

# Islamabad POST

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**Armenian interference in internal matters unacceptable: Baku**

Detailed News On Page-06

**Asif Zardari confident of success**

Detailed News On Page-08



**GDP growth to exceed 5% mark in FY22: Tarin**

Detailed News On Page-07



## Briefs

### Indonesian Deputy FM arrives

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Indonesian Deputy Minister Abdul Qadir Jilani, on Sunday arrived in Islamabad to attend the 48th session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers.

The officials of Foreign office welcomed the distinguished guest. Earlier in the day, Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry arrived in Islamabad to attend 48th session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers. He was welcomed by Special Representative on Religious Harmony Allama Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi. Speaking on the occasion, Allama Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi said Pakistan and Egypt are tied in brotherly relations. He said the Egyptian Foreign Minister is visiting Pakistan after 24 years and we warmly welcome him.

### Reference to be filed today

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development, Reforms and Special Initiatives

Asad Umar announced on Sunday the reference for the interpretation of Article 63(A) is "ready" and will be presented before the Supreme Court today (March 21). Taking to Twitter, the minister said: "Hopefully, with this case, the selling of consciousness by becoming turncoats will end once and for all." Umar also hoped that the case will lead to a reduction in buying of votes via illegitimate means. The decision was taken during a consultative meeting of the PTI's political committee held with PM Imran Khan in the chair on Friday.

### Announcement

ISLAMABAD: Mukhtar Tileuberdi, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan has written a special article highlighting various aspects of bilateral relations. He is also arriving Pakistan to attend the OIC summit. His article appears on the Opinion pages today. -Editor

### Inside...

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Int'l Open Sailing C'ship 2022 concludes at Karachi - Page 06

GDP growth to exceed 5% mark in FY22: Tarin - Page 07

No trust-move to succeed at all cost, says Zardari - Page 08

# PM ready to forgive dissidents

"Humans can commit blunders. For the sake of your children's future do not commit this mistake," Khan says



BUREAU REPORT / DNA

DARGAI: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Sunday asked the estranged Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) members of the National Assembly to return back to the party fold because as a head of the party, he would forgive them. Addressing a huge public gathering here, the prime minister told the PTI's dissidents that it was his message to them to come back because as

Continued on Page 06

## PM wants public to stand for soul of Pak

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan Sunday urged the public to attend Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's March 27 gathering in Islamabad in large numbers to fight for the soul of Pakistan. In a tweet, he said that they stood for the right and condemned the recent shameless buying of politicians' souls by political mafias to protect their plundered wealth. "Want all records to be broken of public attendance to fight for the soul of Pakistan. We stand with what is right and condemn such shameless buying of politicians' souls by political mafias to protect their looted wealth," he posted on his Twitter handle. - DNA

## Speaker summons NA session on March 25

The session has been summoned on March 25 due to a two-day OIC CFMs meeting in Islamabad

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly (NA) Speaker Asad Qaiser has convened a crucial session of the lower house to deliberate on the no-confidence motion against Prime Minister Imran Khan on March 25. According to a notification, the NA session will be held at Parliament House on Friday at 11am. Sources privy to the matter said that the government has decided to convene the NA session after consultation with the officials of the

Continued on Page 06

## 'Dissident MNAs to face disqualification'

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hussain said on Sunday that notices have been issued to the dissident MNAs of PTI and they have

Continued on Page 06



UCH SHARIF: Ambassador of Spain Manuel Duran presented with traditional dress and sword during his visit to Uch Sharif. - DNA

## EU ENVOY: SAYING GOODBYE



ISLAMABAD: Ambassadors of European Union posing for a picture with the outgoing EU Ambassador Androullah Kaminara, who is leaving Pakistan after completing her term. In her Twitter message, she thanked all her colleagues for extending fullest cooperation. - DNA

## Pakistan condemns Houthis' attacks on KSA

Pakistan reaffirms its full support and solidarity with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Sunday strongly condemned launching of ballistic missile by Houthis towards civilian infrastructure and economic installations in Jazan, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). "Pakistan reaffirms its full support and solidarity with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia against any threats to its security and territorial integrity," said Foreign Office spokesperson in a news release.

He said such attacks not only violated the international laws but also threatened peace and security of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the region. Pakistan also called for immediate cessation of these attacks. "The successful interception of the ballistic missile by the Royal Saudi Air Defense Force prevented loss of innocent lives and is commendable," it was added. Yemen's Houthi rebels had unleashed a barrage of drone and missile attacks on Saudi Arabia, targeting a liquefied natural gas (LNG) plant, water desalination plant, oil facility and power station, Saudi state-run media reported. The attacks early on Sunday did not cause casualties, the Saudi-led military coalition fighting in Yemen said, but damaged civilian vehicles and homes in the area. - APP

## PM running away from the no-trust motion

Bilawal says Khan does not have any evidence of wrongdoing against Opp.



SHUJAAT HAMZA / DNA

ISLAMABAD: PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Sunday said that Prime Minister Imran Khan is running away

Continued on Page 06

## No-trust motion our democratic right: Abbasi

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Senior representative Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML-N) Shahid Khaqan Abbasi on Sunday said that no-confidence is a democratic and constitutional right. Whoever breaks the constitution; whether the

Continued on Page 06

# Pakistan ready to host OIC CFMs conference

Qureshi says the Foreign Ministers would also discuss the issues of Palestine and Kashmir

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The government is all set to host a two-day meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Islamabad from Tuesday amid rising political temperatures in the country. The 48th summit of the OIC-CFM will be held on March 22 and 23 under the theme: "Building Partnerships for Unity, Justice, and Development." Taking to Twitter, Foreign Office Spokesperson Asim Iftikhar said the session will coincide with 75th anniversary celebrations of Pakistan's Independence Day. Pakistan has invited the worthy guests to attend Pakistan Day pa-

## OIC moot will not be disrupted

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed while regretting over Bilwal Bhutto statement about forthcoming OIC's Foreign Ministers Summit, on Sunday said no one would be allowed to disrupt the OIC



Continued on Page 06

rade on Wednesday and witness the professional capability of Pakistan's armed forces and the traditional floats of all the provinces, reflecting the national unity, he said. Minister for Foreign Affairs Shah Mahmood Qureshi said the Council of Foreign Ministers of Organization of Islamic Cooperation in its meeting would discuss the challenges being face by the Muslim Ummah including the issues of Palestine and Kashmir. He was speaking during a visit to Parliament House here to see the arrangements for the meeting of Council of Foreign Ministers of Organization of Islamic Cooperation on Tuesday. The officials gave a detailed briefing

Continued on Page 06

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## Briefs

## Turkish CG calls on Governor

KARACHI: The Consul General (CG) of Turkey Cemal Sangu called on Sindh Governor Imran Ismail at Governor House here on Saturday. They discussed the promotion of Pakistan-Turkey economic cooperation, opportunities of investment in Pakistan, and other issues of mutual interests. The Sindh Governor Imran Ismail said that Pakistan and Turkey had unprecedented bilateral relations. He said that Pakistan was attractive country in respect of tourism, culture and natural and beautiful sceneries. He said that the metropolis was an economic hub of the country and it could provide best investment opportunities to the investors of Turkey.

He further said that the present government was taking steps to promote tourism in the country to cope with the unemployment and create sources of income.

The Consul General of Turkey Cemal Sangu on the occasion said that Pakistan-Turkey had brotherly relations for decades and Turkey accorded value to its relations with Pakistan. — APP

## Economy must be revolve around job creation

DNA

KARACHI: In order to steer Pakistan from ongoing deep economic crisis, it is needed that job creation should be given top priority and in fact the whole economy should revolve around this basic purpose. This was said by Pasban Democratic Party (PDP) Chairman Altaf Shakoore here Sunday.

He said that Pakistan is amongst the countries with a huge youth bulge but majority of these young people are jobless. He said despite getting 14, 16 and 18 years of education these young people don't find a proper job, because our economy is not based on employability. He said that the hands of our policymakers are tied due to strict conditions of our foreign loans and they are forced not to align the national economy to create ample job opportunities for young people. He said this wrong policy is generating less family incomes and more poverty and deprivation.

Altaf Shakoore said our fertile lands, wonderful river system and favourable weather condition are ideal for creating millions of new jobs in agriculture and farming-related sector, but the government is not serious to tap these resources. He said construction of dams has already made a taboo in Pakistan, land reforms are overdue and use of modern cultivation and cropping technologies are not being introduced in the country. He said value addition to agriculture sector products is criminally neglected in Pakistan and primitive methods of farming and processing of agriculture products have made our economy stagnant. He said till the government and private sector focus on our rural economy we cannot ensure better employability in our society.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan witnessing the agreement signing between the Government of Pakistan, Government of Blochistan and Barrick Gold Corporation of Canada. — DNA

## Tourism to be given industry status: SAPM Azam Jamil

“We have identified the potential tourist attractions in which local and national investors can provide required facilities”

DNA

FAISALABAD: Special Assistant to Prime Minister (SAPM) on Tourism Azam Jamil Sunday said that tourism would be given the status of a full-fledged industry, which would be managed by the private sector and the government would play the role of a facilitator and regulator.

Addressing a dinner reception, given by the Pakistan Economic Conference (PEC) in collaboration with the Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI), he said that the government had finally decided to devolve the Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) to provinces. He said all PTDC hotels, motels and other assets would be transferred

to the provinces under the condition that they would hand over the same to the private sector within a period of two months. He said the government was not meant to run businesses, but play the role of facilitator. He said that 33 to 35 motels were lying closed for the last 10 years, as the job had been entrusted to irrelevant persons. He said that the PTDC would be restructured. A national-level e-portal on tourism was ready, which would be launched by Prime Minister Imran Khan soon. He said that a one-step website had been developed which would have all related information about the tourism sites and its managements. “We have identified the potential tourist attractions in which local and national investors can provide required facilities,” he added. He said

that a concept of village tourism had been introduced which would also play a major role in promotion of our cultural diversity. He said that it was a World Bank funded project which would attract foreign tourists to visit scenic valleys of northern areas. Similarly, a ski resort would also be developed in Chitral, which would be a unique attraction for domestic and foreign tourists, he added. Stressing the importance of road communication system, he said that it was very strange that 300-km long stretch of Silk Route had no bathroom, which was basic and fundamental requirement of any tourist. “We are working for standardization of hotels in addition to other allied services,” he added. He said that qualified professionals were

required to man the hospitality industry and in this connection, schools were being established in different parts of the country. He also gave a comprehensive presentation about the potential of tourism in Pakistan with steps being taken by the government to engage the private sector in it.

Provincial Minister for Culture and Industries Khayal Ahmad Kastro also addressed the dinner reception and said that for the first time in the history of the province, the Punjab Culture Day was observed on March 14.

He said that being the minister for colonies, he retrieved 200,000 acres of state land, encroached upon by the land-grabbers. The value of the land was around Rs. 450 billion, he added.

## Speaker NA should avoid to violate the law: Shazia Marri



NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Central Information Secretary of PPP-P and member of the National Assembly Shazia Atta Marri has said that Speaker of the National Assembly Asad Qaiser should avoid to violate the law and the constitution of Pakistan in order to save the Imran Khan's government. She said that position of the Speaker National Assembly is neutral, but perhaps, Asad Qaiser also considered that being neutral is only applies on animals and that's why he is showing partiality. Joint opposition had submitted the requisition for conveying the National Assembly session on 8th of March and if the National Assembly's session would not be convened within 14 days then it would be a clear violation of Article 54 (3) of the constitution of

Pakistan. This she said in a statement issued hereon today.

Shazia Marri said in that rules of the National Assembly's bounds Speaker National Assembly to start the session of Assembly with no-confidence motion instead of carrying out any other proceedings and PTI leaders had announced that the session of the National Assembly on no-confidence motion would be held on March 28 in their core committee's meeting which was clear violation of the rules and constitution of the country.

She added that the Pakistan Peoples Party will not allow any move of violation of the constitution and if any attempt would be made to violate the rules then serious consequences of it, would be faced by the government.

She added that as per the constitution, the speaker of the National Assembly has full authority to convene the ses-

sion of the National Assembly and this is not the duty of the President to call the session of the National Assembly. The Speaker National Assembly, Asad Qaiser with his biased attitude has made the OIC conference controversial which is highly regrettable act. She further said that if the Speaker National Assembly will convene National Assembly's session on 21st March, he will also avoid violating the Constitution of Pakistan and Conference of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation will also be held without any constitutional crisis.

Ms Marri added that Pakistan Peoples Party has warmly welcomed the meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and demanded that there should be no violation of the constitution and that the OIC conference should also be held in a peaceful manner.

## Dr. Tariq Soomro selected by IEEE Computer Society

DNA

KARACHI: Dr. Tariq Rahim Soomro, Acting Rector, IoBM, Karachi has become the first Pakistani to be selected by the IEEE Computer Society to the 'Inaugural Class of IEEE Computer Society Distinguished Contributors'. This milestone recognizes Dr. Soomro's contributions to society and the profession. Dr. Soomro is also the Dean of IoBM's College of Computer Science and Information Systems (CCSIS). He is currently the Vice Chair of the IEEE Karachi Section. IEEE Computer Society, founded in 1946 and headquartered in Washington DC, USA, is a professional society of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers. Its purpose and scope are to advance the theory, practice, and application of computer and information processing science and technology and the professional standing of its members.



## 300 bikes impounded, 866 persons fined

PESHAWAR: Traffic police on Sunday impounded 300 bikes into terminal over parking them on No-Parking-Zone and fined 866 persons on violating traffic rules.

City Traffic Officer, Abbas Majeed Marwat had directed concerned staff to nab those erecting encroachments alongside roads connecting Baacha Khan Chowk, Hayatabad, Khushal Bazar and Namak Mandi. The traffic police team conducted raids and confiscated dozens of handcarts

by imposing fines on more than 250 persons over erection of encroachments. The confiscated goods and motorcyclists were later released after collection of fine from them. — APP

## My politics is based on public service

STAFF REPORT

GUJRAT: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) president and the most senior minister Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan said that he considered politics as a form of worship that was based on improving public service delivery. He vowed to make AJK a model state to set an example for the whole region. He further said that he would establish good governance in the base camp (AJK) by upholding the rule of law and justice. President of PTI AJK Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan expressed these views while talking to public delegations at the wedding ceremony of the nephew of Minister Chaudhry Ali Shan Sani.

Speaker of the AJK Legislative Assembly Chaudhry Anwar ul Haq, Minister of Local Government Khawaja Farooq, Advisor to Government Chaudhry Akbar Ibrahim, Member Assembly Javed Butt, Deputy Secretary-General PTI Sardar Murtaza Ali Ahmed, Abdul Wadood Qureshi, Sardar Iftikhar Rashid, Sardar Imtiaz Shaheen were also present on the occasion.

Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan said that the system based on plunder, looting and commission was unparalleled in any civilized society in the world. He said that the PTI government would make AJK a model state and set an example for the whole region. He also said that he would take historic steps for the welfare of the marginalised segments in Azad Kashmir as directed by Imran Khan.

## Dr Sumera Shams honored with int'l award

PESHAWAR: Member Provincial Assembly and Chairperson Women Parliamentary Caucus, Dr. Sumera Shams was awarded an international honor by One Young World.

As many as 15 young politicians from around the world were shortlisted in this process and she included in the list of top five 'Young Politicians' of the year by One Young World, which will promote Pakistan's soft image in the world. Apart from Dr. Sumera Shams from Pakistan, the award was also given to young politicians from Iceland, Panama, Nigeria and the United States, who have proved their mettle in world politics.

The award was given to MPA Dr. Sumera Shams, for her outstanding performance and awareness of women's health, human rights, education, economy, women's rights and work for the minority community.

The Women's Parliamentary Caucus was working in partnership with national, provincial and international organizations to achieve social work goals, gender equality and sustainable development in Pakistan. — APP

## Modern aspects of Eastern Medicine

MASOOMA ABID

EASTERN Medicine basically refers to the system of medicine being practiced for centuries in the states of east. However, in this era of advancement and technology, where a bull cart has been replaced by a motor car and the network of world wide web has surrounded the globe, it sounds ridiculous to remain stuck with ancient principles and terminologies. Since Eastern medicine is constantly invading its roots in the field of research, it is no longer restricted to traditional or conventional medicine. It would be quite unjustified to divulge it in the terms of Ayurveda, Unani or Hikmat.

In Pakistan, advanced level of education in Eastern medicine is being provided. There are almost eleven universities offering the degree of BEMS i.e. Bachelors of Eastern Medicine and surgery. On top of these universities lies Government College University, Faisalabad which is facilitating the students with post-graduate degrees of MPhil and PhD after graduation. It has produced a lot of researchers and scientists of Phytomedicine. The significant features of this program and problems being faced by it will be discussed in my next article. Here, I am going to enlighten

the modern and traditional aspects of Eastern Medicine and relate it with Chinese Medicine. The knowledge contained by basic principles of Eastern medicine has the ability to impact the direction of future modern medical development; still, it is easy to find simple knowledge with mark of times and special cultures. There are multiple branches of Eastern medicine revealing its diversity; collectively these can be covered by dividing the whole structure into two major parts:

- One part is connected with the pure traditional way of practice
- The second one is consistently moving towards modern approaches

The part that is persistently moving towards modern approaches possesses all the principles and theories of traditional medicine to be used for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes. For diagnosis, it involves the philosophy based principles i.e. the principle of four temperaments. Along with this, it supports the use of advanced technology such as X-Ray, ultrasound, endoscopy etc. There are ideas to reform the ancient techniques to modern and more scientific procedures as well. It uses the modernized expertise of research and the traditional knowledge of herbs together to present research based natural medicines with efficacy greater than

purely traditional medicines. Contrary to this, the part of Eastern medicine connected with pure traditional way of practice is beyond all above modern diagnostic and therapeutic approaches. It is standing on the base of ancient principles with no scientific research and limited to temperamental diagnosis and use of crude formulations for treatment. Predominantly, Eastern Medicine is similar to traditional Chinese Medicine with some minor differences of philosophy. Yet both have enough flexibility to be merged in each other. Before proposing an eventual association between these two systems, it is necessary to have basic idea about what Chinese Medicine actually is.

Traditional Chinese medicine has been the most advanced and experienced way of therapy in the world for centuries.

In the 16th century, what is now known as "western medicine" was introduced to China but was not commonly used and thus had little effect. It was not until the Opium War that "western medicine" began to develop in China. Therefore, prior to that event, traditional Chinese medicine was always the leading force of medical care in China. The key to successful medical lies in its efficacy. A popular Chinese saying states "Excellence is from experience." As modern (westernized) medicine's impact

increased, it led to the development of "integrative medicine" Theories, therapeutic principles, technologies, and understanding of the life sciences were elaborated, and the basic structure of traditional Chinese medicine also became clearer. Most importantly, traditional Chinese medicine began to reach a common point with modern medicine. In the field of surgery, Chinese medicine is not only self-sufficient in anesthesia but acupuncture also is being practiced as a replacement of it in some surgeries.

Unfortunately, Eastern medicine, despite of its health supportive integrity, is not being encouraged in Pakistan due to lack of awareness and an unfavourable political environment. Whereas, Chinese medicine is believed to be reliable in China and spreading rapidly all over the world. China, due to its stronger economic background has a great potential to propagate in the world market including the health sector.

Hence, the union of Eastern Medicine with Chinese medicine is inevitable to survive and progress in the competition with the west.

—Department of Eastern Medicine and Surgery  
Government College University,  
Faisalabad

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## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### MARCH

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



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Rawalpindi.....	9270601-20



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### Islamabad Metropolitan

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Rawal Town.....	5773343

### Water Tank

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# Serena Hotels celebrate Nowruz Festival in style

Nowruz, which means 'New Day', is an ancient celebration of spring dating back to around 3000 years; and is celebrated by 300mln people belonging to different faiths and ethnicities across the world

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Serena Hotels celebrated a Nowruz and Spring Festival while marking the 20th Anniversary of Islamabad Serena Hotel. The program included cultural performances from across Pakistan, live music, displays of traditional artefacts, and a number of entertainment activities. Nowruz, which means 'New Day', is an ancient celebration of spring dating back to around 3000 years; and is celebrated by 300 million people belonging to different faiths and ethnicities across the world. The Nowruz celebrating countries particularly Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Uzbekistan participated in the celebrations by displaying their cultural heritage and offered their traditional cuisine.

The festival was attended by the members of Diplomatic Corps, Government, Armed Forces, International Agencies, Corporate Sector, Media, and a large number of guests from all walks of life. The Hotel's lush green lawns were exquisitely decorated with colourful fabrics and reed huts. A large array of lavish Pakistani, Continental, Asian and Middle Eastern cuisines were served, where speciality Chefs showcased their skills while serving the guests. The mouth-watering desserts attracted the guests to experience Serena's delicacies along with a variety of beverages.

An amusement corner was dedicated for kids with exciting activities including Camel & Horse Riding, Jumping Castles, Trampolines, Puppet Shows and Street Magic. Cotton Candy, Ice-cream, and Juice Stations were an additional treat for the children, making the festival a truly memorable family day under the blue skies. Michel Galopin, General Manager Islamabad Serena Hotel on the occasion said: "It has been a great pleasure to welcome you for the 20th Anniversary of Islamabad Serena Hotel, and the celebration of Nowruz. I would like to thank all the guests for making this festival a huge success." Aziz Boolani, the CEO of Serena Hotels, said: "The two-decade journey would not have been possible without the support of our hardworking and dedicated Associates. He offered a big thank you to the valued Guests, Government Functionaries, Local Administration, Law Enforcement Agencies and Media for their support over these past 20 years."



ISLAMABAD: CEO Serena Hotels along with staff members cutting cake on the occasion of Nowruz Festival celebrations. – DNA



Ambassador of Switzerland to Pakistan H.E Benedict de Cerjat, said: "I am very glad to join for the 20 years celebration of Islamabad Serena Hotel. I am truly



fascinated by the culture and history of Pakistan specially the Indus Valley Civilization." Pakistan Air Force Group Captain Tahir Sultansaid: "Serena Hotels, as usual, has outclassed itself. This event was truly a memorable experience. We were thrilled by the arrangements made for the 20 years celebration." Westminster Academy Principal Ms. Gulandama said: "It is a beautiful day to come out and celebrate the beginning of Spring, my entire family loved the festivities."

## 38.3 km long Ring Road project to be completed in 2 years

RAWALPINDI: Chairman Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) Tariq Mehmood Murtaza said the construction work of 38.3 km long main carriageway from Baanth (N-5) to Thaliam (M-2) under Rawalpindi Ring Road project would be completed in two years.

He said, RDA had awarded Rs 22.8 billion contract to the Frontier Works Organization (FWO) for a mega project of Rawalpindi Ring Road. Tariq Mehmood Murtaza said the

FWO emerged as the lowest bidder after the committee opened the technical and financial bids in the presence of all the concerned. He said the basic aim of the project was to ease congestion on the urban transportation system of twin cities. Fast and efficient route for trade related traffic and their access to other major cities to provide economic benefit to the local communities.

Construction of interchanges was also part of the project,

he said adding, after completion, the road would ease out traffic flow in the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. As an alternate route, it would reduce travel time and expenditures of the passengers. The project would also provide employment opportunities and boost economic activities in the area.

The over two-decade-old plan to construct the Rawalpindi Ring Road got the green signal as Prime Minister Imran Khan on

Saturday laid its foundation stone at Thaliam near Islamabad-Lahore Motorway. The Punjab government had planned to construct six lanes ring road on priority to address the traffic congestion in the twin cities, Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The project is essential for Rawalpindi as heavy traffic load on various city roads particularly on G.T. Road passes through main roads of the city creating gridlocks on major arteries of the city.

## PHA's rainwater project to save 310,000 gallons clean water

RAWALPINDI: The rainwater harvesting project of Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) Rawalpindi would help save 310,000 gallons clean water which is being used in parks. According to Chairman PHA, Asif Mehmood, the construction of the first underground water tank with a storage capacity of nearly 100,000 gallons, which is part of the rainwater harvesting system project worth Rs 50 million, had been completed in Rawal Park. The project is being executed by PHA Rawalpindi to reduce the use of

clean water in parks. He said the project would enable the authority to collect rainwater in various parks of Rawalpindi city which would be used for irrigation in parks and other plantation sites of the city.

Water supply systems would also be installed in the parks besides constructing water filling stations to fill water tankers, he said. "The second such tank is under construction at Liaquat Bagh while two others would be built in Commercial Market and Allama Iqbal Park. All four tanks would have a capacity of over 310,000 gallons," he added. The underground water tanks were being constructed to conserve rainwater through this eco-friendly project, he said. The project would help save clean water being used for irrigation proposes, he said adding, PHA Rawalpindi was installing rainwater harvesting system to reduce the use of clean water. – DNA

## IT exports increased by 29.92%

ISLAMABAD: IT exports have surged at the growth rate of 29.92 percent in the first eight months of the current financial year. "ICT export remittances, including Telecommunication, Computer and Information Services for the period July 2021 to February 2022 have surged to the US \$ 1.689 billion at a growth rate of 29.92 percent in comparison to the US \$ 1.3 billion during the same period in FY 2020-21". – APP

## Need stressed to prioritize evidence based data in trade

ISLAMABAD: Politicizing economy is fatal for Pakistan at a time when the country is undergoing a very serious political situation, therefore, we must prioritize the evidence-based data in trade and commerce to depoliticize our economy, said experts at a webinar on 'Strengthening Evidence-informed Decision-making in Pakistan's Trade Sector', organized by Sustainable Development Policy Institute. SDPI Executive Director Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri said that SDPI's food security dashboard, which ensures evidence-based prediction

of food items and their prices, is a prime example of it. He was of the view that the Russia and Ukraine conflict also demand the use of evidence-based policy action to avert any emergency of food shortage, and supply chain. Referring to 'Strengthening the Use of Evidence for Development Impact' (SEDI), a programme launched in Uganda, Ghana and Pakistan to contribute towards a more efficient and effective decision-making by the partner governments, he said SEDI is of immense importance especially in the unprecedented times like the Covid. – DNA

## Srinagar highway becomes signal free

ISLAMABAD: The Srinagar (Kashmir) Highway has been made signal free after the proposal of Islamabad Traffic Police to district administration and Capital Development Authority. Chief Commissioner Islamabad has appreciated the proposal of Senior Superintendent of Police (Traffic) and gave directions for immediate implementation on it. Following the proposal, Srinagar Highway has been made signal-free by giving three protective U-turns which connects Islamabad and the twin city with the Islamabad International Airport. – DNA

## Skill, vocational training urged

DNA


ISLAMABAD: Chief Employers Federation of Pakistan (EFP) Islamabad Chapter M. Akram Farid while addressing the fourth meeting of National Accreditation Council for Technical and Vocational Training (NACTVS) said that the most there is a great need for technical skills and industrial professional education. Our workforce is unable to compete in the global market due to lack of proper technical education. There is no shortage of talent in our youth. By providing technical and vocational education, poverty and unemployment can be eradicated and they can be made productive citizens. Nowhere to be challenged. And to increase the prestige abroad. Our women, who constitute 52% of the population, have undergone various training courses, including IT, marble mosaic,

dress designing, digital marketing, hot-line airline ticketing, beautician, etc. Has been living and supporting her family. The Pak-China Corridor (CPEC) will increase the demand for skilled people. We need to pay special attention to the technical training of the youth keeping in view the needs of the industry so that we can earn the best exchange and Unemployment could be reduced.


He added that Nautech could use industry lab free of cost to train youth including steel, pharmaceutical, marble, oil and ghee, auto industry, oil and gas industry. Is. Speaking on the occasion, Sajid Baloch, Executive Director, NAVTTC, said that the government is working hard to produce skilled people as per the requirements of the industry so that the needs of the industry can be met. (NACTVS) reflects the vision of the Prime Minister of Pakistan. Our entire focus is on providing quality

education and training Mian Waqas Masood, Chairman National Accreditation Council for Technical and Vocational Training, (NACTVS) said that efforts are being made to grade technical and vocational institutes as per International standards, which will improve the quality of education in technical training institutes and provide excellent skills to our youth. Will be able to obtain and discourage the issuance of fake certification, he said, presenting the annual report of the Council for the year 2021 on completion of one year and said that (NACTVS) is signing MoUs with various international organizations. Dr. Khalid Mahmood, Director General, Planning and Development, NAVTTC, also addressed the meeting and thanked the members for raising the standard of accreditation and the process of accreditation. A number of suggestions for further improvement were discussed.

REGISTERED



**CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**  
**PLANNING WING**  
(Directorate of Regional Planning)



**PUBLIC NOTICE**

**ILLEGAL / UN-AUTHORIZED LAND SUB-DIVISION NAMEDLY "KARSAAZ VILLAS, NEAR D-12, SHAH ALLAH DITTA, ZONE-3, ISLAMABAD" SPONSORED BY M/S KARSAAZ BUILDERS (PVT.) LTD.**

It has come to the notice of this office that M/s Karsaaz Builders, having Head Office at Karsaaz Builders, Karsaaz Tower-1, Markaz E-11/2, Islamabad & Site Office at Street No. 1, Shah Allah Ditta, near D-12/2, Islamabad, advertising & marketing an illegal land sub-division in the name of Karsaaz Villas, near D-12, Shah Allah Ditta, Zone-3, Islamabad without the prior approval of the Authority and hence **illegal/un-authorized**.

- As per provisions of ICT (Zoning) Regulation, 1992 (amended, 2010) and Revised Modalities & Procedures framed for Planning and Development of Private Housing Schemes in ICT Islamabad, **No Housing Scheme can be floated/launched in Zone-3 of Islamabad.**
- General Public**, through this public notice, is **cautioned and warned** in their own interest to refrain from indulging in any sale/purchase of plots in the illegal housing schemes and ensure the legal status of the scheme from CDA. Website [www.cda.gov.pk](http://www.cda.gov.pk) may also be visited for updated status and approved Layout Plans of the schemes. **In case of any fraud/loss, CDA will not be responsible.**
- The Sponsors, Sellers, Builders, Developers, Advertisers, Promoters, Estate Agents, etc. of Karsaaz Villas also warned through this Public Notice to refrain from carrying out such illegal activities. M/s IESCO, SNGPL, PTCL, etc. also requested, not to provide their Service Connections to such Illegal/Un-Authorized Housing Schemes.

Director Regional Planning  
Ph: 051-9252494

PID NO 6710-21



## Briefs

## NCSW to ensure women empowerment

ISLAMABAD: National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) committed to ensure the development projects for empowering women in the society. Talking to APP, Chairperson Nilofar Bakhtiar NCSW said "The projects mainly establish a structure and path for the commission, dealing with thematic areas related to violence against women, the political representation of women, and ensuring empowerment of women in the public and social sphere". Adding she said NCSW's role in generating knowledge, and women-friendly legislation has been significant. Moreover, the role of NCSW is ensuring the inclusiveness of women from all spheres of life was stressed in these projects. She said the recommendations included in these projects increasing the representation of special-needs women, transgender, and senior citizens to guarantee that their voices and concerns were represented in the formulation of laws. - APP

## Virsa museums to remain closed

ISLAMABAD: National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage (NIFTH) Wednesday announced that 'LokVirsa Museums' will remain closed on March 16, 18, 20, 23 on account of preparations for Pakistan Day parade.

According to statement issued here, the museums will reopen on March 23 at 1500 hours after parade, heritage Museum, also known as LokVirsa Museum is a museum administered and managed by LokVirsa - National Institute of Folk & Traditional Heritage. Due to preparations regarding Pakistan Day parade taking place at Parade Ground near LokVirsa premises, the Pakistan National Museum of Ethnology (Heritage Museum) and Pakistan Monument Museum (PMM) will remain closed as per previous practice. - APP

## DOAM all set to preserve KP heritage sites

ISLAMABAD: Directorate of Archeology and Museums, KP (DOAM) is all set to preserve various archaeological sites of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including Takhti-Bai, Amluk Dara, a Buddhist site at Swat Valley and several in other provinces aiming to promote traditional heritage of the country. Talking to APP, official of DOAM Mahmood Razasaid, "Archaeological conservation is a profession devoted to the preservation of the archaeological record including large-scale features such as sites, structures, landscapes as well as artifacts". He said archaeological remains are found throughout the of the country in areas of past and current human habitation. Archaeological explorations uncover artifacts found in wide-ranging places, from objects buried deep under the sea and in the most extreme environments that humans have explored. Raza further informed that excavation allows us to learn a great deal about the history through studying archaeological remains and their context, exposing artifacts that have been buried can cause rapid and irreversible deterioration. - APP

## Pollen count increases to 'very high' level

ISLAMABAD: The pollen count on Sunday increased up to 44,908 per cubic metre in the air, in the federal Capital, the highest level paper mulberry. Talking to APP, senior official MET office Islamabad Dr Zaheer Babar said as a result of mostly less rainfall during the predicted months February and March the pollen abundance sharply increased. He informed that the pollen has started early during the period. He said the pollen count would also increase during upcoming week. Pollen season is expected to end by mid-April, he added. - APP



ISLAMABAD: A visitor enjoys Swiss delicacies during Francophone day celebrations held at the Club 21 premises. - DNA

## ICCI calls for implementation of rent control act in courts

Ajmal Baloch, said that for the last 40 years, the traders of Islamabad have been demanding the promulgation of a balanced rent control act and the present government has passed a new rent law to address their long standing demand

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Jamshed Akhtar Sheikh, Acting President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) said that the government has passed an amended bill of rent control act for Islamabad through the parliament but it is not being implemented in the courts as yet due to which the traders are facing problems. He appealed to the Chief

Justice of the Islamabad High Court to issue directions to the lower courts for implementation of the new rent control act so that the rent disputes of the traders could be resolved expeditiously and they could fully focus on promoting trade activities. He expressed these views while addressing the inaugural ceremony of City Linkers Estate Office at Karachi Company G-9 Markaz, Islamabad hosted by

ICCI Executive Member Akhtar Abbasi and Rashid Abbasi. ICCI Vice President Fahim Khan, President All Pakistan Anjuman-e-Tajirun Ajmal Baloch, Former Presidents ICCI Zafar Bakhtari, Muhammad EjazAbbasi & Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, Former Senior Vice Presidents ICCI Khalid Chaudhry and Tahir Abbasi, Former Vice President ICCI Ashfaq Hussain Chatha as well as Asgha rAbbasi, Shahid Ab-

basi, Hafiz Usman, Intiaz Abbasi and a large number of traders were present on the occasion. Addressing the gathering, Ajmal Baloch, President, All Pakistan Anjuman-e-Tajirun said that for the last 40 years, the traders of Islamabad have been demanding the promulgation of a balanced rent control act and the present government has passed a new rent law to address their long standing demand.

However, traders will only benefit from the new rent law when it is implemented in courts. He appealed the Islamabad High Court to play a role for enforcement of new rent law in the lower courts so that the traders could try to promote business activities with a sense of better security. Former Presidents ICCI Zafar Bakhtari, Muhammad EjazAbbasi and Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan said in their speeches that in the

absence of a rent law, rent disputes were on the rise in the federal capital and incidents of forced evictions of some traders were also occurring which were a source of great concern for the trading community. However, now that a new rent law has been enacted, it is very important that it should be implemented in the courts to decide the rent disputes so that the trading community can fully benefit from it.



ISLAMABAD: Envoys of South Africa, Vietnam and India posing for a picture during Holi celebrations at the Indian High Commission. - DNA

## Hosting OIC meeting a great honour for Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chief Executive Officer Pakistan Furniture Council Mian Kashif Ashfaq Sunday said hosting OIC (Organisation of Islamic Conference) meeting in Islamabad is a great honour for Pakistan which will further forge durable unity in their ranks and fortify solidarity besides strengthening un-

shakable bonds of brotherhood among member countries. Talking to a delegation of traders led by MianFaryad Ahmad Raza President Furniture Importers Association Lahore chapter Punjab Pakistan here Sunday he said Pakistan has consistently stressed the need for greater unity and solidarity among OIC members and it has always given preference to OIC issues, at times by overriding its own national interests, such

as uninterrupted flinching support for the Palestine struggle and refusal to recognize Israel unless the two-state solution to the dispute is implemented. He said another area where Pakistan has taken a leadership role in the OIC is effectively countering Islamophobia. He said Pakistan has ensured annual adoption of resolutions against defamation of religious ever since the publication of blasphemous cartoons.

## Forests are an integral part of survival on Earth

Roughly 1.6 billion people, including more than 2000 indigenous cultures, depend on forests for their livelihood

ISLAMABAD: The UN works with governments, community organizations, and the general public to promote both local and global activities for the International Day of Forests. Activities include: Tree planting campaigns. Photo exhibits that portray the importance forests and trees. Sharing info graphics, videos, news and messages via social and other media. Forests cover about one third of the world's land mass. Roughly 1.6 billion people, including more than 2000 indigenous cultures, depend on forests for their livelihood. Forests are vital to the planet for many reasons, including: Providing shelter for more than half of the terrestrial species of animals, plants and insects. Contributing to the balance of oxygen, carbon dioxide and humidity in the air. Protecting watersheds, which supply fresh water to rivers. The UN first celebrated the International Day of Forests on March 21, 2013. This initiative follows from the International Year of Forests. - DNA

## Farrukh visits NA hall, inspects facilities for OIC meeting

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Farrukh Habib here on Sunday visited the National Assembly hall to review arrangements for the 48th session of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Council of Foreign Ministers scheduled to be held on March 22 and 23. On January 21 a motion was adopted by the National Assembly to allow the exclusive use of its chamber for the 48th session of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Council of Foreign Ministers. The minister also visited the main central conference hall, counters made to facilitate the visiting delegates, medical, media centers, and various meeting rooms. Habib said, "It is a great honor for Pakistan to host the 48th meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Council of Foreign Ministers." He said Pakistan was taking steps to strengthen the OIC platform. - DNA

## IG Islamabad announces honorarium

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Ahsan Younas has announced an honorarium to policemen performing best in their respective divisions. The honorarium is being given after evaluating performance of the employees working under various divisions units, police stations and sub-offices. Some 2147 personnel of police stations including the eagle squad were included who performed duty at various places during visit of the Australian cricket team. Similarly, over 700 personnel of security divisions and special branch, the employees engaged in 24-hour duty at the police facilitation center and more than 500 from counter terrorism department and Islamabad safe city were incorporated for the purpose. The IGP had already announced cash prizes for traffic police work force. The purpose of announcing honorarium was to recognize the services of personnel as well as to boost morale of the force.

## All set to celebrate Pakistan Day

RAWALPINDI: Preparations are in full swing here to celebrate Pakistan Day in a befitting manner as the nation is preparing for the day celebrated across the country to mark the passing of the Lahore Resolution, when a separate nation for the Muslims of the British Indian Empire was demanded on March 23, 1940 in Lahore.

With the 75th Pakistan Day just a few days away, elaborated arrangements are underway to celebrate the day with great national zeal and patriotic spirit. As the Pakistan Day holds a significant place in the history of Pakistan and to mark it in a befitting manner Armed Forces were busy in rehearsals and drills at Shakarparian parade ground to celebrate the day in a spectacular way.

Armed forces troops and other departments were busy in rehearsals and making other administrative arrangements for the day, to be held in dignified and respectful manner. The residents of the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi were also taking keen interest in the rehearsals and visiting nearby areas such as Faizabad and I-8 interchanges to witness aerobatics maneuvers of fighter jets of Pakistan Air Force (PAF). Participating troops include foot columns of Pakistan Army, Pakistan Navy, PAF, Frontier Corps, Northern Light Infantry, Mujahid Force, Islamabad Police, Tri-Services Lady officers, Tri-Services Armed Forces Nursing Service, Girls Guide, Boys Scouts, Special Service Group from three Services, mechanized columns of Armored Corps, Artillery, Army Air Defence, Signals, Engineers, Army Strategic Force Command, Camel Band and Presidents Body Guard. - APP

## RWMC disposes of 15,000 tonnes of waste

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) had disposed of around 15,000 tonnes of garbage from all tehils of the district during the last 20 days. According to RWMC spokesman, under the direction of Provincial Minister for Local Government Mian Mahmood Al-Rasheed, the RWMC had resolved around 200 complaints received on social media. He informed that 180 vehicles, including 125 mini dumpers, 39 compactors, four-arm rollers, four tractors, two tractor trolleys, and two dumpers were utilized to make the city neat and clean. He said that waste containers were repaired while mechanical sweeping of roads, metro bus stations, and washing was also carried out during the campaign.

In addition, the spokesman informed that the cleanliness of the Expressway and its adjacent areas was underway for the Pakistan Day Parade on March 23. The RWMC spokesman said that additional workers had been deployed in two shifts, and waste and debris were also being lifted to ensure cleanliness. He said that white power lining was also ensured on roads leading to Parade areas. - APP

## GCAR's teachers, students deserve appreciation

The Margalla House was declared best House on achieving maximum positions and Nousherwan, a student belonging to the same House was declared "The Best Athlete" of the event

RAWALPINDI: The Provincial Minister of Punjab for Literacy and Informal Basic Education Raja Rashid Hafeez on Sunday said that the Government Graduate College Asghar Mall Rawalpindi administration, teachers and students deserve great appreciation for successfully conducting a week of cocurricular and extra-curricular activities that paraded the latent talents of the youth of the nation and in so doing the College also displayed a rare yet necessary contrast of gender equality and women empowerment. Addressing the concluding ceremony of the GGCAR Sports Week, the Minister recalled his memories at the College. He said, "I spent four years here and have witnessed many changes. The teachers deserve acclaim for preserving and improving the

great institution of the Rawalpindi Division. It brings immense prestige and honor for me as an alumnus to attend the ceremony as guest at my alma mater." He added that it was the era of the youth and this college did and still does contribute a huge number of alumni to various sectors of social strata. He stressed that all such alumni should be invited at the College for motivating the students. Mr Rashid Hafeez pledged his availability for his Institution when required. Principal GGCAR Professor Dr Abdul Kabir Mohsin said, "I am grateful to the Minister for his commitment to the institution and extended his gratitude for gracing the ceremony as chief guest". The Principal and senior faculty presented a souvenir to the Minister where the latter also distributed winning prizes among the victo-

rious athletes. The College was divided into five houses keeping in view the cultural, heritage and geographical regions of the province namely Potohar, Rawal, Margalla, Punjab, and Kohsar. The Margalla House was declared the best House on achieving maximum positions and Nousherwan, a student belonging to the same House was declared "The Best Athlete" of the event. Spring was in the air, everything was returning to life as GGCAR stirred from its long intellectual slumber triggered by COVID-19 and a general inertia. It was the 14th of March when the Principal Dr Abdul Kabir Mohsin announced the start of week of cocurricular and extra-curricular activities. Two days of debates, speeches, essay writing, creative writing, and calligraphy competitions brought

to the fore the enormous talent of the College's boys and girls. It was serious competition and the students of the five houses: Potohar, Rawal, Margalla, Punjab, and Kohsar contested tooth and nail to establish their intellectual, cerebral and artistic supremacy. After two days the serious task of cocurricular activities got done the scene shifted beyond the walled confines of the Halls and moved to the ground. There was cheering, shouting, waving and light hearted banter. Colours, clapping, and the usual razzmatazz was everywhere. The boys ran, jumped and threw as their life depended on it. So much energy prevailed. It was contagious energy. Frozen muscles thawed; creaking joints mended aching bones rejuvenated as the professors joined the

fray. Every house had its slogans which they chanted till their throats went hoarse. The competition grew fiercer as the days wore on, how they pulled, and ran and threw!!! With such an exuberant crop of youth one wonders why we are and where we are. Friday was the day all for the girl students who comprise almost 50% of the enrolled students of the College. strength to ensure women empowerment. It was an off-day for boys, only the girls came, suddenly the bellowing of the boys turned into 'mellow' screaming of the girls, badminton, table tennis, tug of war, athletics and cricket were the games. For once the girls could peel of their veils and 'abayas', shrug away their chaperones and fearlessly compete. They brought their own brand of competition. - APP



## Attack on media in Ukraine

DEATHS of two journalists reporting near the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv this week is yet another dark reminder of the enormous toll that the Russia-Ukraine conflict is exacting on media. The latest attack left two Fox News network journalists dead and its correspondent severely injured. Killed in the attack were Pierre Zakrzewski, a 55-year-old longtime war photojournalist, and Oleksandra 'Sasha' Kuvshynova, a 24-year-old Ukrainian journalist working as a consultant for the network. Fox News correspondent Benjamin Hall was seriously injured in the attack and remains hospitalised.

After the Ukraine crisis started on February 24, 2022, journalists covering the conflict have been in the line of fire – facing both rocket attack and gunfire.

The deaths of journalists come on the heels of another attack on media in which Brent Renaud, an award-winning filmmaker and journalist, was killed while reporting in a suburb of Kyiv. In recent weeks, a Ukrainian camera operator was killed when a TV tower came under heavy shelling. There was also an incident of firing on journalists from Sky News last week.

With journalists working in Ukraine finding themselves coming under increased fire, media organisations and newspapers have put out urgent appeals, calling for safeguarding reporters.

"At this extremely dangerous moment, we call on all parties to this escalating conflict to do everything in their power to prioritise the safety of journalists and respect the role of the press," Vincent Peyregne, CEO, World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) said in a statement. On its part, media, especially news media, covering the conflict must fall back on the highest professional standards as they report on the Ukraine crisis. Media is providing an invaluable service through their coverage in Ukraine and journalists are playing a very crucial role. International press must be afforded every protection to carry out their essential role and any efforts to disrupt the free-flow of information is unacceptable. Journalists are civilians and as such should be treated as non-combatants.

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## Covid-19 trends

PAKISTAN has witnessed a considerable downward trend in new Covid cases as 375 new cases of novel coronavirus cases were reported in the last 24 hours as the Covid-19 positivity recorded below two percent.

The National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) in its update on Sunday said that one person died of the infection, taking overall death toll to 30,329. The tally of total cases has surged to 1,521,888.

The number of patients in critical care was recorded 506. Pakistan conducted a total of 33,225 tests in the last 24 hours. Around 286 patients have recovered from the contagious virus in last 24 hours and the total recoveries stood at 1,475,759.

As many as 573,579 coronavirus cases have so far been confirmed in Sindh, 504,393 in Punjab, 218,629 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 134,951 in Islamabad, 35,458 in Balochistan, 43,214 in Azad Kashmir, and 11,666 in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Last week, NCOC chief Asad Umar announced lifting all restrictions related to Covid-19 in the country due to downward trend in infection rate and speedy vaccination drive.

Worldwide, some countries are battling unprecedented wave of new Covid-19 cases.

Battling its worst Covid-19 outbreak in two years, China reported its first virus fatalities in over a year on Saturday.

Two patients died in the northeastern Jilin province, raising the country's coronavirus death toll to 4,638, the National Health Commission said in a daily update.

The fatalities, China's first since January 2021, come as authorities scramble to curb a surge in infections driven by the highly contagious Omicron variant.

Jilin, a province home to more than 21 million people, has been the hardest hit in the latest wave of infections.

Of the 2,157 community transmission cases recorded throughout China over the past day, 1,674 were in Jilin, where authorities have enforced a strict lockdown and movement curbs.

China has pushed ahead with its "zero-Covid" strategy of stringent lockdowns and mass testing in a bid to stamp out the growing new wave.

# Kazakhstan and Pakistan: 30 years of friendship and to be continued

Mukhtar Tileuberdi



We also pay particular attention to our interaction with Pakistan within the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, whose Ministerial Conference I am attending this week in Islamabad

LAST year, Kazakhstan celebrated the 30th anniversary of its independence. Our people remember well how, after the adoption of the fateful decision on December 16, 1991, Pakistan, just in four days, December 20, 1991, recognized sovereign Kazakhstan as one of the first amongst.

Two months later, on February 24, 1992, the first visit of the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev to Islamabad took place, during which Kazakhstan and Pakistan officially established diplomatic relations, thereby laying the foundation for building our cooperation in various fields.

From the first days of the development of relations, our nations per-

ceived each other as important partners in the international arena, with shared historical roots and in search for a safer peaceful world. Over the past three decades, we have strengthened ties both in a bilateral format and within the framework of regional and international organizations.

Pakistan has regularly supported Kazakh initiatives aimed at consolidating international peace, security and dialogue, such as the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA) and the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, taking an active part in these forums. Our representatives carried out fruitful work within the framework of other organizations and structures, primarily the UN, the SCO, the ECO, etc.

We look forward to welcoming Prime Minister Imran Khan to the 6th CICA Summit in October 2022 dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the Conference. We also pay particular attention to our interaction with Pakistan within the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, whose Ministerial Conference I am attending this week in Islamabad. Among the many challenges that the Ummah is facing nowadays, I would like to highlight the increasing risks concerning food security in view of climate change and military conflicts of growing intensity due to the worsening geopolitical situation. Therefore, as a major global producer of wheat and other agricultural products, we urge all our partners to support the activities of the Islamic Organization for Food Security, headquartered in the capital of Kazakhstan.

When it comes to bilateral format cooperation, we have a good record in trade and interaction through educational institutions. Of interest for Kazakhstan is the experience of the Pakistani Armed Forces' participation UN's peacekeeping operations potential.

The two governments managed to shape a solid foundation for further building up and diversifying our partnerships.

Our countries have worked out close or coinciding positions on topical international and regional problems.

A trusting, constructive dialogue has developed at the level of the leaders of our countries, high-level meetings and visits are held on a regular basis. The last such meeting took place last September within the framework of the SCO Summit in Dushanbe, where the President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev and Prime Minister Imran Khan held their first tet-a-tet meeting. The conversation took place in a friendly atmosphere, the leaders noted the significant potential for building up cooperation, and focused special attention on the need to strengthen bilateral trade, economic and investment cooperation.

In this context, it is encouraging to note that last year our bilateral trade more than doubled, exceeding a record \$95 million, but this figure is still far from the real possibilities of our states.

To fulfill this task, the Kazakh and Pakistani governments are actively working to expand the legal framework of our bilateral collaboration. We are talking about draft agreements in the field of transit trade, cooperation between customs authorities, etc. Interagency cooperation is being established in the format of joint working groups on trade and investment, transport and regional interconnectiveness, and energy.

Since last year, there has been a positive trend in the context of the expansion of B2B relations, which is important for increasing trade. With the assistance of our diplomatic missions, in November 2021, the Kazakh-Pakistani business forum was held in Almaty, last February. Pakistan was recently visited by a delegation of Kazakh entrepreneurs. Such trips, according to representatives of business circles, allow for seeing with their own eyes the available opportunities, the results-oriented networking and discussing specific joint projects.

Separately, it should be noted that President Tokayev, within the frame-

work of the outlined course and the concept of the New Kazakhstan, instructed the government to increase the export and transit potential of our country, develop the agriculture, the pharmaceuticals, and textile industry. In this case, cooperation with Pakistan and its seaports on the coast of the Arabian Sea, for Kazakhstan, the world's largest landlocked state, is relevant too. In all the above areas, given the solid experience and achievements of Pakistan, our countries can develop fruitful cooperation. I will say more, the negotiations that have taken place over the past few months at the level of authorized departments and private companies have already shown the existing mutual interest. On the other hand, the foreign policy course announced last year by Islamabad for rapprochement with the countries of Central Asia, including Kazakhstan, is fully consistent with the approaches of Nur-Sultan, which once again testifies to the coinciding views and interests of our countries.

Kazakhstan, being an active participant in regional processes, is ready to support and make its own contribution to strengthening our cooperation in the regional format, which will undoubtedly contribute to the solution of such a paramount task as increasing the level of security in our region, which is the basic condition for further diversification of our relations.

Speaking about the regional context, one cannot fail to mention the situation in Afghanistan. Kazakhstan, like Pakistan, is in favor of restoring trade with the country and aiding the Afghan people in order to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe there.

Moreover, the strengthening of cooperation between Kazakhstan and the Pakistan will undoubtedly have a positive impact on other countries of the region, since to deliver goods by land, we need at least to cross the borders of the states between us.

The cataclysms taking place in the world, primarily the COVID-19 epi-

demical that has swept the whole world, once again confirmed the importance of closer international cooperation and mutual support. Only through joint coordinated action can we overcome global challenges.

Speaking about the Kazakh-Pakistani cooperation, it should be emphasized that our relations cannot be limited only to the security, trade, and economic component. Our nations are connected by something more in the historical, cultural, civilizational and religious context. Pakistan has for aged experienced intensive interactions with the peoples speaking Turkic languages. The Empire of the Great Mughals, whose rulers came from Central Asia, left an indelible mark on the history of Pakistan, making its unique contribution to the diverse cultural heritage of your country. For example, the Badshahi Mosque, stunning in its beauty and engineering technologies in the cultural capital of Lahore, is a vivid confirmation of this. In this regard, it is important to pay attention to the development of cooperation in the field of culture and tourism, between our media communities.

To convey this "historical memory" to the youth of the two countries, ties between youth organizations, educational institutions, joint sports events, etc. should be further encouraged.

In conclusion, I would like to congratulate the leadership and the fraternal people of Pakistan on the 75th anniversary of independence, during the period when Kazakhstan and the countries of our region celebrate the holiday of Nowruz (Kazakhs call it Nauryz), which is a New Year in our part of the world and a symbol of spring renewal. I would like to wish us all peace and prosperity.

I believe 2022 will be full of symbolism and new milestones in relations between our countries.

*-The writer is the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan*

## OIC Foreign Ministers meeting in Pakistan and China

Dr. M Akram Zaheer



In addition to the issues of Muslim groups and communities in non-member states, the issues of international terrorism and conflict resolution will feature prominently on the WFC's agenda

THE Meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is going to be held on March 22, 2022 in Islamabad, Pakistan. It focuses objectively on the implementation of decisions and recommendations within the framework of the OIC principles and guideline. Secretary General HussainBrahimTaha will address the meeting to review key activities, plans and programs of the General Secretariat, as well as post-OIC MFC projects.

The meeting will address a wide range of issues and will consider the activities of the OIC General Secretariat in implementing the resolutions passed on various issues in the Islamic world, including the issue of Palestine and Al-Quds Sharif and Niamey. The meeting will also discuss a number of political files, in particular the events in Afghanistan and its humanitarian consequences for the Afghan people and the situation in Jammu and Kashmir, which the Group of Contact from OIC Jammu and Kashmir at the side meeting.

The meeting will address a number of African issues, including the situation in the Republic of Mali, the coastal areas and Lake Chad, the fragility of the region, and the situation in Central Africa and the Republic of Guinea. At the Arab level, the Foreign Ministers will discuss developments in Yemen, Libya, the Republic of Sudan and Somalia, Syria and other regions.

Cooperation with international partners, the United Nations, the Russian Federation and the European Union will also be discussed at the annual meeting. On the sidelines of the session, the OIC will organize a meeting of the Open and Contact Group on Muslims in Europe.

In addition to the issues of Muslim groups and communities in non-member states, the issues of international terrorism and conflict resolution will feature prominently on the WFC's agenda. The OIC will convene a meeting of the Ad Hoc Ministerial Committee on Accountability for Rohingya Human Rights Violations.

The meeting will cover many economic,

cultural, social, humanitarian and scientific topics, including Islam phobia. The regular report of the Islam phobia Observatory is expected to be presented at the meeting for consideration.

At least 48 OIC foreign ministers from 57 countries have so far confirmed their participation. This is the second OIC meeting hosted by Pakistan in three months. In December, Pakistan also hosted a special meeting of the OIC on Afghanistan.

Another interesting thing is that Pakistan has invited Chinese foreign minister Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi as the guest of honor.

It is a rare move to accord to this opportunity to a top diplomat of non-OIC country. FM. Wang Yi may address to the OIC Foreign Ministers' Conference as a special guest.

In addition to attending the OIC conference, the Chinese Foreign Minister will also attend the Pakistan Day Parade to see the performance of newly added J-10C fighter jets to the Pakistan Air Force (PAF). Pakistan is the first country to acquire J-10C fighter

jets from China, which is notable for its close bilateral relations, especially in the defense field. China's Foreign Minister will review bilateral relations and meet with the country's civil and military leaders to discuss regional and international issues. During his visit, he will also review the progress of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects. Following Prime Minister Imran Khan's recent visit to Beijing, CPEC has taken a further hit. Prime Minister Imran attended the opening ceremony of the Winter Olympics in Beijing in February to express China's support at a time when many Western countries refused to send their teams to the event China and Pakistan.

The two countries have a close relationship long-standing, but have improved in recent years.

Islamabad insists it does not believe in bloc politics, but its decision to skip the US Democracy Summit and attend the Beijing Winter Olympics shows the country is moving too fast towards China.



## Briefs

## PM ready to forgive...

FROM PAGE 01

a father he was ready to forgive them. "Humans can commit blunders. For the sake of your children's future do not commit this mistake," he added. The prime minister said what message would be passed to the society when elected representatives took bribes! The prime minister said that he was talking for the betterment of those legislators because days of Changa Manga politics had been over when the members of parliament were treated like herds. "It is the country where people have awareness and they are aware of everything. They know it very well that you people have taken bribes to switch loyalties. The public do not believe in your words," he added. The prime minister reminded those estranged PTI's members of parliament that it would be difficult for them to live in a society with such a stigma.

The people would not marry their sons and their children would face difficulties. The public would not forget them, he added. The prime minister said that often a decisive phase arrived in a nation's history, requiring it to take a definite stance. Today, he said, on the one hand, big dacoits of Pakistan had gathered to save their looted wealth and on the other hand, there were people who had been striving for decades against their corruption. The prime minister said the decisive phase had now arrived for the nation to take a definite course.

## PM running away from...

FROM PAGE 01

from the no-confidence motion as he already knew about his defeat from the outset. Addressing a press conference in Islamabad, Bilawal said that the "captain who knows that he is going to win never runs away from the game." "The speaker of the National Assembly did not hold the session 14 days after the requisition was passed," said the chairman, adding that the Constitution of Pakistan says the NA speaker should hold a session after 14 days. "According to the rules, the voting on the no-confidence motion should take place after seven days of its submission just like it was done during Shaheed Benazir Bhutto's time," said Bilawal. The chairman said the prime minister is running away from the motion but "we will not allow him to play with the future of our country." He went on to criticise the PM, saying that he has "violated the Constitution of Pakistan", and that the NA speaker failed to follow the rules. Bilawal said that the Bar Council has presented a petition before the Supreme Court which did not include the names of political parties. However, the chief justice of Pakistan still issued notices to us.

## No-trust motion...

FROM PAGE 01

speaker, the prime minister or anyone else, he will have to face article 6. While addressing the public along with Ahsan Iqbal, he mentioned that it is necessary to implement the democracy, parliament and constitution in the country. The incumbent government does not care about the constitution, democratic values and parliament. Shahid Khaqan Abbasi said that the no-confidence motion cannot be delayed. The government will have to face it. This is neither a senate election nor a GB election where money was used. The politics of the container has ended. The people want to leave the government and come in opposition. The speaker was biased from day one, and is still practicing the same patterns today.

## Dissident MNAs...

FROM PAGE 01

been asked to clarify their position within seven days. In a tweet, he said that after one week, process for declaration of their seats vacant would start and all members would be disqualified for life. He said that new members were being nominated for the reserved seats.

## Int'l Open Sailing C'ship 2022 concludes at Karachi

PAF Yacht Club is a pioneer institution in the country to promote this exhilarating sport and regularly organizes national and international events in collaboration with Pakistan Sailing Federation

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Pakistani sailors dominated the medal table as curtains were drawn on the 3rd Chief of the Air Staff International Open Sailing Championship-2022 being held at PAF Yacht Club, Karachi. The championship was played from 17-20 March, 2022 in which 97 sailors and officials from 11 countries participated. PAF Yacht Club is a pioneer institution in the country to promote this exhilarating sport and regularly organizes national and international events in collaboration with Pakistan Sailing Federation. Air Vice Marshal Shams-Ul-Haq, Advisor Engineering to Chief of Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force was the Chief Guest at the closing ceremony. Speaking at the occasion, Air Vice Marshal Zubair Hassan Khan, Chairman PAF Yacht Club, said that flawless conduct of this competition is the manifestation of PAF's commitment in promoting healthy activities, not only at national level but also at international level. Addressing the participants the



Chief Guest said, "it indeed is a matter of great honor for me to attend the closing ceremony of 3rd CAS Open Sailing Championship 2022. I am pleased to see the immaculate arrangements made by PAF Yacht Club to host this

magnanimous event. It has been possible through the sheer diligence, earnest teamwork & unremitting efforts that teams from 10 foreign countries participated in this championship. I formally congratulate all the participants,

team & jury members for holding such a successful event. We also look forward to enhanced interaction of our foreign guests in order to bridge the geographical and cultural gaps. I hope that you have enjoyed the diverse culture,

rich heritage and hospitality of Pakistan."

Later on, the Chief Guest gave away medals to the position holders. In Laser standard category, all medals were clinched by Pakistani sailors, namely Muzammil Hussain, Najeeb-Ullah and Allah Ditta. In RSX category gold, silver and bronze medals were grabbed by Pakistan's Qasim Abbas, Sajjad Muhammad, and Mohammad Irfan. In Laser 4.7 category gold medal was won by Kan Kaechuen of Thailand, while silver and bronze medals were clinched by Zain Binyamin of Pakistan and Dhanika Saakya of Sri Lanka respectively. In Optimist category, gold and silver medals were won by Patcharaphan Ongkooly and Pitipoom Jaroenpon of Thailand, while Bronze medal was won by Maryam Sajjad Abbasi of Pakistan.

For the 1st time national jet ski championship was also played in 2 categories (below 1200cc and above 1200cc). Wasif Ali won the title in below 1200cc category while Syed Abdul Karim secured 1st position in above 1200cc category.

## Pak embassy Nepal holds alumni get together



DNA

KATHMANDU: In the honour of Nepalese citizens graduated from various educational institutions of Pakistan, the Embassy of Pakistan organized an Alumni Get Together at Hotel Aloft Kathmandu. These graduates were recipient of scholarships under Pakistan Technical Assistance Programme (PTAP) in MBBS, BDS, D. Pharmacy, BS Engineering etc. General (R) Rajendra Chhetri, former Chief of Army Staff of Nepalese Army graced the occasion as the Chief

Guest. In his remarks on the occasion, General Chhetri recollected the depth and warmth of Nepal-Pakistan friendly relations and appreciated the support of Pakistan for Nepal's development, especially in the field of technical education. He also thanked Government of Pakistan for equipping Nepalese students with quality education at its renowned educational institutions. He noted that the students qualified from Pakistan were contributing towards the progress of Nepal with their rich educational experience. General Chhetri expressed the hope for Pakistan's continued support in

future as well.

In his remarks, Ambassador Syed Haider Shah said that the educational scholarships by Pakistan to Nepalese students reflected the closeness of people-to-people relations between Pakistan and Nepal. He said that Nepalese students made life-long friends while in Pakistan and carried with them positive memories all their lives. He also assured of Pakistan's continued support for educational scholarships to Nepalese students in future as well. He thanked the Alumni for upholding the spirit of serving humanity.

## Harvard Law School recognizes 'Israel' as apartheid regime

WEB DESK

MASSACHUSETTS: The US-based Harvard Law School has recognized 'Israel' as an apartheid regime. In a recent report to the UN, the International Human Rights Clinic at Harvard Law School recognized the apartheid character of the Israeli regime. The report was in response to a call for submissions from the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the OPT and 'Israel'. Addameer, in partnership with the International Human Rights Clinic at Harvard Law School, contributed the joint submission. The report's title is Apartheid in the Occupied West Bank: A Legal Analysis of Israel's Actions. It analyses whether Israel's legal regime in the occupied West Bank violates the prohibition of apartheid under international law. The submission also outlines Israel's discriminatory laws, policies, and practices in the occupied West Bank. The groups said Israel's discriminatory law "create a dual legal system." This system "systematically discriminates against

Palestinians and suppresses their civil and political rights." The submission also finds "Israel's actions in the occupied West Bank are in breach of the prohibition of apartheid." Moreover, it finds that its actions "amount to the crime of apartheid under international law." The Human Rights Council established the Commission of Inquiry in May 2021. It aimed to investigate "all alleged violations and abuses of international human rights law." "...leading up to and since 13 April 2021" in the OPT, including East Jerusalem, and in Israel. In addition, it aimed to investigate "all underlying root causes of recurrent tensions, instability and protraction of conflict." This included "systematic discrimination and repression based on national, ethnic, racial or religious identity." Amnesty International said lately 'Israel' is carrying out "the crime of apartheid against Palestinians." B'Tselem also asserted that Israeli policies had been designed to enforce "Jewish supremacy from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea." The New York-based Human Rights Watch last year became the first international rights group to publicly level the allegation of apartheid.

## Waseem loses title fight to Edwards

SPORTS DESK

DUBAI: British star boxer Sunny Edwards continued his unbeaten track record as he won his 18th successive fight by beating Pakistan's three-time WBC world flyweight silver champion Muhammad Waseem in the crucial IBF flyweight world title fight on March 19th here at the Duty-Free Tennis Stadium. The 26 years-old Edwards now holds a staggering track record of 18-0 after the win over Waseem in the 12-round clash. Edwards, who scored 115-111, 116-110, 115-111, and was declared winner unanimously, called Muhammad Waseem a world-class fighter, besides revealing his plans about future fights. However, after the bout, Waseem congratulated Edwards but complained about the unfair refereeing of the contest. "It was a tough fight. I tried my level best to win the fight, but unfortunately, the referee wasn't fair.

"I congratulate Edwards for this win. I hope to make a strong comeback in my next fight. Pakistan Zindabad," he concluded. According to BBC Sport, Edwards said: "Muhammad is a world-class operator and he and his team came with a good game plan but I thought I was always one step ahead tonight."

"I now want the Ring Magazine belt and the WBC title. I know Martinez wants the fight so let's make it happen, it will be huge," he added.



## Putin is 'in better shape than ever'

RUSSIA: Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko said in an interview that Russian President Vladimir Putin "is in better shape than ever" and called him "completely sane." "If you think that President Putin physically doesn't feel well or something like that, he is, as we say, very much alive," Lukashenko, considered a close ally to Putin, told Japanese television channel TBS in an interview, according to a video clip shared by Reuters. "He will catch a cold at all our funerals, as they say here. He is an absolutely adequate and healthy person. So the West and you should get this stupidity, this fiction out of your heads. Putin is absolutely adequate. He is in better shape than ever." Lukashenko said that Putin had less powers at the moment but that he was fully executing them, adding "this is a completely sane, healthy person, physically healthy. He's an athlete." - Agencies

## Shusha's event: Baku responds to Armenia

"Armenia's interference in the internal affairs of other country is unfounded and unacceptable," Abdullayeva said. "Armenia's territorial claims against Azerbaijan show that it has not drawn the correct conclusions from the result of the 44-day Armenia-Azerbaijan Karabakh war"

NEWS DESK

BAKU: The process of organizing any event on its sovereign territory by Azerbaijan and the participation of international representatives in this event is beyond Armenia's competence, Spokesperson for the Azerbaijan Foreign Ministry Leyla Abdullayeva said while commenting on the protest of the Armenian side in connection with the participation of a UN representative in the conference in Azerbaijan's Shusha city. "According to the Armenian Foreign Ministry, the UN representative in Armenia was summoned to the Armenian Foreign Ministry due to participation in the conference dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the Azerbaijan-UN partnership on March 18 in Shusha city," Abdullayeva said. The spokesperson added that the process of organizing any event on its sovereign territory by Azerbaijan and the participation of international representatives in this event is beyond



Armenia's competence. "Armenia's interference in the internal affairs of other country is unfounded and unacceptable," Abdullayeva said. "Armenia's

territorial claims against Azerbaijan show that it has not drawn the correct conclusions from the result of the 44-day Armenia-Azerbaijan Karabakh war."

The spokesperson said that this position of the Armenian Foreign Ministry is nothing but an attempt to hamper the joint peacekeeping efforts of Azerbaijan and the leading members of the international community in the region. "We bring to the attention of the Armenian Foreign Ministry that Shusha is the indigenous territory of Azerbaijan," Abdullayeva said. "This city, the cradle of Azerbaijani culture, along with other territories, was liberated in 2020, and our territorial integrity was restored." The spokesperson said that the UN has never taken a neutral position on the ongoing Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, on the contrary, it supported Azerbaijan's territorial integrity in resolutions adopted by the UN General Assembly and the UN Security Council. "In this regard, it is unclear what kind of 'neutral stance' the Armenian Foreign Ministry is calling for," Abdullayeva said. "In conclusion, we would like to reiterate that the sooner Armenia accepts the realities of the post-conflict period in the region, the more useful it will be for this country."

## Pakistan ready to...

FROM PAGE 01

to the minister about the arrangements for the conference. The minister visited the central conference hall, counters for the delegations, medical center, media center and different meeting rooms. Speaking on the occasion, the minister said it was a great honour for Pakistan to host the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers conference after holding the extraordinary session of the OIC ministers last time.

He said he met with the visiting Egyptian foreign minister and exchanged views on matters of mutual interest. Meanwhile, in a statement, OIC said the session will address many topics and the activities of the OIC General Secretariat on implementing the resolutions adopted on various issues in the Islamic world, including the issue of Palestine and Al-Quds. The summit will also discuss developments in Afghanistan and its humanitarian consequences for the Afghan people, and the prevailing situation in Indian illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir, read the statement.

The statement further said many African issues will also be on the summit's agenda, including the situation in Mali, the Sahel region, and Lake Chad, and the situation in Central Africa and the Republic of Guinea. It said the OIC Foreign Ministers will also discuss developments in Yemen, Libya, Sudan, Somalia, Syria, and other regions during the summit.

For this crucial meeting, the Parliament House has been selected as the venue, where the plenary sessions will be held. Meanwhile, talking to newsmen in Islamabad, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi the OIC session is a significant as it is being held at an important phase when the Muslim Ummah is confronted with a host of challenges, including the Kashmir and Palestine issues.

Shah Mahmood Qureshi said various global challenges like economic contraction and its fallout, and climate change, will also come under consideration. More than 100 resolutions will be considered during the session.

## OIC moot will not be...

FROM PAGE 01

Conference. If anyone has courage then dare to stop the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) conference, he warned while addressing a presser here. The National Assembly had adopted a resolution on January 21 to hand over the House to Foreign Office for holding OIC Conference, he added.

He said only agents of imperialistic forces could think to sabotage the OIC conference. He said outer security of Parliament House, Parliament Lodges and Members National Assembly's (MNA) hostels had been handed over to the Rangers and FC till April 2.

Regarding convening of National Assembly (NA) session for no-confidence motion against the Prime Minister, the minister said the Speaker NA could not kill the motion rather he has authority to extend the session keeping in view the current situation.

However, he said that he did not know when the Speaker would summon the National Assembly session.

He expressed the hope that all allied would support Prime Minister Imran Khan after their consultation. The Minister condemned storming at Sindh House and said the cases had been registered against all those who were involved in the incident. The Attorney General would file reference in Supreme Court on Monday, he added. - APP

## Speaker summons...

FROM PAGE 01

NA secretariat and legal experts during a meeting at Asad Qaiser's residence. The 14-day constitutional deadline to convene the NA session on the Opposition requisition will expire on March 21. According to a statement issued by the NA secretariat, the session has been summoned on March 25 due to a two-day meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Islamabad. Offing Fateha for deceased PTT MNA Haji Khayal Zaman has been placed on the agenda of the sitting, while continuing or adjourning the session is the discretionary power of the speaker, said the sources.



## Briefs

## Civilian deaths in Ukraine war hit 847

NEW YORK: The number of civilian deaths recorded since the start of Russia's war on Ukraine has reached 847, while 1,399 more have been injured, the UN Human Rights Office said on Saturday. "OHCHR believes that the actual figures are considerably higher, especially in Government-controlled territory and especially in recent days," said the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Most of the civilian casualties recorded were caused by the use of explosive weapons with a wide impact area, including shelling from heavy artillery, multiple-launch rocket systems, and missile and air strikes, according to the rights office. It said receipt of information "from some locations where intense hostilities have been going on has been delayed and many reports are still pending corroboration."

This concerns, for example, Izum in the Kharkiv region, and Mariupol and Volnovakha in the Donetsk region, where there are allegations of numerous civilian casualties. Russia began its war against Ukraine on Feb. 24. It has drawn international condemnation, led to financial sanctions on Moscow, and spurred an exodus of global firms from Russia. More than 3.32 million refugees have fled to neighboring countries, according to the UN. — APP

## Over 116,000 Yemenis displaced in Marib

## AGENCIES

SANAA: More than 116,000 Yemeni civilians were displaced in the central Marib province in 2021 amid fighting between government forces and Houthi rebels, according to the Yemeni authorities on Sunday.

In a statement, the government-affiliated Executive Unit for IDP's Camps Management said most of those displaced had fled to Al-Madina and Al-Wadi districts in Marib. According to the statement, more than 2.2 million Yemenis have been displaced from their homes in the central province since 2014. Iran-aligned Houthi rebels have stepped up attacks to take control of oil-rich Marib, one of the most important strongholds of the legitimate government and home to the headquarters of Yemen's Defense Ministry. Yemen has been engulfed by violence and instability since 2014, when Houthis captured much of the country, including the capital Sanaa.

The conflict has created one of the world's worst man-made humanitarian crises, with nearly 80% of the country, or about 30 million people, in need of humanitarian assistance and protection and more than 13 million are in danger of starvation, according to UN estimates.

## GDP growth to exceed 5% mark in FY22: Tarin

"The welcome news is that the LSM has grown by 8.2% in January against same month of last year and 4.2% against December 2021," he said

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: Owing to robust growth of the country's large scale manufacturing, agriculture and exports, Minister for Finance and Revenue Shaukat Tarin on Sunday expressed the hope that the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth would exceed five percent mark against the set target of 4.8 percent for the fiscal year 2021-22.

"The welcome news is that the LSM has grown by 8.2% in January against same month of last year and 4.2% against December 2021," he said while addressing a press conference here. He said the LSM growth was slowed down in August, September 2021 however, the good news was that it had come again on high growth level. "Our economic growth momentum has picked up

again as our all agriculture crops are growing at 6 to 12 percent, and exports and services sectors are also growing at high pace", he said. Tarin said no doubt there were some headwinds like inflation and current account deficit but the growth was sustainable and robust. He said to curtail inflation and pass on minimum impact of international inflation pressure to the masses, the government had taken several measures including significant relief in prices of petroleum products and electricity.

The minister highlighted that due to such measures, the Sensitive Price Index (SPI) based weekly inflation had reduced by 1.15 percent in a single week. With respect to the a recent world happiness index issued by a United Nation's body, the minister said Pakistan's happiness index had improved



by seven points in one year however that of India had declined by three points. He said the elements on which the index was based included perception of corruption, social support, freedom to make choices, Gross Domestic Product per capita, life expectancy, and generosity. In Aisa, he said Pakistan was among the top 15 happiest countries. The finance minister added that the current account posted high deficit for few months but now due to the government's measures to curtail imports and increase exports, the deficit

shrank significantly from over US \$ two billion in January to mere US \$ 545 million in February. Our reserves with the central bank were almost US \$ 16.6 billion, so there had not been any hustle and bustle in the reserves as in the past when the reserves started depleting fast after high current account deficit. Replying to a question with respect to the ongoing talks with the IMF to release the next tranche of the programme, the minister said the IMF had expressed reservations over the Pakistan government's recent relief in petroleum products and electricity. However, he said, "We have satisfied them by showing how we will manage the fiscal space". He said the IMF had asked us to show the agreements and proofs that how the subsidized money

would be managed. "This is not a big issue, as we have made full homework and my final talk with the IMF would be held on Tuesday," he said adding that the IMF should have no reason to stop the next tranche. Responding to another question regarding the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz leader Miftah Ismail's press conference yesterday, the minister said, the government was not issuing the Euro bond at this time due to high interest rate. "As soon as the international markets settles down and the rates become normal, we will issue the bonds." He said Miftah Ismail was wrong in comparing the present current account situation with that in 2018, saying that in 2018, Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves were at the lowest level and they had reserves enough to pay for imports of only one month.

## Mirziyoyev, Vladimir Putin exchange greetings

## NEWS DESK

TASHKENT: President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev and President of Russia Vladimir Putin exchanged congratulatory messages on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, reports "Dunyo" IA correspondent.

President Shavkat Mirziyoyev in his message noted that in recent years, by joint efforts, the parties have brought interaction between Uzbekistan and Russia to an unprecedented high level of strategic partnership and alliance and further strengthened friendship between the peoples of the two countries. Cooperation between Uzbekistan and Russia is actively developing based on the principles of openness, mutual trust and support, and respect for each other's interests. Unique mechanisms have been established that have proven their effectiveness, allowing for a close and ongoing dialogue in all key areas of the practical interaction.

The trade turnover reached record levels. Large-scale industrial cooperation projects are being implemented. Humanitarian collaboration is developing. Ties are strengthening in healthcare, science, culture, art and education. "We intend to further consistently develop and strengthen friendship and multifaceted partnership between Uzbekistan and Russia in the interests of our countries and peoples", President Shavkat Mirziyoyev said.

## SL cancels school exams amid financial crisis

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka has cancelled school exams for millions of students after running out of printing paper, as the country contends with its worst financial crisis since independence in 1948. Education authorities said on Saturday the term tests, scheduled a week from Monday, were postponed indefinitely due to an acute paper shortage, with Colombo short on funds to finance imports.

"School principals cannot hold the tests as printers are unable to secure foreign exchange to import necessary paper and ink," the Department of Education of the Western Province said. Official sources said the problem could hold up tests for around two thirds of the country's 4.5 million students. Term tests are part of a continuous assessment process to decide if students are promoted to the next grade at the end of the year. A debilitating economic crisis brought on by a shortage of foreign exchange reserves to finance essential imports, has seen the country run low on food, fuel and pharmaceuticals.

The cash-strapped south Asian nation of 22 million announced this week that it will seek an IMF bailout to resolve its worsening foreign debt crisis and shore up external reserves. — Agencies

## FMs of Iran and Oman discuss bilateral ties

## FOREIGN DESK

TEHRAN: In the phone call with his Iranian counterpart, Omani Foreign Minister binHamad Al-Busaidi expressed hope that the final stages will be taken in the Vienna talks as soon as possible, Trend reports citing Mehr. Iran Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and his Omani counterpart Badr bin Hamad Al-Busaidi held a phone call on expansion of bilateral ties as well as the latest regional and international developments.



ISLAMABAD: Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry arrived to attend 48th session of the Organisation of Islamic Conference Council of Foreign Ministers. — DNA

## Chinese companies steps up pharmaceutical co-op with Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Chinese companies to step up pharmaceutical cooperation with Pakistan, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Saturday. "Having provided over 20 million doses of vaccine made in Pakistan, we expect to deepen cooperation with this country", said Mr. XinChunlin from CanSino at a CPEC B2B Conference. In the conference organized by the Board of Investment (BOI), Pakistan, providers of original new drugs and traditional Chinese medicines including Luye Life Sciences Group, Guangzhou BaiyunshanZhongyi Pharmaceutical, Guangzhou Qixing Pharmaceutical also expressed their intention to cooperate with potential Pakistani partners. "Facing the common challenge of the ongoing pandemic, joining hands with the Pakistani brothers will bring benefits for both peoples", Mr. Xin added. CanSino is a renowned Chinese pharmaceutical company that has launched the single-dose CanSino COVID-19 vaccine branded PakVac locally produced in Pakistan last year. According to Ms. GhazalaParveen, Chief Biological Production Division, National Health Institute, Pakistan, PakVac is producing more than 3 million doses per month, exceeding the initial expectation of 1 million and cutting the cost by 25%. Meanwhile, Pakistan welcomes investment in the medicine sector. "Pakistani pharmaceutical sector is ripe for investment", said Mr. Muhammad Radimuddin, Senior Technical Advisor to USP, on the conference. Comprising of 700 plus manufacturers and thousand of distributors, Pakistan's \$4 billion pharmaceutical market has been growing at a pace of 12.5% CAGR. "The potential of pharmaceutical exports with right partners is exponential", Muhammad said. He also believed that as global generic medicine market is expected to grow to about \$700 billion by 2025, this is an opportunity for Pakistani industry to take a larger share. A case in point is that during the pandemic Pakistan was able to start local production and export the key covid-19 drug Remdesivir to 16 countries through joint ventures with foreign companies. — DNA

## Business community urges OIC to encourage intra-trade

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani business community on Sunday urged the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to encourage intra-trade among member countries for countering offset looming global threat caused by Covid-19 pandemic on their economies. Chairing a round table conference on "Organization of Islamic Cooperation Conference Trade Prospects" organised in Lahore by MeherKashifYounis, former senior Vice President Lahore Chamber, President SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry Iftekhar Ali Malik said OIC was the second largest inter-governmental Organisation after United Nations with a large membership of 57 states covering four continents whereas its intra trade between 2019-20 registered a decrease of 21.2 percent ranging from US\$700.1 billions to US \$ 522.8 billion in 2019.

## Broad space for China-Pak footwear industry as Pakistan's exports soar

## DNA

BEIJING: There is broad space of cooperation for the development of China-Pak footwear industry as Pakistan's exports soar, according to a report of China Economic Net (CEN). Pakistan's footwear exports achieved double-digit growth. Its footwear exports in the first eight months of the 2021-2022 fiscal year reached USD 104 million, a year-on-year increase of 17.7%, and the export volume was 12.09 million, a year-on-year increase of 9.08%, according to the latest data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). Among them, in addition to the export value increase of its traditional advance products, leather footwear increased by 12.76%, canvas footwear and other footwear increased by as high as 181.89% and 40.58% respectively. As the seventh-largest footwear producer, Pa-

kistan accounts for more than 2.4% of world footwear production, but footwear contributes less than 1% to its global exports. For a long time, Pakistan's footwear industry has been eager to enhance its global competitiveness and expand the scale of exports through measures such as technological upgrading, import substitution of footwear materials, and improvement of labor quality. Based on CPEC's substantial improvement of infrastructure including power and transportation, Pakistan hopes to bring in more Chinese shoe-making industries. Asad Umar, Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives, said in early March that "footwear industry is one of the four investment areas as that Chinese companies could be lured to invest in Pakistan, especially where Pakistan have a potential to export its products." How attractive is Pakistan

to Chinese footwear companies? What is the space for cooperation between the footwear industries of the two countries? Chen Qianjiang, CEO of a Chinese footwear company ZungLan Trading (Pvt) Ltd, who has four years of business experience in Lahore, mentioned a set of models in an interview with CEN. "Combining Made in Pakistan with Chinese capital and technology, that is, integrating the advantageous production factors of Pakistan and China will help improve Pakistan's production and enhance the international competitiveness of its products." "Some footwear enterprises in Pakistan do relatively well and have a large scale, such as leather shoes and PU injection sandals are its competitive products, while the advantage of my company lies in casual shoes and travel shoes," Chen said that Pakistan still has a lot of room for growth in this regard.

## China-led farming as alternative livelihood

"The initiative being unleashed will also help boost "nursery business"

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: China-led farming is being developed as alternative livelihood for Gwadar, says a report carried by Gwadar Pro. According to the report, in a situation where Gwadar residents desperately need more sources of income other than fishing to maximize financial survivability, a sustainable and modern alternative source of income is coming into play through an initiative of modern farming inspired by Chinese agro-based high-tech scientific technologies. Credit goes to "Plant Tissue Culture Lab and Greenhouse", an integral part of Belt and Road Engineering Research Center for Tropical Arid Non-Wood Forest built and run in cooperation with Central South University of Forestry and

Technology, China Overseas Port Holding Company Limited and Yulin Holding Company Limited in the premises of Gwadar Port Free Zone area. Ministry of Climate Change, University of Karachi, and Indus University are also on board. Thousands of residents of Gwadar are going to be part of the new Chinese program offered to them to learn how to kick start growing tropical and economic crops that will be potentially strong to survive in Gwadar's hot, dry and arid climate besides producing higher number of fruits. The alternative source of income will help Gwadar's residents lessen their dependency on fishing livelihood that accounts for almost 95 percent in the source of income of Gwadar people. Zhang Saiyang, Director at Plant Tissue Culture Lab

and Green House, told Gwadar Pro "soon we are going to hold training sessions free of charge for local residents of Gwadar to impart them advanced knowledge of how to inventively grow economic cultivations including banana, orchid, jujube, ginger and others. "In the first phase, a group of 10 resident of Gwadar and employees in Gwadar Free Zone area, will learn modern breeding and grafting skills and technology," he added. After the pilot project succeed, residents of Gwadar city living outside the Gwadar port will also get access to the initiative, he explained. Being a PhD in forestry, Zhang Saiyang said, "our aim is not only to change and improve the local economy but also to make Gwadar greener and cleaner," he added.

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**Briefs**

**10 million have fled their homes in Ukraine: UN**

GENEVA: Ten million people - more than a quarter of the population - have now fled their homes in Ukraine since Russia's invasion, the United Nations refugee chief said Sunday. UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, said nearly 3.4 million of the total had fled to neighbouring countries, mostly to the Polish border. "Among the responsibilities of those who wage war, everywhere in the world, is the suffering inflicted on civilians who are forced to flee their homes," UNHCR chief Filippo Grandi said, implicitly holding Russia. "The war in Ukraine is so devastating that 10 million have fled, either displaced inside the country, or as refugees abroad," he said. UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, said Sunday that 3,389,044 Ukrainians had fled across the country's borders since Russia invaded on February 24. Another 60,352 joined the exodus since Saturday's update, a flow roughly the same as the day before. Some 90 percent of those who have fled are women and children. Ukrainian men aged 18 to 60 are eligible for military call-up and cannot leave. UNICEF, the UN children's agency, said more than 1.5 million children are among those who have fled abroad, warning that the risks they face of human trafficking and exploitation are "real, and growing". - APP

**Six killed in Belgium as car drives into carnival crowd**

BRUSSELS: A car ploughed into a crowd of early morning carnival-goers in Belgium on Sunday, killing six people and injuring dozens of others, authorities said. The tragedy took place just after 5:00 am (0400 GMT) at the carnival of Strey-Bracquegnies, a district of the former industrial town of La Louviere. "At this stage of the investigation, we know that a vehicle slammed into a group (of carnival goers) and that there are six dead and 26 injured, including 10 people whose life is in danger," prosecutor Damien Verheyen told reporters in La Louviere. The main suspects, who were arrested, were born in 1988 and 1990, he said, adding that terrorism was not at this stage considered a motive. The suspects came from La Louviere and are not known to authorities for similar acts, Verheyen said. Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo deplored the "horrible news" on Twitter, saying "a community gathering to celebrate has been hit in the heart." De Croo was expected to visit the scene later on Sunday accompanied by Belgium's King Philippe, the prime minister's office said. Belgian towns and villages host many street carnivals around the season of Lent, with the parades in Binche and Alost the most known internationally.

**Thousands of Tunisians protest against Saied**

TUNIS: Thousands of Tunisians rallied in the capital Sunday, the country's independence day, to protest against President Kais Saied and consultations over constitutional reforms proposed by him. Protesters shouted "the people want to overthrow the president" and "no to consultations", according to AFP reporters. The demonstration was organised by the Islamist-inspired Ennahdha party and a movement named "Citizens Against the Coup" - in reference to a power grab by Saied last year. Many of the demonstrators were from people who had voted for Saied, such as blogger and rights activist Mounira Bouazzi. "I thought that he believed in democracy and the gains of the revolution, but he did the complete opposite," she told AFP.

**No trust-move to succeed at all cost, says Zardari**

PPP and former MPA from Lalamusa Tanvir Ashraf Kaira meets former President Asif Zardari in Islamabad

GULZAR NOSHI/DNA

ISLAMABAD/LALAMUSA: Former President and Co-Chairman of PPP Asif Ali Zardari has said no trust move against Prime Minister Imran Khan will succeed at all cost adding the allied parties shall soon announce support for the opposition parties. Former President made these remarks during his meeting with the PPP leader and former MPA from Lalamusa Tanvir Ashraf Kaira. Tanvir called on Asif Zardari at the Zardari House on Sunday. Former President further told Tanvir Kaira that a number of PTI members of the Parliament had announced not to vote for the prime minister. He said some of the MPs have already made their announcement public while there are still who are waiting for the opportune time to announce their decision. Tanvir Kaira in his statement said, said that Imran Khan wanted to postpone the issue of no-confidence motion till April under the garb of the OIC conference by talking to the Speaker National Assembly but we will not allow Imran Khan to do so. He said that funeral of the "change" will take place in the month of March, otherwise there will be Dama Dam Mast Qalandar. He said that if Imran Khan takes cover of the



ISLAMABAD: Former MPA and PPP leader Tanvir Ashraf Kaira met with former President Asif Zardari at the Zardari House on Sunday. - DNA

OIC conference to save himself, it would be a misuse of the aims of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. He said that the no-confidence motion is a democratic, legal and constitutional right that cannot be taken away from us under the guise of anything. Tanvir further said the government days have been numbered that is why it is trying to use dilly dallying tactics. He made it clear that government will not be able to survive as all parties have decided to vote against Imran Khan. He said Prime Minister Imran Khan has lost the confidence of the National Assembly after the people. He further said that Imran Khan is no longer remained the Prime Minister of the country after losing the confidence of his own members of the National Assembly. He added that as much as the Speaker National Assembly, Asad Qaiser will take time in convening the session, the greater number of the candidates of the no confidence motion will be increased. He added, PPP wanted to dislodge this government in order to give relief to people of Pakistan who have been bearing the brunt to govt atrocities for three and half years. He said, PPP would perform well in the next elections. He said he together with Qamar Zaman Kaira was sparing no efforts in resolution of masses problems.

**FM Qureshi, Egyptian FM discuss bilateral ties**

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ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi and his Egyptian counterpart Sameh Shoukry on

Sunday discussed the bilateral ties, cooperation in diverse fields and important regional and global issues. During a meeting, the foreign minister said Egypt was an important brotherly country of the region and it was achieving political

stability and strength under the leadership of President Abdel Fattah-el-Sisi.

Qureshi said both the countries were linked on basis of common faith and cultural affinities and expressed satisfaction at the shared views of both the countries with regard to various regional and international issues, a news release said.

The Egyptian foreign minister had arrived to attend 48th session of Organization of Islamic Cooperation Council of Foreign Ministers. Foreign minister Qureshi observed that bilateral ties between the two countries had been strengthened during the last few years due to increased interaction at the highest level. He noted that bilateral trade between the two countries surged to US \$ 423 million during the last fiscal year. Both sides also agreed to cement the bilateral trade. Participation in the joint air defence exercises in Egypt was also a manifestation of the strong defence ties between the brotherly countries, Qureshi added. The foreign minister said cultural relations could also serve as a platform to bring the people of the two countries closer, adding, they would welcome solid proposals from the Egyptian side to strengthen these ties. He said the meeting of the OIC- Council of Foreign Ministers was being held in Islamabad when Pakistan would be celebrating its 75th anniversary of its independence. The Egyptian foreign minister thanked the foreign minister for the warm welcome accorded to him.



**PM felicitates nation over Reko Diq mine agreement**

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Sunday congratulated the nation and residents of Balochistan province over a successful agreement for the development of Reko Diq mine by setting an investment of US \$10 billion and creation of 8,000 new jobs. In a series of tweets, the prime minister expressed that Reko Diq mine would be potentially the largest gold and copper mine in the world and liberate the country from the crippling debt, ushering in a new era of development. He informed that a successful agreement was made with the Barrick Gold for the development of Reko Diq. "I congratulate the nation & ppl of Balochistan on successful agreement with Barrick Gold for development of Reko Diq mine after 10 years of legal battles & negotiations. Penalty of approx (approximately) \$ 11 bn is off set, \$10 bn will be invested in Balochistan creating 8000 new jobs," the prime minister said. "RD will potentially be the largest gold & copper mine in the world. It will liberate us from crippling debt & usher in a new era of development & prosperity," he tweeted. - APP

**Pakistan to safeguard core interest of Muslims countries: Prof Cheng**

BEIJING: Cheng Xizhong, Visiting Professor of Southwest University of Political Science and Law and Senior Fellow of the Charhar Institute on Sunday said that Pakistan has the courage to safeguard the core interests of Muslim countries and was playing a leading role in the Islamic world. Just a few months after the successful hosting of an extraordinary meeting of the OIC-CFM last year in Islamabad, Pakistan will host the 48th session of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Council of Foreign Ministers (OIC-CFM) on March 22-23. This is not only a great honor for Pakistan, but also the full trust of the Islamic world in Pakistan, he added. Prof. Cheng, who is also former Chinese Defense Attache in South Asian countries, commented that on a series of major issues such as Palestine, Kashmir, Afghanistan and Islamophobia, Pakistan has dared to speak, adhered to justice and safeguarded the core interests of the Islamic world. As a result, Pakistan has not only won the trust of the Muslim countries, but also won universal praise from the international community.

He opined that in safeguarding the core interests of the Islamic world, Pakistan's greatest contribution was that it repeatedly emphasized the issue of Islamophobia on various international occasions, and finally the UN Security Council adopted a resolution to proclaim March 15 as International Day to Combat Islamophobia. He said that secondly, Pakistan was committed to regional peace and stability and has been playing a key role in alleviating the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan and promoting Afghanistan towards lasting peace. Pakistan advocates that the international community should act collectively to avert a humanitarian crisis and economic collapse in Afghanistan, and engage actively with the Afghan authorities to promote human rights, encourage inclusivity, and develop effective strategies to eliminate the terrorist threat from the country. Prof. Cheng said that under the background of pandemic spreading, war burning and strenuous turbulence in the world, the Islamic world was facing many new challenges, so the upcoming 48th OIC-CFM meeting in Islamabad has assumed huge significance. - APP



**China locks down millions more as Covid spreads**

MONITORING DESK

BEIJING: China on Sunday imposed stay-at-home orders on millions more people in the country's northeast as it battles its biggest COVID-19 outbreak in two years. The country has largely kept the virus at bay since it brought to heel its initial outbreak in 2020 using targeted lockdowns, mass testing and travel restrictions. But the Omicron strain has broken through its defences in recent months and taken hold in multiple cities. Jilin, the second-biggest city in Jilin province, will lockdown about 4.5 million inhabitants for three days from Monday night, local authorities announced. More than 4,000 new infections were reported across China on Sunday - with two-thirds in Jilin province, which borders Russia and North Korea. Changchun, Jilin province's capital, said Saturday it would also tighten restrictions for three days. Since March 11, Changchun's nine million people have only been allowed out once every two days to buy food. The new measures mean only medical personnel and other anti-epidemic workers will be authorised to leave their homes. But restrictions are being eased in the southern tech hub of Shenzhen, which locked down its 17.5 million residents a week ago. Public transport will resume fully from Monday, alongside some administrative and business activities, local health authorities said Sunday. Non-essential businesses will remain closed however and the downtown Futian business district is still under strict anti-COVID measures. Shenzhen is home to some of China's biggest tech firms, meaning any curbs on businesses come at a significant economic cost.

**World Nowruz Day to be marked today**

Nowruz is an ancestral festivity marking the first day of spring and the renewal of nature

DNA

ISLAMABAD: International Day of Nowruz will be marked on March 21 (Monday) across the globe including Pakistan celebrates the start of the Persian spring festival March 21 every year. It occurs on or around the time of the March equinox. Nowruz celebrations can include traditional folk dances. About 300 million people worldwide celebrate Nowruz, with traditions and rituals particularly strong in the Balkans, the Black Sea and Caspian Sea regions, the Caucasus, Central and South Asia, and the Middle East. Events may include folk dance performances, special concerts, and tree planting ceremonies. Nowruz is an ancestral festivity marking the first day of spring and the renewal of nature. It was proclaimed as an official UN observance because it promotes peace and solidarity, particularly in families. The day also focuses reconciliation and neighborliness, contributing to cultural diversity and friendship among peoples and different communities.

**Russia accused of bombing school sheltering hundreds**

KYIV: Ukrainian authorities said on Sunday that Russia had bombed a school sheltering 400 people in the besieged port of Mariupol, as Moscow claimed that it had again fired hypersonic missiles in Ukraine, the second time it had used the next-generation weapon on its neighbour. Turkey said that the two sides were close to a deal to stop the fighting, amid reports of more civilians being killed in strikes across the country. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said that the siege of Mariupol, a strategic mostly Russian-speaking port in the southeast where utilities and communications have been cut for days, would go down as a war crime. "Our cities have turned into multi-storey ruins, every area is like a horror movie," Sergiy Gaiday, head of the Lugansk regional administration, wrote on the Telegram messaging app. The war in Ukraine, which Russian President Vladimir Putin launched on February 24 to stamp out the pro-Western leanings in the ex-Soviet country, has sparked the fastest growing refugee crisis in Europe since World War II, felled Russia-West relations to Cold War-era lows, and is wreaking havoc in the world economy still recovering from the coronavirus pandemic. - APP

**Short-circuit causes fire near Sialkot Garrison: ISPR**

The inferno did not lead to any loss of life or property

DNA

RAWALPINDI: A fire broke out in an ammunition shed near Sialkot Garrison as a result of a short-circuit, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said Sunday. The ISPR, in a brief statement, said that the inferno did not lead to any loss of life or property. The fire was extinguished and damages contained through timely and an effective response, the military's media wing added.

**Zelenskiy condemns 'terror' in besieged Mariupol**

Ukraine and its Western backers say Russian ground forces have made few advances in the last week, concentrating their efforts instead on artillery and missile strikes

MONITORING DESK

LVIV: Russian and Ukrainian forces fought for control of Mariupol on Sunday, local authorities said, while President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said Russia's siege of the southern port city was "a terror that will be remembered for centuries to come". Mariupol has suffered some of the heaviest bombardment since Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24, and many of its 400,000 residents remain trapped in the city with little if any food, water and power. The U.N. refugee agency said 10 million people had now been displaced across Ukraine, including some 3.4 million who have fled to neighbouring countries such as Poland. Officials in the region said they were reaching capacity to comfortably house refugees. Capturing Mariupol would help Russian forces secure a land corridor to the Crimea peninsula that Moscow annexed from Ukraine in 2014. Fighting continued inside the city on Sunday, regional governor Pavlo Kyrylenko said, without elaborating. The city council said on its Telegram channel late on Saturday that several thousand residents had been "deported" to Russia over the past week. Russian news agencies said buses had carried hundreds of people Moscow calls refugees from Mariupol to Russia in recent days.

President Vladimir Putin says Russia's "special operation" is aimed at disarming Ukraine and routing out people he terms dangerous nationalists. Western nations call it an aggressive war of choice and have imposed punishing sanctions aimed at crippling Russia's economy. Ukraine and its Western backers say Russian ground forces have made few advances in the last week, concentrating their efforts instead on artillery and missile strikes. Ukrainian presidential adviser Oleksiy Arestovych said on Sunday there had been a relative lull over the past day, with "practically no rocket strikes on (Ukrainian) cities". He said front lines were "practically frozen". Mariupol's city council said Russian forces had bombed an art school on Saturday in which 400 residents were sheltering, but the number of casualties was not yet known.

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