly to think that there's not going to be pressure or expectation, so we're trying to really step into that and embrace it," she said. The West Indies finished with 259-9, making a blistering start of 10 runs an over before the New Zealand attack pegged them back with a steady stream of wickets. The first dismissal of the tournament was Dottin on 12 when she edged a Lea Tahuhu delivery to Jess Kerr at mid-off in the third over.

Matthews' maiden ton was the highlight of the innings after the 23-year-old was promoted from the middle order to open the batting. "I'm not sure how I felt about it at first since I was pretty comfortable batting at five, but it seemed to work out alright," she said after a knock that included 16 fours and one six. — News Desk

Shoaib & Sania drop first look
of 'The Mirza Malik Show'

WEB DESK

ISLAMABAD: Shoaib Malik, former captain and renowned player of Pakistan cricket team, has released the first photo teaser of his upcoming show with Sania Mirza, his wife, a well known athlete in her own right. Both star athletes, Shoaib Malik and Sania Mirza, are all set to enter the entertainment industry by co-hosting the variety show called 'The Mirza-Malik Show'.

Malik shared this news through his official Instagram account this week. The Pakistani all-rounder also shared his joy of working with his wife Sania Mirza on this upcoming project.

"The Mirza Malik Show" will be released on Urduflux, first Urdu OTT platform in Pakistan. Sania Mirza who is a renowned tennis player will share the screen as host with his husband. Earlier, both athletes had announced about their upcoming project in a press conference in Dubai.

"I am very excited for this new project.



We have always been connected with the media industry but were on the other side so now it feels exciting to switch the sides and come up in front. It would be a lot of fun", Sania Mirza expressed while talking to a private media outlet during press conference. "Fun, enjoyment, and entertainment are the main ingredients in this show. We will try to show peo-

ple a different side of us and of the guests", the tennis star added.

While on the other side former captain of Karachi Kings Shoaib Malik has also revealed that he is eagerly waiting to experience this new thrilling opportunity. "Looking forward to 'The Mirza Malik Show' with Sania Mirza on UrduFlix", Malik stated along with a photo poster of the show over his Instagram account.

Top cricket teams will follow Australia's example

The PCB spent much of the last decade trying to convince teams to visit Pakistan but suffered a setback when New Zealand and England abandoned their tours last year

AFZAL JAVED

RAWALPINDI: Cricket Australia Chief Executive (CEO) Nick Hockley and Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) CEO Faisal Hasnain said that it was "such a historic day" for Pakistan for hosting the Benaud-Qadir trophy and will encourage major cricket nations to shed their apprehensions and visit to Pakistan.

Faisal Hasnain, CEO of the Pakistan Cricket Board along with Cricket Australia CEO Nick Hockley, International Cricket Council CEO Geoff Allardice and Australia Cricketers' Association CEO Todd Greenberg, held a joint-press conference here at the Pindi Cricket Stadium on Friday ahead of the first Test between Pakistan and Australia for the Benaud-Qadir Trophy.

The PCB spent much of the last decade trying to convince teams to visit Pakistan but suffered a setback when New Zealand and England abandoned their tours last year.

While the four senior cricket administrators shared their views on the importance and significance of the series and reflected on the



work done in the background to make happen the first series between the two sides in Pakistan in 24 years, they also paid tributes to legendary Australia wicketkeeper Rodney Marsh, who sadly passed this morning at the age of 74.

Addressing the media, PCB CEO Faisal Hasnain said that this tour is more than just about cricket for Pakistan and it is a result of teamwork, sincerity and mutual respect. He said that we are privileged to host one of the great Test sides in the world. Our hospitality and security will surely impress the visitors.

"I'm confident that when the Aus-

tralian team returns home, they will leave with fond memories, and they all hope will become ambassadors of Pakistan" Hasnain said, adding that there are many people on both sides who have worked tirelessly over many months to make this tour a reality. Talking to media, Cricket Australia CEO Nick Hockley said that we have been looking forward to this historic day and I could not be more thrilled to be here in Pakistan.

"The welcome that we've received has been just really overwhelming and the excitement among our playing group has just been palpable," he said, adding that Pakistan

has worked hard to make this tour happen. The security arrangements and hospitality are up to the mark so far and we are grateful to be here for cricket," he shared.

The Cricket Australia chief executive further thanked the PCB and the ACA, saying that it's been a "wonderful team effort".

International Cricket Council CEO Geoff Allardice said that he is satisfied with all the arrangements made by Pakistan for visitors and I hope this tour will bring more teams to Pakistan and make the country a regular venue for international cricket. "I've seen over the last four or five years

57 martyred
in mosque...

FROM PAGE 01

Minister KP Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif told media that a huge blast was heard in the mosque after two attackers exchanged firing with police deployed for security of the mosque.

The police and rescue workers rushed to the site of explosion and shifted the injured to Lady Reading hospital Peshawar. Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed strongly condemned the Peshawar blast at a mosque in Qissa Khawani Bazaar in which several people have lost their lives and many others received injuries.

According to a statement issued here, he said, it was a planned bomb attack to disrupt peace and tranquility of the capital city of the province adding there was no threat received about any untoward incident in this area. However, he said the law enforcement agencies have been directed to take all possible measures to ensure security in the area. Minister said that he has sought a report from the Chief Secretary and Inspector General Police Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

He expressed grief and sorrow over the loss of precious lives in the blast. Sheikh Rashid also extended condolence to the families of the deceased. Meanwhile, Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Mahmood Khan has strongly condemned a blast occurred at Kocha Risaldar Mosque, here on Friday afternoon. In a statement, he expressed profound grief and sorrow over precious loss of lives and condoled with victim families. He directed rescue agencies and district administration to expedite rescue operations.

He directed administration of all hospitals to ensure the provision of best medical treatment to the injured. Chief Minister directed the ministers Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif and Kamran Bangash to supervise the relief operations and the provision of medical aid to the injured. He also sought a report of the incident from the IGP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Long march to continue...

FROM PAGE 01

brave and willing to continue her journey with the workers in the long march. The PPP chairman said Prime Minister Imran Khan has killed the farmers financially and he is going to Islamabad to make him accountable for it so masses must support the long march. He said this was announced by Imran Khan that the PM should be considered a thief and thug if prices of petrol and electricity hike in the country. So now the people should stand up against PM Imran on price hikes and lies, Bilawal added.

Earlier, PPP Bahawalpur Divisional President Nawabzadi Saira Abbasi, leading a caravan, has joined the marchers near Khanawal. Speaking on the occasion, Saira said that the PPP's march will send the government home. After Bilawal's speech, the caravan moved forward to Sahiwal where complete arrangements have been made to give a warm reception to the marchers. Camps have been set up at different places of the city while the sumptuous meal is also being cooked for the dinner. From Sahiwal, the PPP workers and leaders, led by Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, will head to Lahore tomorrow (March 5) and will reach the city via Okara and Pattoki.

US official meets...

FROM PAGE 01

— and that the journalists, prosecutors and others who made up civil society in Afghanistan might never get US visas. "I told them that I was really sorry it was taking so long and I was as frustrated as they were, frankly," the senior US official said. "But I also asked for their understanding of how hard we've been working to get the systems going."

The visit comes as the United States is still struggling with how to handle the tens of thousands who piled into planes in the hectic final days of the US's withdrawal from Afghanistan in August last year. More than 74,000 Afghans are now living across the US after being housed on military bases for months, amid challenges in resolving immigration statuses and logistical challenges in finding affordable housing.

Briefs

Indonesia reports 26,347 new Covid cases

AGENCIES

JAKARTA: Indonesia on Friday confirmed 26,347 new COVID-19 cases, bringing the total tally to 5,693,702, the Ministry of Health said. According to the ministry, the death toll from COVID-19 rose by 328 to 149,596, while 40,462 more people recovered from the disease, bringing the total number of recoveries to 5,026,853 in the Southeast Asian country. As the Indonesian government is accelerating its national vaccination programs to curb the spread of the virus, more than 191.63 million people in the country have received their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, while over 146.55 million have taken their second dose. Indonesia started mass COVID-19 vaccinations in January last year after the authorities approved the emergency use of the Chinese Sinovac vaccine. Aiming to fully vaccinate 208.26 million people in the country, the government has administered over 349.64 million vaccine doses so far, including third booster jabs.

Ukraine should be bridge between East, West

WEB DESK

GENEVA: Chinese Ambassador for Disarmament Affairs Li Song said here on Thursday that Ukraine should become a bridge between the East and the West, not a front-line for confrontation between major countries. The situation in Ukraine is rapidly evolving and China has been paying close attention to the developments, Li said when briefing a plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament on China's position.

The current situation in Ukraine is not in the interest of any Country, he said, adding that China always forms its own position according to the merits of the matter at hand, and China's basic position on the Ukraine issue is consistent and unequivocal.

"We always believe that all countries' sovereignty and territorial integrity should be respected, and that international disputes should be resolved peacefully in accordance with the purposes and principles of the UN Charter," he noted.

"The immediate priority is to prevent further worsening of the situation, while stepping up diplomatic efforts for a political solution," he said. Li said that in their first round of negotiations, Russia and Ukraine have shown their willingness to continue talks, and China welcomes this.

Facing the highly complex and sensitive situation, Li said, China does not support any approach that may exacerbate tensions, and calls on the international community to abide by the principle of political settlement and create favorable conditions for direct dialogue between the parties concerned.

Iran FM ready to go to Vienna if deal struck

WEB DESK

TEHRAN: Iran's foreign minister said Friday he was ready to travel to Vienna if a deal is reached to revive the 2015 nuclear accord, as the US suggested an agreement is possible. "I am ready to go to Vienna when the Western sides accept our remaining red lines," Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said in a phone call with EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell, quoted in a foreign ministry statement. "The presence of foreign ministers in Vienna and the announcement of a final deal depend on full respect for the red lines set out by Iran, including effective economic guarantees," the statement read. The 2015 deal began unravelling when former US president Donald Trump withdrew from it in 2018 and re-imposed sanctions, prompting Iran to start disregarding the limits on its nuclear activity laid down in the agreement.

UN offers mediation to put Libya back on election path

Stephanie Williams' offer came a day after the country's eastern-based parliament swore in a prime minister in a challenge to interim premier Abdulhamid Dbeibah

AGENCIES

TRIPOLI: The United Nations' top official in conflict-ravaged Libya offered Friday to mediate in a bitter dispute over a framework for postponed elections, warning against "escalation" after a parallel government took office. Stephanie Williams' offer came a day after the country's eastern-based parliament swore in a prime minister in a challenge to interim premier Abdulhamid Dbeibah - a move observers fear could tip Libya

into a new schism. Williams, UN chief Antonio Guterres' Special Advisor on Libya, warned Friday in a series of tweets that "the solution to Libya's crisis does not lie in forming rival administrations and perennial transitions." She said she had written to the leaders of both the eastern-based House of Representatives and the High Council of State, an upper house based in Tripoli, "inviting them to nominate six delegates from each chamber to form a joint committee dedicated to developing a consensual constitutional basis."

Her proposal comes after presidential and parliamentary elections, set for December 24 as part of a UN-brokered peace process, were abandoned amid bitter disputes over their constitutional and legal footing as well as the candidacies of several highly contested figures. Their indefinite postponement dashed hopes of drawing a line under a decade of conflict since the 2011 revolt that toppled dictator Moamer Kadhafi. The country endured two rival governments from 2014 to early 2021, when Dbeibah's

administration was approved by key factions after a ceasefire late the previous year. On Thursday, despite months of UN-led efforts aimed at re-unifying its institutions, Libya found itself once again with two prime ministers - Tripoli-based Dbeibah, who has refused to cede power except to an elected government, and former interior minister Fathi Bashagha, backed by the parliament hundreds of miles to the east. In his inaugural speech, Bashagha accused Dbeibah and his allies of shutting the country's airspace and detaining three ministers to

prevent them reaching the assembly to be sworn in. Williams on Friday stressed "the fundamental importance of preserving security and stability, and refraining from all acts of escalation." She also urged the country's politicians to "engage constructively together to move towards elections, for the sake of the 2.8 million Libyans who registered to vote" last year. She proposed to convene the joint committee on March 15 and to produce a constitutional framework. There was no immediate public response to her

proposal from the upper or lower house. Kadhafi scrapped Libya's constitution after seizing power in a 1969 coup and ruled for four decades through a mixture of a personality cult, tribal alliances, petrodollar patronage and manipulating the military to avoid further coup attempts. After he was ousted and killed in the NATO-backed uprising, Libyan politicians agreed on a "constitutional declaration". In 2017, a committee submitted a proposed constitution to parliament, which was meant to organise a referendum - but never did.

250,000 displaced Afghan return

DNA

KABUL: More than 250,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) have returned to their provinces across Afghanistan since the Taliban's takeover in mid-August last year, the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations of the Afghan caretaker government said on Friday. "Over 250,000 IDPs have been shifted via ground transportation to their main provinces during the past six months," the ministry said in a statement. It added that efforts were underway to address the problems of the remaining IDPs in the country.

Over 550,000 Afghans out of nearly 7 million Afghan refugees and asylum seekers have returned home, mostly from Iran and Pakistan, during the past six months, according to the statement. Since the start of 2021, nearly 360,000 people have been displaced by conflicts, and about 5.5 million people have been displaced since 2012, according to figures provided by Afghan officials.

Over 400 Nigerians who fled Ukraine return home

ABUJA: A first batch of more than 400 Nigerians who fled Ukraine following the Russian invasion were flown home on Friday.

The group, most of whom were students, arrived shortly after 0630 GMT on a chartered flight from Romania's capital Bucharest, one of the hubs from where African governments are scrambling to extract stranded citizens.

Nigerian foreign ministry official Gabriel Aduda tweeted pictures of the group inside an aircraft late on Thursday, saying "415 Nigerians mostly students fleeing the Ukraine-Russian war from Bucharest." Many looked tired but relieved that their journey was over.

"I'm very happy to be back home, thank you, Nigeria!" one young woman said as she walked off the tarmac and into the terminal in Abuja. Minister of Foreign Affairs Geoffrey Onyeama said there were about 5,600 Nigerian students in Ukraine and an estimated 8,000 Nigerian citizens in the country before the war. On Monday he said an estimated 1,000 citizens were ready for pickup from Romania, 200 others in Slovakia, and 250 both in Hungary and Poland. A million refugees have fled Ukraine so far, the UN said Thursday, warning that unless the onslaught ended immediately, millions more were likely to flee. - APP

China's space station to host 6 astronauts

BEIJING: China's space station is expected to host six astronauts from two space-ships by the end of 2022, according to the chief designer of the country's manned space program. The Shenzhou-13 crew has been in orbit for 140 days. They are in good health, and have so far completed all planned or added tasks as needed. They are expected to return to Earth in mid-April, Zhou Jianping said.

This year, China will launch two lab modules for the space station, two manned spacecraft and two cargo spacecraft. The Shenzhou-14 crew will witness the arrival of two lab modules during their stay in orbit, said Zhou, who is also a member of the 13th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, the country's top political advisory body.

The Shenzhou-15 crew will fly to the space station before the end of this year and join the Shenzhou-14 crew in space. At that time, the space station will consist of three modules, two manned spacecraft and one cargo spacecraft, with a total mass of nearly 100 tonnes, Zhou said. The space station will carry a large number of high-level space experiment devices covering fields such as the life sciences, biological science, material science, combustion science, microgravity fluid science and basic physics, he said. - APP



LAHORE: Ambassador of Azerbaijan Khazar Farhadov and his spouse visit Badshahi Mosque, during a recent visit to Lahore. - DNA

Thai man gets jail for putting sticker on king's portrait

BANGKOK: A Thai man was sentenced to two years in jail on Friday for violating the country's tough royal defamation laws by putting a sticker on a portrait of Thailand's king during 2020's huge democracy rallies.

It is the first sentencing from lese majeste charges related to the protests, Thai Lawyers for Human Rights (TLHR) said, when thousands marched demanding the resignation of Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha and made unprecedented calls for reform to the nation's untouchable monarchy. But the movement petered out as Covid-19 case numbers surged and authorities detained most of its leaders. Narin, whose last name was withheld, is among some 160 activists hit with criminal charges under Thailand's tough royal defamation laws - which carry a prison sentence of up to 15 years per charge. The criminal court jailed him for two years for violating Section 112 of the Thai Criminal Code after he posted a 'GuKult' sticker on King Rama X's portrait outside Bangkok's Supreme Court during a rally in September 2020. 'GuKult' is a satirical and anti-establishment Facebook page.

"This could be an example of prosecuting the other 112 cases going forward," said TLHR's Kittisak Kongthong, defending the 31-year-old. He noted the case had been "accelerated", with the court ordering "no testimonies of academics and the plaintiff." Narin's sentence was reduced from three years to two, and he can appeal within 30 days. He was released on a 100,000 baht (\$3,000) bail bond. He is still facing at least two further lese majeste charges, according to his lawyer. The sentencing comes after a number of prominent pro-democracy protest leaders were released on bail last month. Parit Chiwarak, better known in Thailand by his nickname "Penguin", is facing 23 lese majeste charges but was allowed to free ahead of trial on February 24. - DNA

Pak-China tour operators, agents exchange views



BEIJING: The tour operators and travel agents of Pakistan and China at a webinar discussed ways and means for deepening bilateral tourism cooperation. The webinar was jointly organised by Pakistan Tourism Development Cooperation (PTDC) and Embassy of Pakistan Beijing. The event was attended by the more than twenty five tourism promotion agencies, travel agents and tour operators from the two countries. The leading Chinese companies which attended the webinar included Ctrip, Qiyongyou, Chinese Overseas Travel and Tourism Market, Qingdao Tourism Group and Chengdu Overseas Tourism Group etc. In his opening remarks, Managing Director of PTDC, Aftab ur Rahman Rana, gave a detailed briefing to Chinese tour operators about tourism potential of Pakistan and incentives to expand bilateral tourism cooperation between the two countries. He underlined that under the broad rubric of MoU on Tourism Exchange and Cooperation signed last year, Pakistan looked forward to expanding B2B linkages between the tour operators of both countries and the support of the Chinese government for the development of Pakistan tourism industry. During the webinar, the tour operators and travel agents of both sides gave a detailed presentation of their areas of expertise and exchanged views for deepening bilateral tourism cooperation. The Embassy of Pakistan briefed the audience about the trend in China's tourism sector and highlighted various areas of cooperation for deepening two-way tourism flows. The tourism promotion companies of both sides were also informed that during Prime Minister's recent visit to China, Pakistan and China had decided to celebrate 2023 as the Year of Tourism Exchanges which would spur tourism exchanges between the two countries. - DNA

Sri Lankan president reshuffles cabinet

DNA

COLOMBO: Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa reshuffled his cabinet on Friday as a new minister of transport and a new minister of wildlife and forest conservation were sworn in.

On Thursday evening, Rajapaksa also changed his minister of power, minister of industries, as the country faced a fuel and power crisis triggered by a foreign exchange shortage.

According to the Presidential Media Division, the new ministers took oaths in front of the president and all assumed duties in their new ministries immediately on Friday. Dilum Anunugama was sworn in as the minister of transport on Friday while C.B. Rathnayake was sworn in as the minister of wildlife and forest conservation.

On Thursday evening, Pavithra Wanniarachchi was named as the minister of power while Gaminu Lokuge was sworn in as the minister of energy. S.B. Dissanayake took the portfolio as the minister of industries.

Ambassador Sajjad visits special economic zone

DNA

MINSK: Ambassador Sajjad Haider Khan accompanied by Deputy Head of Mission Muhammad Abdullah Amin, visited the "Bremino-Orsha" Special Economic Zone and met with the Director of "Bremino Group" Mr. Sergey Kupreev, Deputy Director commercial affairs Mr. Roman Sobolev and the Head of the development and management department Mr. Sergey Avseev.

The parties discussed the possibilities of mutual beneficial cooperation between "Bremino Orsha" and Pakistani companies, cooperation in logistics and transportation. The Special Economic Zone "Bremino Orsha", is not only connected with road and railway links but also has a dedicated airport and provides attractive terms of investment and taxation for its residents and investors. The two sides agreed to establish fruitful cooperation between companies of both countries.



Pak assists helpless Indian students in Ukraine

The Pakistan embassy helped the Indian students at a time when the students from South Asia and Africa complained of feeling at risk owing to the racist behavior from Ukrainians while boarding trains or crossing the border. They were either pushed out or made to wait for hours on the border while locals and westerners get preferential treatment

ISLAMABAD: Keeping humanity over animosity, the Embassy of Pakistan in Ukraine came to rescue the Indian students after their own embassy officials left them stranded there, following the on-going conflict with Russia. Neglecting their obligation to ensure the evacuation of their nationals, the officials of the Indian embassy fled for their own survival, leaving the Indian students at the mercy of none. The Indian students reported that the officials of the Indian embassy went missing as they sought their help for evacuation. However, Pakistan's gesture of assisting the students from an arch-rival country won the hearts of many. In a viral video, the Indian stu-

dents in Lviv, a city in western Ukraine, can be seen among Pakistani students at the embassy. There were reportedly no Indian officials present, so the Pakistani embassy had stepped in to help them. The students traveled from Kharkiv to Lviv city but found no official at the Indian embassy and the Pakistani embassy welcomed them. "You can see, these are all Pakistani students here. We are four Indians only," a student can be heard saying in a relaxed environment pointing to his fellow travelers. They are all seen having meals apparently at the Pakistani embassy. However, keeping up their own tradition, some paid trolls of

the Modi government disgusted the Indian student, who shared the video and praised the Pakistani embassy. Professor Ashok Swain, a known Modi critic who teaches international relations at a Swedish university, shared the video on Twitter with a caption: "Indian embassy officials are missing at the Romanian border. Pakistan Embassy helping Indian students to escape war in Ukraine." The Pakistan embassy helped the Indian students at a time when the students from South Asia and Africa complained of feeling at risk owing to the racist behavior from Ukrainians while boarding trains or crossing the border. They were either

pushed out or made to wait for hours on the border while locals and westerners get preferential treatment. In a video shared by the Opposition Leader in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge, reportedly, the Ukrainian forces are seen torturing an Indian girl whose loud screams are also audible in the video while she was trying to reach the Poland border. The soldiers also fired shots in the air to horrify the fleeing people. The students say they are being discriminated against on account of their color and racial background. "Officials are giving us roses at the airport. But when we were stranded at the borders, nobody came to help

us. Had the government evacuated us on time, there would have been no need for these show-offs". Divyanshu Singh, a student from Motihari, Bihar. Pakistan's humanitarian gesture reiterated its peace overtures and evidenced that the biggest hindrance in achieving peace in South Asia was the Hindutva ideology that has taken over India. After coming to power, Prime Minister Imran Khan offered India peace by saying, "If you take one step towards peace, we will take two steps." Instead of a reciprocating peace gesture, India sent its fighter jets a few months later to strike "imaginary terror camps" in Pakistan.

Briefs

Alvi appears in 2016 case setting aside immunity

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Friday, without taking his constitutional immunity, appeared before the Anti-Terrorist Court in the hearing of a case registered against him in 2016. The president along with his counsel and Adviser on Parliamentary Affairs Babar Awan appeared before the court of Judge Muhammad Ali Warraich. The president had requested the court to appear in the proceeding of the case like a common citizen, irrespective of his presidential immunity. President Alvi in a statement before the court said though the Constitution of Pakistan granted him immunity, however he felt that it was appropriate to appear in person after studying the precedents in Islamic history. He said that he wanted to set an example in the country in line with the respect for rule of law, in spite of one's position and stature. The president also drew the attention of the court towards delay in judgment of cases and said early dispensation of justice was a vital aspect of a society. After the hearing, President Alvi drove his car back to his office. No special security cordon was put in place for the president's appearance in the court. - APP

IHC clubs identical petitions against PECA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Friday clubbed another petition against PECA Ordinance with other identical petitions for hearing together and also served notices to attorney general of Pakistan in it. The new petition was moved by the Pakistan Broadcasters Association (PBA) and other journalists' bodies challenging the amendments in Prevention of Electronic Crime Act (PECA). Chief Justice Athar Minallah heard the case. The court noted the petitioners had not challenged section 20 of the PECA and asked if they had no objections on it. The court observed that the other petitioners had also challenged the matter regarding criminalizing the defamation act. The petition had stated that the discussion and debates on the performance of public office holder was necessary to ensure good governance. It prayed the court to turn down the news ordinance as it was violating the article 19 and A-19 of the Constitution. The court served notices to respondents and adjourned the case till March 10. The petition was filed by Pakistan Broadcasters Association (PBA), All Pakistan Newspapers Society, Council of Pakistan Newspapers Editors and Association of Pakistan Electronic Media Editors and News Directors. - APP

More than 1.2 million refugees flee Ukraine

GENEVA: More than 1.2 million people have fled Ukraine into neighbouring countries since Russia launched its full-scale invasion on February 24, United Nations figures showed Friday. The UN children's agency UNICEF estimates that around half a million of them are youngsters. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) has projected that more than four million Ukrainian refugees may eventually need protection and assistance. "The rate of this exodus is quite phenomenal," said UNCHR communications chief Joung-ah Ghedini-Williams. "We know that there are many more on the move. Also there are possibly equal numbers inside the country that are internally displaced." The UN's International Organization for Migration (IOM) said people from roughly 138 countries had left, recording 78,800 from third countries crossing Ukraine's borders, including migrant workers and students. - APP

Speakers stress for Women economic empowerment

Embassies of Muslim majority countries in collaboration with NCSW organize workshop to promote Women Economic Empowerment at the Indonesia embassy

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The Embassies of Indonesia, Malaysia, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, and Turkey collaborated with the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) to organize the first hybrid International Workshop session on Muslim Women Pioneers: Leading Economic Growth. The event was a kick start of a series of discussions to share best practices of women's breakthrough leadership in socio-economic affairs, politics, and policymaking in the Islamic world. The opening session was attended by participating embassies, the diplomatic community, Chairperson of the NCSW, Ms. NilofarBakhtiar, Chairperson of the National Commission for Child Rights, Ms. AfshanTehseen, Director-General United Nations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Usman Iqbal Jadoo, andfeaturing theFounder and Managing Director of Kashf Foundation, Ms. Roshanay Zafarand four esteemed panelistswho joined the event virtually from Jordan, Ms. Huda Ayeshe, Dr. Lana H. Bin Said of Saudi Arabia,Dr. Suryani S.F. Motikof Indonesia and 2015 Nobel Peace Laureate, Ms. OuidedBouchamaoui of Tunisia. Ambassador Adam Tugio of Indonesia in his opening remarks underscored the importance of Education and skill development of women to enhance their productivity and betterment of the future generation. Ambassador Borhene El-Kamel of Tunisia further added the importance of the progressive role of womenand their contribution to nation-building and shared to the audience the experience of women empowerment in Tunisia. The Chairperson of NCSW shedthe light of the idea behind the launching of international workshops and suggested making a pool of new talented women entrepreneurs and connecting them with successful global Muslim women entrepreneurs as the next step endeavor to facilitate concrete implementation. The workshop focused on promoting the economic conditions of Muslim Women. The esteemed panelists underscored that Muslim Women have made an outstanding contribution to society and on some occasions served as outstanding leaders. They shared their struggle to start a business and gain success at a later stage, including Noble Peace Laureate, Ms. OuidedBouchamaoui from Tunisia. Chairperson of the National Commission for Child Rights, Ms. AfshanTehseen reminded that "If you support a woman, you support an entire nation." Ambassador Ibrahim Al Madani of Jordan concluded the event by emphasizing that,



"The inclusion of Women's economic empowerment should be incorporated as a priority in national development plans." Pakistani Women Entrepreneurs also participated in the event and displayed vibrant and colorful works such as handicrafts, handmade jewelry,

rug, painting, and many more interesting items. Their work and dedication were encouraged and admired by the audience. The next event will focus on sharing best practices on the advancement of women's role in politics in Muslim majority countries followed by the role of

Ulema in promoting women empowerment. This series of events will bring together eminent Islamic scholars, researchers, and experts from Muslim majority countries to discuss and share their knowledge, experiences, and best practices in promoting women's rights as guaranteed by Islam.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan along with CM Punjab Sardar Usman Buzdar being briefed on 2000 low cost apartments. - DNA

Govt fulfilling poor segment's dream: PM

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Friday said that the government was fulfilling the poor segment's dream of purchasing their own house. The Prime Minister, who performed the balloting of low-cost apartments of Farash Town Islamabad here in a simple ceremony, directed to ensure transparency in allotment of the houses. He said that in view of the growing population and to tackle the haphazard expansion of cities, the model of high-rise buildings should be adopted. The Farash Town project of 2000 low-cost apartments was being completed through a joint venture between the Naya Pakistan Housing and Development Authority and Capital Development Authority (CDA).With the price of apartment fixed at Rs. 3.2 million each, the government will provide a subsidy of Rs. 300,000 on every apartment to reduce the per unit cost at Rs. 2.9 million for the benefit of allottees. The project was being competed on the special interest of Prime Minister Imran Khan to help the poor and middle class to realize the dream of buying their own house in the federal capital. Since the private banks were providing the facility of loans on easy installments for the purchase of apartments, the monthly installment of these apartments had come at Rs. 13,000 as against the market rate of Rs. 38,000. Chief Minister Punjab Sardar Usman Buzdar and Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Farrukh Habib were also present in the ceremony.

EU may curb Russia's rights in IMF

MONITORING DESK

BRUSSELS: European Union officials are examining curbing Russia's influence and access to finance at the International Monetary Fund following its invasion of Ukraine, six officials told Reuters. This scenario now under discussion would add to the pressure on Russia's economy and financial system and also mark an important symbolic step, deepening Moscow's international isolation. One option under consideration is to remove Russia entirely from the institution that acts as a lender of last resort, officials said, though some noted that would prove difficult if not impossible.

Pakistan values relations with Azerbaijan: Pervaiz Elahi

LAHORE: Speaker Punjab Assembly Chaudhry Parvez Elahi said that Pakistan values relations with Azerbaijan. Azerbaijani Ambassador to Pakistan Khidir Farhadov called on Pakistan Muslim League -Quaid-e-Azam (PML-Q) leader and Speaker Punjab Assembly Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi at the Speaker's Chamber and discussed issues of mutual interest and promotion of bilateral cooperation. Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi said that good relations is that Pakistan and Azerbaijan have developed better mutual relationship, we want Azerbaijan to be included in the Commonwealth countries, he added. He said that the exchange of high level delegations from both the sides would further strengthen the ties. The Speaker appreciated the role of the Ambassador of Azerbaijan in promoting the relations between the two countries. Appreciating Pakistan's efforts for peace and stability in the region, Azerbaijani Ambassador Khidir Farhadov said that Azerbaijan was keen to further expand relations with Pakistan and thanked the Azerbaijani government and people for their support on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue. Later, the Ambassador of Azerbaijan also visited the new House of the Punjab Assembly. - DNA

US senator calls for assassination of Putin

NEWS DESK

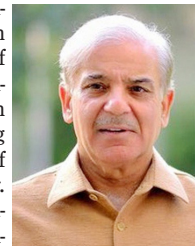
WASHINGTON: US Senator Lindsey Graham called Thursday for the assassination of Russian President Vladimir Putin amid Russia's war on Ukraine. "Is there a Brutus in Russia? Is there a more successful Colonel Stauffenberg in the Russian military? The only way this ends is for somebody in Russia to take this guy out. You would be doing your country - and the world - a great service," said Graham on Twitter, after speaking with Fox News. Claus von Stauffenberg was a German army officer who tried to kill Adolf Hitler in July 1944. The Republican senator from South Carolina appealed to the Russian people to "step up to the plate." "The only people who can fix this are the Russian people. Easy to say, hard to do. Unless you want to live in darkness for the rest of your life, be isolated from the rest of the world in abject poverty, and live in darkness you need to step up to the plate," he wrote. Russia's war on Ukraine, which began on Feb. 24, has been met with international outrage, with the European Union, US and UK among others implementing tough financial sanctions on Moscow. According to UN figures, 227 civilians have been killed and 525 injured in Ukraine since the start of the war. Ukrainian authorities, however, put the death toll at over 2,000. More than 1 million people have fled Ukraine to neighboring countries, according to the UN Refugee Agency.

Shehbaz complains about PML-Q

DNA

ISLAMABAD: An inside story of a meeting between Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman and former president Asif Ali Zardari has emerged on Friday. According to a private television channel report, both the leaders remained in contact with Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz president Shehbaz Sharif during the important meeting to elaborate strategy for the upcoming no-trust move against PM Imran Khan. Shehbaz Sharif expressed reservations regarding Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q). Maulana Sahab on your request, I invited Pervaiz Elahi for a lunch, but he denied it, Shehbaz Sharif was quoted as saying by sources. In reply to Shehbaz, Fazlur Rehman

said, he contacted the son of PML-Q chief Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain after getting knowledge of the matter. The Zardari-Fazl huddle decided to establish contacts with the other political leaders to gain the support of the no-trust move. Earlier, Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) head and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl (JUI-F) supreme Maulana Fazlur Rehman had announced that the no-trust move will be brought against Prime Minister Imran Khan. Fazlur Rehman, while addressing a press conference today, said that he held consultations with PPP co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari regarding the no-trust move.



Australian legend Shane Warne dies



SYDNEY: Australia cricket great Shane Warne, widely regarded as the greatest leg-spinner of all time, has died aged 52, according to a statement issued by his management company. Warne's management said he died in Koh Samui, Thai-

land, of a suspected heart attack. "Shane was found unresponsive in his villa and despite the best efforts of medical staff, he could not be revived," the statement said. "The family requests privacy at this time and will provide further details in due course." It comes just hours after the death was announced of fellow Australian great Rod Marsh, one of the game's outstanding wicketkeepers. Warne was credited with reviving the art of leg-spin and during a brilliant 15-year career he took 708 Test wickets - a tally surpassed only by Sri Lanka off-spinner Muttiah Muralitharan, who took 800. Australia opener David Warner tweeted: "Two legends of our game have left us too soon. I'm lost for words, and this is extremely sad. My thoughts and prayers go out to the Marsh and Warne family. I just can not believe it. #rip, you will both be missed." - APP

UN chief sorrowed over Peshawar attack

UNITED NATIONS: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has expressed his "deep condolences" over Friday's terrorist attack against a Peshawar mosque in which at least 56 people were killed and hundreds more injured. In a phone call to Pakistan UN Ambassador Munir Akram, the UN chief said that this was personal for him since he knows Peshawar very well and had been well treated by its people. The Secretary-General expressed his amazement that a place of worship has been targeted. "He asked me to convey his deepest condolences to the people, Government, and leadership of Pakistan," Ambassador Akram wrote on the Twitter. - APP