



Islamabad POST

Tuesday, March 22, 2022

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Price Rs. 20

Pakistan's Youth upholds the pledge to renew Quaid's legacy

Detailed News On Page-08

Russia accused of deliberately bombing hospitals

Detailed News On Page-07



Fritz beats Nadal to win Indian Wells

Detailed News On Page-06



Briefs

Fawad slams Opposition

SHUJAAT HAMZA
ISLAMABAD, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hussain on Monday came down hard on the opposition for campaigning against the 48th session of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Council of Foreign Ministers starting in Islamabad from Tuesday. The opposition had surpassed India and Israel in campaigning against the OIC moot, he said while talking to the media outside the Supreme Court alongside Energy Minister Hamad Azhar and Adviser to the Prime Minister on Parliamentary Affairs Zaheer-ud-Din Babar Awan. Referring to Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's threat of disrupting the OIC conference, he said "how embarrassing it is for those who had said that we will see how the OIC takes place in Islamabad." He said the final dates for OIC meeting were announced some eight months ago. If the opposition had

Continued on Page 06

All set for OIC CFMs moot today

Saudi Arabia, Kazakhstan, China, Egypt, Somalian Foreign Ministers as well as OIC Secy General arrive

ANSAR M BHATTI / DNA

ISLAMABAD: The stage is all set for the historic OIC conference in Islamabad. Foreign Ministers and Deputy Foreign Ministers of over 40 countries have already arrived in Islamabad. The conference proves to be yet another feather in the cap of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan. The Foreign Ministers and delegations from the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Members States, Observers and representatives of the International Organizations on Monday arrived here to attend the 48th session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers. The delegations were received warmly at Islamabad International Airport, where a special red carpet was rolled out for the dignitaries. The International lounge was also decorated with flags of the OIC Member States and the dignitaries were escorted on traditionally decorated polo carts from the run way to the lounge. Secretary General of Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Hissein Brahim Taha also arrived to attend OIC moot.

Continued on Page 06

Tajik FM, Azeri minister call on Prime Minister

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan held a bilateral meeting with the Foreign Minister of Tajikistan, Mr. Sirojiddin Muhridin, today in Islamabad on the sidelines of 48th Session of OIC-CFM. He expressed satisfaction on growing bilateral cooperation in all spheres of mutual interest.

Pictures on Page, 7 and 8

The Prime Minister felicitated the Foreign Minister on the 30th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Tajikistan. The Prime Minister recalled his official visit to Dushanbe in September 2021 and expressed satisfaction on the

Continued on Page 06

Uzbek Deputy FM calls on COAS

COAS said that Pakistan values its relations with Uzbekistan



STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Furqat Sidikov, Deputy Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan called on General Qamar Javed Bajwa, COAS at GHQ. During the meeting, matters of mutual interest, regional security situation and bilateral cooperation in various fields were discussed. COAS said that Pakistan values its relations with Uzbekistan, rooted in religious affinity, common values, geo-strategic significance, potential for mutually beneficial and enhanced economic and defence cooperation. Both reiterated the desire to further enhance bilateral relations including efforts for peace and security in the region. The visiting dignitary appreciated Pakistan's role in regional stability and pledged to play his role for further improvements in diplomatic co-operation with Pakistan at all levels. He specially appreciated Pakistan's efforts for hosting the OIC's 48th Council of Foreign Ministers.

Govt seeks SC opinion on Article 63-A

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Monday filed a reference in the Supreme Court seeking its opinion on Article 63-A of the Constitution. The reference submitted by Attorney General for Pakistan Khalid Jawed Khan seeks apex court's guidance on two interpretations of Article 63-A and which one should be adopted and implemented to achieve the constitutional objective of curbing the menace of defections and purification of the electoral process and democratic accountability. The Supreme Court formed a five-member larger bench on a presidential reference

Continued on Page 06

SC not convinced on intervening in NA affairs

MONITORING DESK

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court is not convinced about intervening in the proceedings of the National Assembly, Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Umar Ata Bandial said on Monday while

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi hold arms in a show of unity. The Chinese Minister said his country greatly valued ties with Pakistan. — DNA

PAKISTAN IS PROUD TO HOST



48th OIC Council of FOREIGN MINISTERS

March 22-23, 2022
Islamabad

Partnering For Unity, Justice And Development

Pakistan as host of the 48th Session of CFM of OIC, aims to promote unity within the Ummah, advance the cause of justice for all Muslims, and promote inclusive and sustainable development for OIC member states.

#OIC48CFM



#OICinPakistan



**48th OIC Council of
FOREIGN MINISTERS**
March 22-23, 2022
Islamabad

Pakistan *Welcomes*
all distinguished guests for the

**48th Session of the OIC Council
of Foreign Ministers**

March 22-23, 2022 | Islamabad



H.E. Hissein Brahim Taha
Secretary General, Organization of Islamic Cooperation

On the occasion of the 48th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the OIC being convened in this beautiful city of Islamabad, it is my immense pleasure to convey best wishes to the Government and people of Islamic Republic of Pakistan and all OIC Member States. It is a further joy that this OIC gathering is taking place when Pakistan is celebrating its 75th Anniversary of Independence. On this auspicious occasion, I pay special tribute to the founding father of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, and extend my sincere greetings to H.E. President Arif Alvi, H.E. Prime Minister Imran Khan, the Government and people of Pakistan. As a founding member of the OIC, Pakistan has always played a vital role in the development of the Organization and in promotion of its Charter objectives. During the past 5 decades, Pakistan has hosted many conferences and made invaluable contributions to strengthen the Organization. The eminent Pakistani lawyer, late Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada served as the OIC Secretary General (1985-1988). May Allah Almighty bless his soul. Since inception, OIC stood as a symbol of unity of the Ummah. From day one, the Organization has taken up the responsibility of uniting efforts to defend the causes of the Ummah, achieve political stability, economic prosperity and social well-being for its people, as enshrined in the OIC Charter. Amid unprecedented crises including the Covid-19 pandemic, and raging global conflicts, OIC Member States have demonstrated continuous commitment to preserve international peace and sustainable development, through Islamic values of unity and cooperation. Every OIC CFM offers an opportunity for Member States to analyze and self-reflect in terms of the past and present, assess the progress made, as well as review future prospects emerging for our Organization and joint Islamic action. The theme adopted for the 48th session, "Partnering for Unity, Justice and Development", augurs well in strengthening the resolve of the Member States towards the OIC Charter objectives of promoting and consolidating solidarity among them, guided by the noble Islamic values of unity and fraternity. Wishing full success to the 48th Session of the OIC CFM, I pray Almighty Allah to strengthen cooperation and solidarity within the Muslim Ummah and among the Member States of the OIC. Ameen!



Dr. Arif Alvi
President, Islamic Republic of Pakistan

Pakistan is hosting the 48th Session of OIC Council of Foreign Ministers in Islamabad, on 22-23 March 2022. The meeting also holds special significance as it will coincide with the 75th anniversary celebrations of Pakistan's independence. The people of Pakistan are looking forward to welcoming our distinguished guests from the OIC Member States on this auspicious occasion.

Pakistan has a deep and abiding commitment to the eternal Islamic virtues of amity and brotherhood. Promoting solidarity and cooperation among members of the Islamic Ummah is not only a foundational basis for our foreign policy, but is also an element of faith for us.

The guiding principles of this vision were articulated by the Father of the Nation, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, when in February 1948 he said, **"We are members of the brotherhood of Islam in which all are equal in right, dignity and self-respect. Consequently we have a special and very deep sense of unity"**. Over the years, Pakistan has remained true to these lofty ideals.

As a founding member of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Pakistan is committed to the vision of realizing the true potential of the Organization as the most effective and representative voice of the Muslim World. This vision would also serve as a guiding principle for the 48th Session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM). I am confident that the 48th OIC CFM will provide a valuable opportunity to the leaders of the Muslim World to take tangible and practical steps towards further strengthening the bonds of Islamic solidarity and cooperation. I wish the meeting every success.



Imran Khan
Prime Minister, Islamic Republic of Pakistan

It is a matter of great honour for Pakistan to host the 48th Session of OIC Council of Foreign Ministers in Islamabad on 22-23 March 2022. The CFM also holds special significance as it coincides with the 75th anniversary celebrations of Pakistan's independence. Having hosted the 17th Extraordinary Session of OIC Council of Foreign Ministers on the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan on 19th December 2021, the 48th CFM is another manifestation of Pakistan's proactive role to promote Islamic solidarity and cooperation. The 48th Session comes at a critical juncture for the Islamic World: the people of Palestine and Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir are being denied their inalienable right to self-determination; the rising tide of Islamophobia and hate speech threatens Muslim communities across many parts of the world; and millions of our Afghan brethren risk an uncertain future in the midst of humanitarian and economic crises. Similarly, the deleterious impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is yet to be fully contained. Under these circumstances, it is high time that all OIC Member States come together to forge a collective response on all such wide ranging issues and strive towards harnessing our ambitions into concrete actions by further strengthening our partnership for unity, justice and development. I am confident that the 48th CFM would prove to be a landmark session in the Ummah's combined efforts to chart a joint way forward. For its part, Pakistan remains committed to supporting all efforts aimed at promoting and advancing solidarity, brotherhood and prosperity in the Muslim World. We look forward to welcome the Foreign Ministers of OIC Member States and all other dignitaries for a successful CFM.



Shah Mehmood Qureshi
Foreign Minister, Islamic Republic of Pakistan

It is our great privilege to host the 48th Session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers in Islamabad, on 22-23 March 2022. This special occasion, which coincides with the 75th anniversary celebrations of Pakistan's independence, will not only serve as an affirmation of Pakistan's leading role within the OIC, but also a collective celebration of our accomplishments since independence in 1947. Pakistan has a proud history of hosting OIC Summits and meetings of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers. These include the Second OIC Summit Conference in February 1974, as well as four Sessions of OIC Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM). Pakistan has also hosted two Extraordinary Sessions of OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, including the recently-held 17th Extraordinary Session of OIC CFM on the Humanitarian Situation in Afghanistan. The 48th Session of the OIC CFM is being hosted at a time when the entire Muslim World is faced with numerous challenges, and the need for solidarity and cooperation between Muslim Ummah is more pressing than ever. During the course of our Chair of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, Pakistan will sincerely endeavour to promote unity amongst the OIC Member states, advance the cause of justice for all Islamic people, including for our Kashmiri and Palestinian brethren who are forced to live under illegal and oppressive occupations, and promote the mutually reinforcing goals of prosperity and development for the OIC Member States. Similarly, ensuring full and complete recovery from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic also remains a key priority for us. The proposed theme of the 48th Session, "Partnering for Unity, Justice and Development" perfectly encapsulates these priorities; and based on these ideals, we will seek to build bridges of cooperation and construct partnerships across the Islamic World and beyond. I believe that the 48th Session of OIC Council of Foreign Ministers will serve as a unique opportunity for the leaders of the Muslim World to collectively reaffirm their commitment towards the unity, solidarity and prosperity amongst the Muslim Ummah. It would also solidify the collective position and stance of the Muslim World on pertinent issues and emerging challenges.




**48th OIC Council of
FOREIGN MINISTERS**
March 22-23, 2022
Islamabad

**PARTNERING FOR
UNITY, JUSTICE
AND
DEVELOPMENT**



Government of Pakistan

#OICinPakistan | #OIC48CFM

— HISTORY OF OIC —

- Established on 12th Rajab 1389 Hijra (25 September 1969) following the criminal arson of Al-Aqsa Mosque in Occupied Jerusalem.
- The 2nd Largest Organization after the United Nations.
- 1st OIC Charter adopted by 3rd CFM Session in 1972.
- From 30 founding members to 57 member states today

— OIC AT A GLANCE —

- 57 Members Countries
- 5 States with Observer Status
- Covering 4 Continents
- 18 priority development areas including peace & security, poverty alleviation, counter terrorism among many others
- Representing over 1.5 bn Population*
- 8.1% of Global GDP (2020)**
- GDP Per Capita \$3,680 (2020)**

— SOME ACHIEVEMENTS OF OIC —

Many Milestones in 53-year history

- Special Fund to support UNRWA for Palestine Refugees
- OIC Contact Group on Jammu & Kashmir
- Establishment of Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission
- Amplified Bosnian Voice in the UN Security Council during Bosnian War
- Unified voice against Islamophobia

— PAKISTAN AT OIC —

- One of the Founding Members of OIC
- Created OIC Contact Group on Jammu & Kashmir
- Established COMSTECH in Islamabad – aimed at Promoting Science & Technology in Member States
- Hosted 17th Extraordinary Session of CFM to Highlight Afghan Humanitarian Crisis
- Determined to fight Islamophobia – Steered the UN Resolution to designate March 15 as International Day to Combat Islamophobia

— PAKISTAN AS HOST OF —

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| OIC Islamic Summit: | Session of Council of Foreign Ministers: |
| • Lahore, 1974 | • 2nd Session in 1970 |
| | • 11th Session in 1980 |
| | • 21st Session in 1993 |
| | • 34th Session in 2007 |

National Days and Armed Forces Days

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



Hotels & Restaurants

- Serena Hotel.....111 133 133
- Marriott.....051- 2826121
- Monal.....0334-5421812



Airlines

- Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

- Rescue (Police).....15
- Bomb Disposal.....15
- Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16
- Emergency Ambulance.....1122 & Rescue Services.4451122
- Motorway Police.....9266044
- Motorway Police.....9270601-20
- Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596
- Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



Enquiry

- Edhi Ambulance.....115
- PIA Flight Info.....114
- PIA Cargo.....9280979
- Railway Inquiry.....117
- Railway Exchange 9270831-5
- WASA Rawalpindi.....5555489
- CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

- CMH.....5611111
- MH.....5611116
- Cantt Hospital.....9270907-11
- DHQ.....5556311-4
- RGH.....9290301-7
- Holy Family.....9290322-7
- PIMS.....9261170-79
- Polyclinic.....9218300-09
- Shifa International.4603666



Departments

- CDA.....9221334-43
- CDA.....9208301-04
- Met Office.....9250360-6
- RDA.....5555864
- TMA.....5770886
- Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Islamabad Metropolitan

- Corporation.....9209224
- Potohar Town.....9209224
- Rawal Town.....5773343

Water Tank

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: Secretary General United Business Group (UBG) Zafar Bakhtawari and others presenting a bouquet to SM Munir Patron in Chief of the UBG upon his arrival at a the brunch hosted by Zafar Bakhtawari. – DNA

PM Imran Khan lauds Islamic Development Bank's support

Dr. Al-Jasser briefed the PM on IsDB's programmes including the operationalisation of the Afghanistan Humanitarian Trust Fund that was established by the Extraordinary session of the OIC-CFM held in Islamabad on 19 December 2022



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan received Dr. Muhammad Sulaiman Al-Jasser, Chairman of the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) Group, who is in Pakistan to participate in the 48th Session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers. The Prime Minister recognized IsDB's long standing and trusted partnership with Pakistan and its support in diverse sectors such as Energy, Finance, Transportation, Education and Health. He also appreciated IsDB's support to Pakistan for the procurement of COVID-19 vaccines which greatly contributed to National

Vaccination Campaign for reach out to unvaccinated eligible population. Dr. Al-Jasser briefed the Prime Minister on IsDB's programmes including the operationalisation of the Afghanistan Humanitarian Trust Fund that was established by the Extraordinary session of the OIC-CFM held in Islamabad on 19 December 2022. The Prime Minister appreciated IsDB's initiative in support of the Afghan people that were in dire need of humanitarian and economic assistance. The Prime Minister underscored that Pakistan greatly valued its partnership with IsDB and looked forward to continued collaboration and enhanced engagement.

PTI's rally venue shifted to Parade Ground: Faisal

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Leader Senator Faisal Javed Khan on Monday said that preparations are in full swing to hold largest public gathering on March 27 at D-Chok, Islamabad. Addressing a press conference, he said the entire nation was standing by Prime Minister Imran Khan at this critical juncture. He said, "The Prime Minister will also make a historic speech at the gathering where he will present his future strategy." Faisal Javed Khan who is also Chairman Senate Standing Committee on Information and Broadcasting said that the Opposition parties' leaders were exposed as their interviews also resurfaced about horsetrading, adding, other PTI MNAs were also approached by opposition and they were offered huge bribes which they refused to accept. He said that Changa Manga era was no more existed as this was social media's era and nothing was hidden from the masses. He said that PM Imran Khan has come into politics to build the county as a strong state. He said that the previous rulers have made corruption and money laundering known as a common practice, adding, "People know very well about the good and bad practices adopted by the politicians". He said that from day one, the government plainly rejected the National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO), demanded by the opposition. He said that the opposition also tried their best to bargain over each public interest legislation, adding, they also held long march, threatened to submit their resignation from the assemblies and held protests but Prime Minister Imran Khan clearly denied to give them the NRO. Faisal Javed Khan added that the country's economy was strengthened despite COVID-19 pandemic. – DNA



ISLAMABAD: Visitors enjoying various delicacies during the Francophone week celebrations held at the Club 21. – DNA

Afghan, Gwadar Chambers explore "trade activities"

The President of GCCCI appreciated the efforts of PAJCCI, specially Zubair Motiwala, Chairman PAJCCI, for continuously working for the business community and socio-economic uplift of Pakistan by connecting & collaborating with diverse stakeholders and government entities across the border

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In order to boost up commercial and business activities in Gwadar, Gwadar Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCCI) explored Gwadar trade activities in a meeting with visiting delegation of Pakistan-Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI) at GCCCI office in Gwadar. According to Gwadar Pro, both chambers' officials tried to mull over the various potential of Gwadar, the strategic importance of Pakistan's second deep seaport, and its utility in increasing trade with the region including transit trade with Afghanistan and Cen-

tral Asian Countries (CARs). This meeting is part of PAJCCI's commitment to connect all chambers with the Afghanistan business community and to strengthen B2B relationship between Pakistan & Afghanistan. The President of Gwadar Chamber of Commerce & Industry (GCCCI) appreciated the efforts of PAJCCI, specially Zubair Motiwala, Chairman PAJCCI, for continuously working for the business community and socio-economic uplift of Pakistan by connecting & collaborating with diverse stakeholders and government entities across the border. Motiwala iterated that Gwadar is the future of Pakistan and is the land of opportunity. "Trade can be increased by efficiently deploying



infrastructure, provision of cheap and green electricity, mobile & internet connectivity, roads, service areas on borders, establishing banking network and strengthening security," he said. He said that

the economic zone is only offering rental property, which is not attractive to potential investors in the development of industrial areas. "The policy should provide the provision of first right to purchase after three years which will consolidate the investors' interests in long term projects and Pakistan will then fully realize the potential of developing port alongside industrial and commercial zone," he added. "The electricity proposed cost of PKR 50 per unit is not feasible hence government should establish solar, wind, and hydropower projects which will ensure sustainable trading while providing affordable infrastructure to investors and the local population. Such measures will increase employ-

ment in the area and open trading routes to the world beyond," he proposed. PAJCCI delegation also visited Pak-Iran border crossing, met with Customs and other government entities operating in Gwadar. Motiwala said that Gwadar can become one of the major transit hubs for the region and especially for transit trade with Afghanistan via the Chaman border, the need is to develop supportive infrastructure and viable investment policy. The meeting was attended by members of the business community, office bearers of Gwadar Chamber, Official of Gwadar Development Authority, and Captain Gul Muhammad, Director Operations Gwadar Port Authority.

Rupee sheds 67 paises against dollar

ISLAMABAD: Exchange rate of Pakistan rupee weakened by 67 paises against the United States dollar in the interbank trading on Monday and closed at Rs181.24 against the previous day's closing of Rs180.57. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs181 and Rs182.5 respectively. Similarly, the price of the euro was appreciated by 56 paises and closed at Rs200.34 against the previous day's closing of Rs199.78. The Japanese Yen gained one paisa to close at Rs1.52, whereas an increase of Rs 1.18 was witnessed in the exchange rate of British Pound, which was traded at Rs238.37 as compared to its last closing of Rs237.19. The exchange rates of Emirates Dirham and Saudi Riyal increased by 18 paises to close at Rs49.34 and Rs48.31 respectively. – APP

Ghurki Trust Teaching Hospital, PBM join hands

ISLAMABAD: Ghurki Trust Teaching Hospital would provide the medical treatment facilities to poor patients and persons with disabilities (PWDs) in collaboration with Pakistan Bait ul Mal (PBM). A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between PBM and Ghurki Trust Teaching Hospital on Monday in Lahore. According to MoU, Ghurki Trust Teaching Hospital would provide comprehensive, state-of-the-art medical treatment facilities including Cyber Knife surgery, artificial limbs, joints implants, assistive devices and chemotherapy etc to PBM funded patients. It was also outlined in the MoU that the hospital would not charge any consultation fee will from the PBM sponsored patients regarding their training, psychological treatment and repair of surgical instruments. Managing Director PBM, Malik Zaheer Abbas Khokhar and Chairman, Ghurki Trust, Prof. Dr. Amer Aziz validated the MoU on this auspicious occasion. While addressing the audience, Managing Director PBM, Malik Zaheer Abbas Khokhar implied that under the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan, PBM was taking serious measures to resolve the issues of vulnerable and deprived people of society. Such measures would enable the special persons to render their religious, political and social duties without any hindrance. – APP

ITP's campaign in full swing

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The campaign of Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) to check violation of traffic rules is in full swing and special efforts are being made to maintain traffic discipline in the city. The main objective of this road safety campaign is to ensure safety to people while road users are being educated for lane discipline during drive. Following directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Muhammad Ahsan Younis, Senior Superintendent of Police (Traffic) Rai Mazhar Iqbal has constituted special teams to control lane violation on various roads and ensure smooth flow of traffic in the city. Strict checking is being made against those not using helmets during bike ride, using mobile phone and not fastening seat belts during drive. ITP's FM Radio 92.4 is also disseminating the messages about road safety and to educate audience about traffic rules. SSP (Traffic) has appealed the citizens to cooperate with the force by following traffic laws. He said that action would be taken against those not following lanes during drive as the sole purpose is to ensure safe road environment in the city. He hoped that citizens will follow traffic rules and help ITP through their cooperation in ensuring secure traffic system in the city.

Briefs

Farrukh asks Sindh govt to release PTI workers

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Farrukh Habib on Monday deploring the arrest of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insan workers in Sindh said it was their democratic right to hold protest peacefully.

In a statement, he asked the Pakistan People Party's government to immediately release the PTI workers who were exercising their democratic rights.

Creating hurdles in the way of peaceful protestors was "undemocratic", he said, regretting that the PPP, which claimed itself as a champion of democracy, could not tolerate the peaceful protest of the workers. He said the illegal action of the police in Sindh had exposed the undemocratic attitude of the PPP.

Farrukh reminded the leadership of the PPP that their long-march which reached Islamabad from Karachi without any obstruction.

Lashing out at the Sindh police for arresting the PTI workers, he said the law and order in the Sindh would have improved if it had carried out such an operation against criminal elements.

"Bilawal Bhutto Zardari will have to answer this undemocratic action by the Sindh police," he said. - Agencies

ANF recovers 528 kg drugs, arrests four

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) on Monday recovered 528 kg drugs besides arresting four accused. According to an ANF Headquarters spokesman, ANF Peshawar acting on a tip-off, intercepted a Honda Civic car bearing Reg. No. AXH-398 near Motorway Toll Plaza Peshawar and arrested an accused named Muhammad Asif resident of Islamabad. Upon search of the vehicle, 264 kg Hashish and 96 kg Opium concealed in plastic bags were recovered from secret cavities of the car. On interrogation at the spot, the accused disclosed that his accomplice is on the way to deliver more drugs destined for Islamabad.

Upon the pointation of the accused, a Suzuki Mehran car bearing Reg. No. LZU-9466 was also intercepted at the same location and another accused was arrested named Suleman Afridi, resident of Peshawar. During search of the car 48 kg Hashish was also recovered which was concealed in plastic sacks lying behind the front seats of the Mehran Car. The drugs were being smuggled from Peshawar to Islamabad and Punjab. In another raid, ANF Lahore and ANF Intelligence conducted an operation near Kot Abdul Malik Interchange, Lahore and recovered 120 kg drugs including 84 kg opium and 36 kg charras, from a car and arrested two accused named Waqas Haider and Mamoon Zulqifur resident of Sheikhpura. Separate cases have been registered against the accused, while further investigation is in progress. - APP

IHC adjourns petitions against PECA till Mar 25

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday adjourned the hearing on petitions against PECA Ordinance due to the non availability of Attorney General of Pakistan Khalid Jawed Khan till March 25. Chief Justice Athar Minallah heard the cases filed by PBA, PFUJ and others against the PECA ordinance.

The court was told that the AGP couldn't attend the proceeding due to his engagements in the top court. The deputy attorney general prayed the court to grants some time for submission of comments against the pleas. The court adjourned further hearing till March 25.

IsDB Group approves \$14.5 bn for projects in Pakistan

This program has helped to vaccinate 38mln children, resulted in a 98% decline in polio cases, and has currently reached an opportunity to stop virus transmission

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: As of December 2021, the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) Group has approved total financing of about US\$ 14.5 billion for 412 projects in Pakistan out of which 372 are completed and 40 are active ongoing projects. Out of the total, IsDB financed \$ 2.7 billion, while \$ 274.9 million have been approved by IsDB Group's private sector development arm, Islamic Corporation for Development of Private Sector (ICD), \$ 6.7 billion trade operations by IsDB Group's international trade finance arm, International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC), and \$ 4.9 billion have been financed by other IsDB Group funds and operations. In addition, IsDB Group's insurance arm, The Islamic Corporation for Insurance of Investment and Export Credit (ICIEC), has provided US\$ 5.4 billion as business insured and US\$3.7 billion as new insurance commitments. According to official documents, Pakistan joined the Jeddah based IsDB on August 12, 1974 as a founding member. The sector wise financing details show that about 69.8% (\$10.1 billion) of total financing has been made in energy sector, 13.2% (about \$1.9 billion) amount has been financed in industry and mining sector, and



7.5% (about \$1.1 billion) amount has been financed in agriculture sector. Further, the document added that the IsDB has provided COVID-19 Vaccine Support to Pakistan amounting to US\$ 72.5 million approved in December 2021, out of which 85% funding has been disbursed to date. The IsDB is the largest financier of the Polio Eradication program in Pakistan. It has provided

\$ 487 million since 2012 in partnership with the Gates Foundation and the Lives and Livelihoods Fund (LLF). This program has helped to vaccinate 38 million children (under 5), resulted in a 98% decline in polio cases, and has currently reached an opportunity to stop virus transmission. The IsDB has also promoted education in remote areas of Pakistan by supporting ba-

sic education projects in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, including the construction and operationalization of over 300 schools to educate and nurture more than 55,000 students. The IsDB has been investing in several major energy projects in Pakistan including Mohmand Dam and Hydropower Plant Project (US\$ 180 million) that will generate 800 MW of electricity, Kwar Hydropower Plant project, Neelum Jhelum HPP project, Tricon-Boston Wind, and Foundation Wind project that have added 2,172 Megawatt (MW) of cost effective and sustainable electricity, and installation of 225 km of power transmission and distribution lines. The IsDB, based on its "National Ecosystems for SSTRC" framework, is supporting the government of Pakistan to establish its inaugural Center of Excellence on South-South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTRC) through a grant of US\$ 119,000. The IsDB Group's international trade financing arm, ITFC, has been a strong partner to Pakistan. It signed the 4th framework agreement with the country, on June 28, 2021, for US\$ 4.5 billion to support energy imports over the coming three years (e.g. US\$ 1.5 billion on a yearly basis). The document added that in 2021, the total distribution of financing by the IsDB had reached to US\$ 1.0 billion.

CG COMSTECH meets Russian diplomats



KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Coordinator General COMSTECH, Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary had a meeting with H.E. Mr. Ramazan Abdulatipov, the permanent representative of Russia to the OIC and H. E. Mr. Danila Ganich, the Ambassador of Russia to Pakistan on Monday. The dignitaries discussed and agreed to develop a

5-10-year cooperation programme between COMSTECH and Russian Cooperation Agency for the development of science and technology in OIC states. This programme would help develop linkages between Russian Cooperation Agency and the OIC member states. Scholars exchange programme and signing of MoUs with top Russian universities would be part of this programme.

Russia would support enhancing capacity in artificial intelligence and exploring medical health care systems in OIC least developed countries particularly African member states. COMSTECH would facilitate visits of scholars, scientists and technicians from OIC states to top science and technology institutions and laboratories of Russia in basic sciences, engineering,

biomedical sciences, and public health. H.E. Mr. Ramazan Abdulatipov, the permanent representative of Russia to the OIC, appreciated the role of Coordinator General COMSTECH, Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary for his efforts for the advancement of science and technology in OIC member states. Prof. Choudhary presented COMSTECH souvenir to both the dignitaries.

Zartaj asks nation to plant a tree on World Forest Day

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Climate Change Zartaj Gul on Monday said the nation should pledge to plant a tree, while commemorating the World Forest Day 2022, under the flagship Ten Billion Tree Tsunami Plantation (TBTP) project's spring plantation drive being initiated to make the country climate resilient and disaster adaptive. In a video message, the minister of state said there was much to be mentioned for restoration of degraded forests and nature conservation on the occasion of International Day of Forests 2022. Zartaj said the world recognition and progress on reviving green cover under TBTP initiative has substantially increased. "We have created around 250,000 jobs so far and will succeed in retrieving one million hectares land forest under the target set till 2023", she added. She added that the ministry through its holistic coordination and mechanism was progressing well over 10 billion trees plantation target till 2030. Moreover, she said air Quality in the cities to counter smog has also improved after plantation and mitigation measures implemented under Clean Green Pakistan movement. The minister added that Pakistan's TBTP, the Billion Tree Honey products were excellent well and also improved food security among the communities associated with forests. "Trees plantation and forests' conservation is a perpetual charity and sunnah (traditions and practices of Holy Prophet) of Prophet (PBUH)", she remarked in her message for the nation on World Forests Day. - DNA



IHC adjourns Avenfield property's case till May 12

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday adjourned hearing of appeals of Maryam Nawaz and her husband Capt (ret'd) Muhammad Safdar against their conviction in the Avenfield property reference till May 12. The bench comprising Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Mohsin Akhter Kayani, hearing the appeals, instructed NAB's new Prosecutor Imtiaz Saddiqui to discuss the case with Deputy Prosecutor General Sardar Muzafar Abbasi. Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz Vice President Maryam Nawaz and Capt (ret'd) Muhammad Safdar appeared before the court. At the outset of hearing, the court noted that as the appellants' lawyers had given arguments partially, now the National Accountability Bureau's (NAB) prosecutor should argue the case. Maryam's lawyer Irfan Qadri contended that if the prosecution would provide the evidence regarding beneficial owner of the property then it could save the time of court. NAB Prosecutor Imtiaz Saddiqui said there was also a need to view the nature of the crime. The services of several corporate experts were hired to hide the real ownership of the London flats. Justice Farooq remarked that but it was National Accountability Bureau's responsibility to present the evidences. The prosecutor said that NAB had to prove how the accused had hidden the ownership of flats. Irfan Qadri said National Accountability Bureau's prosecutor was giving very complex arguments. The defence lawyers had claimed that the codes of conduct had been violated in the case. Justice Farooq remarked that the court had not curtailed the right of arguments of defence rather it had asked a few questions from National Accountability Bureau's regarding the defence's initial arguments. - APP

Preparations to celebrate Pakistan Day in full swing

ISLAMABAD: The preparations to celebrate Pakistan Day in a befitting manner were in full swing as nation geared up to mark the passing of the Lahore Resolution, when a separate nation for the Muslims of the British Empire was demanded on March 23, 1940 in Lahore. As the Pakistan Day holds a significant place in the history of Pakistan and to mark it in a befitting manner

Armed Forces, Para Military Forces and Civil Armed Forces, Scouts, Girl Guide and others are busy in rehearsals and drills at "Shakarparian" parade ground to celebrate the day in a spectacular way. Various organizations and departments, both public and private, have planned a number of activities including seminars, conferences and discussion programs to highlight the historical significance of Pakistan Day. Cultural organizations including the PNCA, Pakistan Academy of Letters, National Book Foundation, National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage (LokVirsa) are all set to hold various events and activities in connection with Pakistan Day. As only one day left in the celebrations of Pakistan Day, the

famous brands have started offering sales on dresses, shoes and other accessories to provide an opportunity to the buyers for having good stock of required stuff at the advent of the summer season. Directorate of Sports, Culture and Tourism has organised special events to celebrate Pakistan Day at the cricket ground in Fatima Jinnah Park. Special 'dua' ceremonies would be organised at the Mosques after Fajar prayers, seeking solidarity, integrity and prosperity of the country. Meanwhile, ITP have devised a special traffic plan for convenience of the road users in connection with the Pakistan Day Parade on March 23 and OIC's Foreign Ministers conference to be organized on March 22 and 23. - APP



ISLAMABAD: MNA Ghulam Bibi Bharwana calls on PM Imran Khan. - DNA

'Constitution gives right to freedom of speech'

Gill said we won't talk about a person who sells him for money but if anybody confronts him with harsh words, then we would speak against him. "This is hypocrisy which has brought this country at this place. We have to use tell a person on his face if he is a thief or broker



ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Political Communications Dr Shahbaz Gill on Monday said Pakistan's constitution gives every citizen and political party the right to put their opinion in front of the people peacefully. "It can be a public gathering, newspaper column, social media post. The constitution gives us the right to freedom of speech and freedom of assembly," he said.

He recalled that Pakistan People's Party (PPP) leader Bilawal Bhutto Zardari organized a long march from Sindh to D chowk and Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) also held public gatherings due to the freedom of speech that is given by the constitution. Now Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) is doing the same thing," he said while talking to media outside the Supreme Court here.

He said the opposition wanted to come to Islamabad on March 27 on the same date which Khan had announced just to create problems. "They may have the power of money but not of the

people who trust in Imran Khan. There is much space here where the (opposition) can hold a public gathering at one place while Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf on the other side," he said. Gill said we won't talk about a person who sells him for money but if anybody confronts him with harsh words, then we would speak against him. "This is the hypocrisy which has brought this country at this place. We have to use tell a person on his face if he is a thief or broker. He urged the media to focus on horse trading that was going on instead of other inadequate things. "Anyone who has won a seat in the general elections on Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf name should first resign from the party and then contest a new election and comeback. On PML-N leader Maryam Safdar, he said the word neutral was talk of the town these days. "Not even a single person of this country can put the country's sovereignty, peace at stake and give it in the hands of thieves. How can we be neutral when we see Rupees 16 crore in the account of a peon," he said. Gill said from the past three to four days, institutions were being abused by using Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf name on social media. "It is PML-N which had been abusing institutions and PTI is not like them as our institutions are our pride. We have made a brief report and will be handing it over to the FIA to investigate and take action against the culprits involved in using Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf name. No Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf social media worker can ever talk against the institutions as Imran Khan is the biggest ever defender of the institutions and the country," he said. To a question on the return of irked members to the party, he said anyone can return to good side anytime. "Leaving the good side to go to the corrupt is something bad," he said. - DNA

Motorways police serving masses effectively

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of National Highways and Motorways Police (NH&MP) Inam Ghani Monday said that the department was taking effective measures to serve the masses. Motorways police realized that the responsibilities might be increasing day-by-day and the department was heading towards betterment with area of responsibility, he said while talking to a private news channel. He said the Motorways Police was also providing every possible assistance while travelling on motorways, including security and basic necessities. Ghani said the department was also facing new challenges every day as initially we had M-2 of 350 km length after that it has been enlarged to M-9 with length of 13500 km which would be ultimately enhanced to 18000 km. Motorways Police was arranging awareness programmes for road users besides taking steps to control roads violations, he added. - APP

Vitamin B might reduce risk of stroke

ISLAMABAD: Taking vitamin B supplements might help to reduce your risk of a stroke, according to study published in the journal Neurology. The study by researchers at Zhengzhou University in China reviewed 14 clinical trials and found that Vitamin B lowered the risk of stroke overall by seven percent. However, taking the supplements did not appear to affect the severity of the strokes or the risk of death from a stroke. Medical Xpress reported. "Previous studies have conflicting findings regarding the use of vitamin B supplements and stroke or heart attack," the author, Xu Yuming, said. "Some studies have even suggested that the supplements may increase the risk of these events." The studies compared B vitamin use with a placebo or a very low dose of B vitamin. The 54,913 participants, who were followed for at least six months, had 2,471 strokes during the studies. All of the studies showed some benefit of taking vitamin B. Folic acid, a supplemental form of folate or vitamin B9 that is often found in fortified cereals, appeared to reduce the effect of vitamin B. Researchers did not find a reduction in stroke risk for vitamin B12. "Based on our results, the ability of vitamin B to reduce stroke risk may be influenced by a number of other factors such as the body's absorption rate, the amount of folic acid or vitamin B12 concentration in the blood, and whether a person has kidney disease or high blood pressure," Yuming said. - APP

Ghurki Trust, PBM join hands

ISLAMABAD: Ghurki Trust Teaching Hospital would provide the medical treatment facilities to poor patients and persons with disabilities (PWDs) in collaboration with Pakistan Bait ul Mal (PBM). A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between PBM and Ghurki Trust Teaching Hospital on Monday in Lahore. According to MoU, Ghurki Trust Teaching Hospital would provide comprehensive, state-of-the-art medical treatment facilities including Cyber Knife surgery, artificial limbs, joints implants, assistive devices and chemotherapy etc to PBM funded patients. It was also outlined in the MoU that the hospital would not charge any consultation fee will from the PBM sponsored patients regarding their training, psychological treatment and repair of surgical instruments. Managing Director PBM, Malik Zaheer Abbas Khokhar and Chairman, Ghurki Trust, Prof. Dr. Amer Aziz validated the MoU on this auspicious occasion. While addressing the audience, Managing Director PBM, Malik Zaheer Abbas Khokhar implied that under the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan, PBM was taking serious measures to resolve the issues of vulnerable and deprived people of society. Such measures would enable the special persons to render their religious, political and social duties without any hindrance. - APP

Govt and opposition's rallies

BOTH the government and the opposition had announced to hold rallies at the D Chowk thus sending shock waves among the general public and especially the diplomatic community based in Islamabad. People had feared a clash between the opposite forces thus causing colossal loss. The situation was indeed grim and dangerous. But then the Supreme Court of Pakistan helped defuse the tension. The apex court advised both parties that they should choose any other venue adding if both parties gather at the D Chowk, it may be harmful for the workers of both parties. Sanity prevailed and both the government and the opposition decided to shift their venues.

Now the government has planned its procession at the Parade Ground while the Opposition shall be allocated a space near Sector H 8, which is close to the Zero Point. After the intervention of the superior court an unseemly situation was avoided.

In another development the government has filed reference in the apex court seeking SC guidelines about Article 63 A of the constitution, that deals with the floor crossing. The government has raised four fundamental questions in its plea, which is to be taken up on March 24. The Court has promised to hear the case on a day to day basis so that a verdict could be announced before the no trust vote.

It would be good to see this matter debated in the Supreme Court as Pakistani politics is fraught with the instances of floor crossing and buying and selling of the members of the parliaments. When it comes to this sort of trade, all parties are to equally share the blame for all of them having been involved in this nasty business. It would be quite befitting if the Supreme Court takes up this issue in a retrospective manner so that incidents that took place in the past could also be addressed.

Quite recently, we witnessed some undesirable scenes during the election of the Chairman Senate, who got elected despite being in minority and then PPP leader Yousaf Raza Gillani got elected as Senator from the National Assembly of Pakistan, where government had the majority and thus its candidate Hafeez Shaikh should have won that seat. But it did not happen – courtesy horse trading!! This is a time that this menace is dealt with effectively so that such bad occurring does not take place in future.

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Pakistan hosts OIC CFMs

THE Council of the Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) will meet today at the inaugural session of the 48th session being hosted by Pakistan.

Prime Minister Imran Khan in his keynote address at the inaugural session will highlight Pakistan's role and contribution towards OIC and deliberate on the challenges faced by the Muslim world. Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi will deliver a statement on the occasion and after the election of bureau members the OIC chair will be handed over to Pakistan. Foreign ministers of Saudi Arabia Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud, Secretary-General OIC Houssein Brahim Taha, President Islamic Development Bank Dr Muhammad Suleiman Al-Jasser, Chinese State Councilor, and foreign minister Wangi Yi will address the session.

The video message of Secretary-General of the United Nations Antonio Guterres will be shown on the occasion.

The theme of the session is 'Building Partnerships for Unity, Justice, and Development,' which will be held at the Parliament House.

More than 100 resolutions will be considered during the two-day session. The session coincides with the 75th anniversary celebrations of Pakistan's independence. On March 23, the visiting foreign ministers will visit the Pakistan Day parade venue and witness the professional capability of Pakistan's armed forces and the traditional floats of all the provinces, reflecting the national unity. In December, a historic moot of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) was held in Islamabad at the initiative of Saudi Arabia, which dilated at some length on different humanitarian, financial and health related problems and issues concerning the people of Afghanistan- and it also took some appropriate decisions after day-long deliberations.

The OIC member states through their Foreign Ministers also expressed solidarity with the people of Afghanistan, reiterating their commitment of helping in bringing much wanted peace, security, stability and development of their country. The unanimously adopted Joint Resolution, which is also called the Islamabad Declaration, has indeed brought a glimmer of hope for the 22.8 million, more than half the population of Afghanistan, who are facing acute food shortage while the large number of 3.2 million children and about 700,000 pregnant and lactating women who are facing grave risk of acute malnutrition and even death. These two international conferences in Pakistan are surely a good omen for the foreign policy. It has also strengthened Pakistan's role as a leading voice of Muslim world.

In Saudi Arabia, dance maybe, dissent no

James Dorsey

The warning came after Saudi entertainment chief Turki al-Sheikh, a close associate of Mr. Bin Salman, denied reports of harassment of women on their way back from a concert that was cancelled in early January. Moreover, Saudi Arabia recently put to death 84 people, many of them Shiite activists, in the kingdom's largest mass execution in recent history. The executions occurred in the same week that British Prime Minister Boris Johnson visited Saudi Arabia

THREE scantily dressed samba dancers wearing traditional feather headdresses laid bare the limits of social liberalisation in Saudi Arabia when they earlier this year danced on the streets of Jizan, a historically conservative city on the border with Yemen.

Invited to participate in the Jizan Winter Festival, the dancers, in stark contrast with the traditional, all-covering black robes often worn by Saudi women in public, sported blue coloured feathers that left their legs, arms, and bellies uncovered.

Faced with a conservative backlash, Jizan governor, Prince Mohammed bin Nasser, pledged "necessary measures to prevent all (future) abuse." It was not clear what steps Mr. Bin Nasser might take, but his response acknowledged that the rapid pace of change might be just too fast for some in the kingdom.

To be sure, the dancer's garb went beyond the liberalised norms informally laid down by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, which no longer require women to cover themselves in public in head to foot black-coloured, shapeless garb. The criticism of the dancers' appearance followed a spike in sexual harassment incidents during a music festival in December despite the organizer's attempt to warn against it on their social media accounts.

The dancers and the festival are part of an explosion of cultural events in Saudi Arabia that involve far-reaching social change and have helped create a Western-style entertainment sector in the once socially ultra-conservative kingdom. Entertainment is one pillar of Mr. Bin Salman's Vision 2030 plan to change Saudi society in support of a bid to diversify the kingdom's oil-export-dependent economy.

Beyond introducing Western-style entertainment and liberalised dress norms, social change has also involved lifting a ban on women's driving, expanding professional opportunities for women, and loosening restrictions on gender mixing. However, social liberalisation has gone hand-in-hand with ever greater repression of dissent and freedom of expression and a stepped-up effort to put nationalism rather than religion at the core of Saudi identity.

With many intellectuals, clerics, blog-

gers, and activists already behind bars, Saudi Arabia last month warned that anyone spreading "baseless" rumours on social media could face up to five years in prison and a hefty fine.

The warning came after Saudi entertainment chief Turki al-Sheikh, a close associate of Mr. Bin Salman, denied reports of harassment of women on their way back from a concert that was cancelled in early January. Moreover, Saudi Arabia recently put to death 84 people, many of them Shiite activists, in the kingdom's largest mass execution in recent history. The executions occurred in the same week that British Prime Minister Boris Johnson visited Saudi Arabia. The visit demonstrated Western willingness to lift an informal boycott of Mr. Bin Salman after the 2018 killing of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in exchange for increasing Saudi oil production to reduce oil prices. The price of oil has spiked recently due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The crackdown on dissent and freedom of expression came as Mr. Bin Salman's father, King Salman, decreed that Saudi Arabia would celebrate its founding on February 22.

The date commemorates the 18th-century attempt to establish a Saudi state by the monarch's ancestor, Imam Muhammad bin Saud. The Ottomans thwarted the attempt.

The government also ordered restaurants and coffee shops to rename "Arabic coffee" as "Saudi coffee." The government efforts are, at least in part, designed to cushion the impact of rapid social change that is sparking concern among some conservatives and those who fear they may be left behind.

"Whilst there is widespread support for the Vision, there are concerns about the pace of change, as well as the perception that to date there has been an over-emphasis on elite interests," said Mark C. Thompson in a recently published study. Mr. Thompson is a Saudi-based social

scientist who has long tracked the evolution of Saudi youth attitudes towards Mr. Bin Salman's vision.

"The significance of Saudi Arabia's two primary identity narratives, namely, Islam and family, have only changed incrementally regardless of post-2030 transformations," Mr. Thompson said.

None of this suggests that Mr. Bin Salman's reforms are unpopular. On the contrary, even if Mr. Thompson indicates that concerns about the pace of change are not confined to an older generation or an ultra-conservative minority or fringe. Overall, Mr. Thompson concludes that the crown prince's plan to free society from the raw edges of the kingdom's austere, ultra-conservative interpretation of Islam has boosted youth morale, expectations, and ambitions.

It has also bolstered the kind of national pride that Messrs. Bin Salman and Al-Sheikh have sought to promote.

"The danger is that Vision-related transformations might be weak in the face of much stronger traditional values, and consequently, the rapid social changes could vanish just as quickly precisely because they have not become deep-rooted within Saudi communities," Mr. Thompson warned. Amid the rapid change and seemingly endless announcements of futuristic mega-projects, a young woman told Mr. Thompson that everything had "become a blur" to the extent that she no longer recognized the country in which she grew up. The woman said she struggled with preparing her children "for a world with little or no clarity." The social scientist cautioned that most foreign Saudi watchers based their analysis and conclusions on interactions with members of the Saudi elite who would have the most to lose if social change were to falter.

Mr. Thompson quoted a Western-educated Saudi consultant as saying that most Saudis "would not be affected greatly" if

the entertainment sector failed.

The fact that Saudi elites are the greatest beneficiaries of Mr. Bin Laden's reforms means that most Saudis, concerned primarily about jobs, cost of living, affordable housing, and healthcare, often only benefit at best partially. To benefit more fully, they would have to have what the elite has: wasta or clout and connections.

The risk for Mr. Bin Salman is that the reforms widen the kingdom's already yawning income gap, cast further doubt on the integrity of the crown prince's anti-corruption campaign, and undermine widespread support for his vision. Small and medium-sized enterprises and their employees feel that they are often excluded from participation in Vision-related projects that favour large and well-known family enterprises. As a result, young Saudis with lesser family backgrounds and education end up as drivers when they migrate from the provinces to the cities. In a rare outpouring of protest earlier this year, residents of districts recently razed to the ground to create space for a multi-billion dollar development in the Red Sea city of Jeddah vented their anger on social media.

The residents complained that they had not received adequate warning or compensation when their homes and neighbourhoods were demolished. They were further outraged at government attempts to demonise them as drug dealers, criminals, and prostitutes and to dismiss the whole area being redeveloped as a slum.

For now, Mr. Bin Salman has the winds in his sails. By and large, Saudis appear to have embraced his vision despite whatever concerns they may have. The question is whether crackdowns on freedom of expression and a refusal to engage with complaints publicly is what will ensure the crown prince's momentum.

Biden's Novruz congratulation: new strategic goals of Baku

Turan Rzayev

In particular, projects such as TAP and TANAP promising prospects for European energy supply make energy cooperation between Azerbaijan and the United States necessary. Baku's geopolitical position, its proximity to other oil and gas countries- the Central Asia, its warm relations with the Arab countries, and, most importantly, its strategic partnership with Israel-increases the importance of Baku in Washington's view

PRESIDENT of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev has received president of the Republic of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Stressing that this year marks the 30th

anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and Azerbaijan, Biden said, "My administration will continue to support democracy, peace and progress in the South Caucasus".

It is an important event that Biden congratulates President Ilham Aliyev and the people of Azerbaijan on the occasion of Novruz. First of all, this is an indicator of the value that the official Washington has given to Baku. The fact is that there are about 200 countries in the world today, and the United States does not send congratulations to the president and people on the official holidays of all countries. One of the specific features of traditional Anglo-Saxon diplomacy, the holiday is an indicator of the value given by the congratulatory country to the country addressed.

A number of points draw attention to Biden's congratulatory letter:

First, along with the text of the letter in the English language, the expression Novruz holiday is written in the Azerbaijani language. Although it seems a small detail, it can be regarded as a gesture of the world's superpowers to Azerbaijan. Washington shows once again that it is interested in cooperation with Baku, and this diplomatic correspondence manifests itself in the most delicate way.

Secondly, Biden said in his letter that "my Administration will continue to support democracy, peace and prosperity in the South Caucasus. We will also work together with Azerbaijan to address common security concerns,

promote regional reconciliation and explore new opportunities for Economic Cooperation."

I think Biden, speaking about promoting regional peace, talks about the support of the United States to the normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the signing of a peace agreement. Washington can contribute to peace between the two countries. At the same time, the question arises: Why did Washington not do it for 27 years?

A change in the geopolitical situation over the past 27 years and the taixi victory that Baku gained in the 44-day war changed Washington's view of the South Caucasus. In other words, the United States accepts the consequences of the 44-day war and the emerging geopolitical reality.

The reasons that prompted Washington to cooperate with Baku US President Joe Biden's congratulation of President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev is a positive event in all cases, but there are the main reasons for the improvement of relations between the two countries in recent years.

Undoubtedly, the United States will not develop relations with any country in the absence of its interests to the level of sight. I think this is the case with Azerbaijan. The fact is that despite the fact that 20 per cent of Azerbaijan's lands have been under Armenian occupation for more than 27 years and these years have been under de facto war with Armenia, the mega energy pro-

jects implemented in the region attract Washington's attention. In particular, projects such as TAP and TANAP promising prospects for European energy supply make energy cooperation between Azerbaijan and the United States necessary. Baku's geopolitical position, its proximity to other oil and gas countries-the Central Asia, its warm relations with the Arab countries, and, most importantly, its strategic partnership with Israel-increases the importance of Baku in Washington's view.

The balance policy of Azerbaijan in the current Ukrainian-Russian war, as well as official humanitarian aid to Kiev make Azerbaijan a reliable partner. I think Washington views Baku as an alternative country in Europe's energy supply and attaches importance to cooperation in this direction.

Strategic goals of Baku against Washington

The rapid development of relations between the two countries encourages Baku to set a number of strategic goals for Washington. I think we should have a number of goals for the United States at the present moment:

First, in 1992, the U.S. Congress adopted the "support for Freedom" Act at the initiative of the Armenian Lobby, and the 907th amendment prohibiting direct American assistance to Azerbaijan is still in force. Although a temporary moratorium is put on Section 907, it does not mean a complete repeal of the amendment. Official Baku must first of all increase efforts towards repealing this amendment.

Secondly, in order to abolish the 907th Amendment, the lobby and Diaspora activities in the United States should be increased, and this should be done primarily through the state.

If we fail to develop our lobby and Diaspora activities in the United States, the development of relations with Washington will not be sustainable, nor will the 907th amendment be completely abolished. First of all, it is necessary to block the lobby and diaspora of Armenia, which is the foundation of relations with the United States.

Third, Azerbaijan has been implementing mega energy projects in the region in recent years. This makes our country an alternative energy source to Europe. However, such efforts do not fully meet the requirements of the West. In comparison with Russia, Baku supplies Europe with very little gas and oil. Cooperation with the United States in this direction can be expanded, necessary technical equipment and investment can be attracted.

Fourth, cooperation with the United States can be carried out not only in the energy sector, but also in many different areas. In particular, US companies may be involved in the region to restore Karabakh. The activities of specialized US companies in Azerbaijan, especially in Karabakh, can prevent Armenian provocations and possible tension in the region.

—Turan Rzayev, political analyst at the Center for International Relations and Diplomatic Studies

Briefs

Pakistan
earn first
ICC Women's
World Cup win

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan outplayed West Indies by eight wickets to earn a first ICC Women's Cricket World Cup victory since 2009 with a complete all-round performance.

The West Indies were restricted to 89 from their 20 overs in a rain-shortened match as off-spinner Nida Dar took the best figures for Pakistan in a World Cup with four for 10, helping end an 18-match losing streak in the tournament. The last time Pakistan had won a match in the ICC Women's Cricket World Cup was also against the West Indies, said a press release issued here. The West Indies remain third on the points table with six points but have played six matches with only one more league match to go against South Africa on Thursday. Australia have already qualified with five straight wins while South Africa are second having won all their four matches so far. India, England and New Zealand are on four points each.

Left-handed opener Muneeba Ali set up Pakistan's run chase perfectly as the West Indies' chances of qualifying for the semifinals suffered a bump. Muneeba, playing for the first time in the tournament, scored a brisk 37 and Omaima Sohail hit the winning runs much to the delight of her team-mates.

The match got underway five hours later than scheduled after a herculean effort from the ground staff to clear the standing water, with Pakistan winning the toss and choosing to bowl. - APP

Govt seeks
SC opinion...

FROM PAGE 01 seeking its opinion on Article 63-A of the Constitution, which deals with the disqualification of parliamentarians over defection.

Names of the judges who will constitute the bench are yet to be finalised.

The court adjourned the hearing till March 24.

According to the first interpretation, "Khiyanat (dishonesty) by way of defections warrants no pre-emptive action save de-seating the member as per the prescribed procedure with no further restriction or curbs from seeking election afresh." While the second interpretation, "visualizes this provision as prophylactic enshrining the constitutional goal of purifying the democratic process, inter alia, by rooting out the mischief of defection by creating deterrence, inter alia, by neutralizing the effects of vitiated vote followed by lifelong disqualification for the member found involved in such constitutionally prohibited and morally reprehensible conduct." The reference stated if the constitutional disapproval and prohibition against defection was effectively enforced with deterrence for future as well, many such members should stand disqualified for life under Article 62(1)(f) and would never be able to pollute democratic streams.

"It was barely a year ago in the wake of elections for the Senate that compelling evidence in the form of audio and video recordings showing horse-trading emerged leaving the identities of perpetrators in no doubt yet nothing meaningful has been done in that respect till date," the reference read.

The reference stated "the questions of law of public importance revolving around interpretation of Article 63A of the Constitution have arisen in the context of the unending malaise of floor crossing and defections that have sullied and damaged the purity of the democratic process in the country for decades. As happened on many occasions in past, the stage is yet again set for switching of political loyalties for all sorts of illegal and mala fide considerations including vote buying which by its very nature rarely leave admissible or traceable evidence. Some of the presently defecting members have even publicly admitted to defection in interviews to the media with evident pride and further commitment to stay engaged in this immoral trade as the prima facie consequence is innocuous while gains in cash and kind may be colossal without any possibility of loss of membership of Parliament for life."

KAZAKH DELEGATION AT MONAL RESTAURANT



ISLAMABAD: A delegation from Kazakhstan, which is in Pakistan to attend the OIC conference enjoying Monal delicacies. OIC countries delegations expressed their special desire to visit Monal restaurant. - DNA

All set for
OIC CFMs...

FROM PAGE 01

He was warmly welcomed by Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Farrukh Habib, Special Representative on Religious Harmony Muhammad Tahir Ashrafi and officials of Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the Islamabad International Airport. The Foreign Ministers of Egypt, Somalia, Niger, Gambia, Bangladesh, Uganda, Tunisia, Tajikistan, Guinea Bissau, Cote d'Ivoire and Bosnia reached the federal capital this morning. Meanwhile, the delegations of Indonesia, Azerbaijan, Libya, Malaysia and Mozambique led by Deputy Foreign Ministers also arrived in Islamabad to attend the OIC meeting. Maldives' Permanent Representative to OIC, Mohamed Khalil also arrived to attend the OIC moot. A delegation from Turkey also reached to participate in the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers. Bangladesh's Permanent Representative to OIC Mohammad Javed Patwary also reached.

President Islamic Development Bank (IDB), Mohammad Sulaiman Al Jasser also arrived to attend 48th session of the OIC moot.

Tajik FM,
Azeri...

FROM PAGE 01

implementation of the decisions taken during the visit. The Prime Minister stressed the importance of early conclusion of transit trade agreement between the two countries to enhance trade and economic linkages. The Prime Minister reiterated his desire to comprehensively upgrade bilateral cooperation including in the fields of economy, trade, energy, connectivity and investment. He also elaborated Pakistan's enhanced engagement with Central Asia under "Vision Central Asia" policy and reiterated commitment for timely completion of CASA-1000 power project.

The Prime Minister underscored Pakistan's consistent support for the efforts for sustainable peace and provision of humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. Emphasizing the importance of lasting peace and stability in the country for regional prosperity, the Prime Minister underscored the key role of neighbouring countries in this respect. The Prime Minister stressed that a peaceful, stable, prosperous and connected Afghanistan was in everyone's interest.

Fawad slams
Opposition

FROM PAGE 01

submitted the resolution for convening the National Assembly session ten days later, nothing would have happened.

"What's harm in it if the NA session is convened on March 25 instead of March 22," he questioned, adding a motion was adopted by the National Assembly on January 21 to allow the exclusive use of its chamber for the 48th session of OIC Council of Foreign Ministers.

He said all the efforts of opposition parties were seemed to be against the national interest. "It has been observed that Fazlur Rehman and his so-called alliance are making more efforts than India and Israel to sabotage the OIC conference," he added.

Fawad said Prime Minister Imran Khan stood affirm in the face of opposition's threats and would foil their every bid against him and his government. "It is not the first time that Imran Khan is facing such challenges in his life... he always emerges victorious in such situations," he added.

SC not
convinced...

FROM PAGE 01

hearing a plea filed by Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA). The SCBA had filed a plea seeking the apex court's order against public gatherings in the federal capital in order to prevent "anarchy", ahead of voting on the no-trust motion against Prime Minister Imran Khan after the government and Opposition announced to hold rallies in Islamabad.

A two-member bench, headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Umar Ata Bandial, and comprising Justice Muneeb Akhtar, was hearing the SCBA's plea.

Fritz ends Nadal win streak
to lift Indian Wells title

"We did a lot of work leading up to the match and I went through a rollercoaster of emotions before the match thinking there's no way I could possibly play today"

SPORTS DESK

INDIAN WELLS: Taylor Fritz battled through excruciating pain to bring Rafa Nadal's 20-match winning run to an end with a 6-3 7-6(5) victory in the Indian Wells final on Sunday, becoming the first American to lift the title since Andre Agassi over two decades ago.

Home favourite Fritz gave fans what they came to see - an heroic effort and an American winner, denying Nadal what would have been his fourth title of the season and a record-equaling 37 ATP Masters 1000 championships.

Struggling with an injured ankle, Fritz said after collecting his second career title he had had doubts he could even take to the court and had never before experienced such pain prior to a match. But the 24-year-old American decided to gut it out and was rewarded with the biggest win of his career, fighting off the 21-time Grand Slam winner.

"This is just one of those childhood dreams you just think would never come true," said Fritz. "I



can't even describe how ridiculous it is how I could play today. "I have never experienced worse pain in my life before a match. "If I knew it was going to be that bad, I wouldn't have come out here. I took a couple of change-of-direction steps and screamed and honestly I was trying to act tough because I had cameras on me. "We did a lot of work leading up to the match and I went through a rollercoaster of emotions before

the match thinking there's no way I could possibly play today." Both players had fitness concerns coming into the final. While Fritz was struggling with an ankle problem, Nadal was dealing

Swiatek blows away Sakkari to win title

INDIAN WELLS: Poland's Iga Swiatek blew away Greece's Maria Sakkari 6-4 6-1 to win a windswept Indian Wells final on Sunday and move up to number two in the world rankings. Another windy day in the California desert made life miserable for both players, the gusts contributing to an uneven contest littered with nine breaks of serve. The 20-year-old Swiatek claimed six of those breaks including two in a one-sided second set, clinching a second consecutive WTA 1000 title with a thundering forehand winner. The title is the fifth of 2020 French Open champion Swiatek's career. "It's pretty crazy because I wasn't expecting to be in that place (final) especially after playing so well in the previous tournament; I didn't know it was possible for me to play that well for that long," said Swiatek, winner of the WTA 1000 event in Doha in February. "It was a different match, for sure, because of the conditions. "You always want to see the best final that's possible, but in these conditions it was pretty hard to, as I said, play tactically as I wanted, so in the end I was just focusing on playing in." After losing her first three meetings with the Greek, Swiatek has now come out on top in the last two, with Sunday's victory extending her WTA match-win streak to 11. Sakkari earned a spot in the final by dispatching defending champion Paula Badosa but had no answers for the windy conditions and a focused Swiatek. - Web Desk



with a chest issue he picked up during an epic three-set semi-final battle with 18-year-old compatriot Carlos Alcaraz. "When I'm breathing, when I'm moving, it's like a needle all the

time inside. I get dizzy a little bit because it's painful," Nadal said. "It's a kind of pain that limits me a lot. It's not only about pain, I don't feel very well because it affects my breathing.

Plane carrying 132
crashes in China

NEWS DESK

BEIJING: A China Eastern passenger jet carrying 132 people crashed onto a mountainside in southern China on Monday causing a large fire, shortly after losing contact with air traffic control and dropping thousands of metres in just three minutes. There was no immediate confirmation of the number of casualties, but the disaster prompted an unusually swift public reaction from President Xi Jinping who said he was "shocked" and ordered an immediate investigation into its cause.

The Boeing 737 flight from Kunming city to the southern hub of Guangzhou "lost airborne contact over Wuzhou" city in the Guangxi region on Monday afternoon, according to the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC). "It has been confirmed that this flight has crashed," the CAAC said, adding that it had activated its emergency response, while hundreds of firefighters were dispatched to the scene. The plane was carrying 123 passengers and nine crew members, the CAAC said.

PM Imran
expresses
sorrow

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan said Monday Islamabad shares the grief with Beijing after a China Eastern passenger jet carrying 132 people crashed into a mountain in southern China. The jet was carrying 123 passengers and nine crew members, according to aviation authorities. "Deeply saddened by the tragic loss of lives in the passenger plane crash in China," the prime minister said as the disaster prompted an unusually swift public reaction from Chinese President Xi Jinping, who said he was "shocked" and ordered an immediate investigation into its cause. "We share the grief of our Chinese brothers and sisters and convey our deepest condolences and sympathies with the bereaved families," PM Imran said.

Fears for the fate of the jet spread on Monday afternoon as local media reported that China Eastern flight MU5735 had not arrived as planned in Guangzhou after taking off from Kunming shortly after 1:00 pm (0500 GMT). Flight tracking website FlightRadar24 showed no data for the flight after 2:22 pm.

The tracker showed the plane had sharply dropped from an altitude of 29,100 feet to 3,225 feet in the span of three minutes, before flight information stopped. State broadcaster CCTV said the crash "caused a mountain fire" which was later extinguished, as rescuers poured to the scene in Teng county near Wuzhou. One villager told a local news site that the plane involved in the crash had "completely fallen apart" and he had seen nearby forest areas destroyed by a fire caused when the plane crashed onto the mountainside. China Eastern changed its website to black and white colours on Monday afternoon, and opened an emergency assistance phone number.

Pakistan reduces
Australia to 232-5

KARACHI: Pakistan have reduced Australia to 232-5 at the end of day one of the final Test match of the historic series at the Gaddafi Stadium, Lahore.

Half-centuries from Usman Khawaja and Steve Smith had put Australia in a strong position after early wickets by Shaheen Shah Afridi. But Pakistani bowlers made a comeback and reduced Australia to 232-5 at the end of day one. Smith was sent back to the pavilion after scoring 59 runs following an lbw by Naseem Shah, who later dismissed Travis Head for caught-behind. Sajid Khan took a crucial wicket of Khawaja, who departed after scoring 91 runs. Khawaja and Smith got the visitors back in the game after a 137-run third-wicket partnership. The Pakistan-born Khawaja has scored 68 runs, while Smith has scored 58 runs to reach 145-2 at tea. Shaheen had dismissed David Warner and Marnus Labuschagne in his second over. The left-arm pacer dismissed Aussie opener, David Warner, with an in-swinging delivery that hit Warner's pads, sending him back to the pavilion for an lbw. In the same over, Marnus Labuschagne fell victim to Shaheen after he was caught behind by Mohammad Rizwan. The number one ranked ICC Test batter was sent packing for a duck.

After the opening Test in Pindi ended in a draw, the Pakistan team pulled off an exceptional draw at the National Stadium Karachi. Skipper Babar Azam and wicket-keeper batter Mohammad Rizwan rose to the occasion and performed brilliantly to save the match. Naseem Shah has replaced Fawad Alam in the hosts' squad, while the visitors have not made any changes to their playing XI from the previous Test. - DNA

Briefs

Azeri,
Russian
FMs mull
trilateral
statements

BAKU: Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov and his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov discussed the current situation in the region, including the implementation of the trilateral statements signed by Baku, Moscow and Yerevan after the end of the 44-day war in 2020. During the phone conversation, the ministers exchanged views on the situation around Ukraine, as well as other issues of mutual interest.

The trilateral ceasefire deal signed by the Azerbaijani, Russian and Armenian leaders on November 10, 2020, ended the three-decade conflict over Azerbaijan's Karabakh region which along with the seven adjacent districts came under the occupation of Armenian armed forces in the war in the early 1990s.

The deal also stipulated the return of Azerbaijan's Kalbajar, Aghdam and Lachin regions. Before the signing of the peace deal, Azerbaijan liberated 300 villages, settlements, city centers, and historic Shusha city that had been under Armenian occupation for about 30 years.

On January 11, 2021, the Azerbaijani, Russian and Armenian leaders signed the second statement since the end of the 44-day war. The newly-signed statement was set to implement clause 9 of the November 2020 statement related to the unblocking of all economic and transport communications in the region.

On November 26, 2021, the three leaders signed a statement and agreed on a number of issues, including the demarcation and delimitation of the Azerbaijani-Armenian border by late 2021, some points related to humanitarian issues and the issue of unblocking of transport corridors which applies to the railway and to automobile communications. - APP

Kyiv mayor
announces
new 35-hour
curfew

KYIV: Kyiv will impose a new 35-hour curfew from Monday evening to Wednesday morning, the mayor of Ukraine's capital city announced. Vitali Klitschko said the curfew will begin at 8 p.m. local time and last until 7 a.m. on Wednesday. Shops, pharmacies, and gas stations will be closed during the curfew, and no vehicles will be allowed to move in the city, except for those with a special permit.

The first 35-hour curfew in the Ukrainian capital Kyiv was announced on March 15. Meanwhile, at least eight people were killed as Russian shelling hit a shopping mall in Kyiv late Sunday, according to local authorities.

At least 902 civilians have been killed so far in Ukraine, and 1,459 injured, according to UN estimates. It has warned, however, that the true toll is likely much higher as it has not been able to gain access to areas of increased hostilities. - Agencies



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan holds a bilateral meeting with the Foreign Minister of Tajikistan, Mr. Sirojiddin Muhriddin. - DNA

Pakistani pine nuts in China comes out with highest sale

“Compared with other main varieties in the Chinese market, including Siberian and Korean pine, Pakistani pine nuts have a huge variety advantage

DNA

BEIJING: China's leading e-commerce platforms, click on the homepage of a Pakistani pine nuts shop with the highest sales volume, says a report published by China Economic Net (CEN) on Monday. According to the report, “On one of China's leading e-commerce platforms, click on the homepage of a Pakistani pine nuts shop with the highest sales volume, it's not difficult to see that the monthly sales volume exceeds 8,000 pieces, and among the more than 7,000 reviews, such praise can be found everywhere.

In the Chinese nut market, Pakistani pine nuts means a veritable “luxury”. At present, its price on mainstream Chinese e-commerce platforms is as high as about RMB 300-650 per kilogram (about 8,473-18,359 rupees). However, Pakistani exporters have been complaining that the price of local pine nuts dropped sharply, “at its worst, each kilogram can be sold for less than 2,000 rupees (about Rmb71).” Why is the price of the same product so different in the two countries? Can these little nuts bring more opportunities to Pakistan? In China, Pakistani pine nuts enjoy a high price premium. A bag of selected Pakistani pine nuts (400 grams) can even sell for Rmb190 (about 5,366 rupees), which is nearly twice that of other kinds. At present, China has become one of the main export destinations for Pakistani pine nuts. According to the Agriculture Marketing Information Service (AMIS), in FY 2018-2019 (July 2018-June 2019, a good year) and FY 2019-2020 (a small year), Pakistan exported 692 tons and 73.9 tons of pine nuts to China respectively, worth 820 million and 190 million rupees, accounting for 45.86 percent and 14 percent of the total export volume.

“Compared with other main varieties in the Chinese market, including Siberian and Korean pine, Pakistani pine nuts have a huge variety advantage. With a thinner skin and plumper flesh, it has low fat content and rich nutrients. Beyond that, the kernel rate of Pakistani pine nuts can reach 80 percent, while that of red pine nuts from northeast China is about 40 percent, only half of the Pakistani type.” XinMindong, Manager of Zhicheng Food Co., Ltd., Meihoukou City, Jilin, who has been trading Pakistani pine nuts for more than 15 years, told CEN in an exclusive interview.

“For us, due to the impact of the epidemic in the past two years, land routes have been partially blocked, and sea transport may take as long as 40 days, which is not conducive to the storage of pine nuts. Besides, the market price of pine nuts fluctuates continually. In contrast, expensive air transport is our best choice now. So far, flights have been cut because of the epidemic, the air freight per ton of pine nuts is about RMB 37,000, which has invisibly increased the cost.” And what about sea transport? “Pakistani pine nuts are generally shipped from Karachi Port to Ningbo Port, Zhejiang. The transportation price is about Rmb 17,000 per ton, which is much cheaper than air freight,” Xin told CEN.

“But in addition to time, we also need to consider the wastage. With thinner skins, Pakistani pine nuts are easily broken or damaged during handling. In addition, we have to process it in advance to remove moisture. Otherwise, the pine nuts in the container will become moldy and deteriorate. We have established a plant in Pakistan. After preliminary dehydration processing locally, mildewed and relatively poor-quality pine nuts are removed for easier transportation.”

Oil prices rally, stocks mixed tracking Ukraine crisis

LONDON: Oil prices rallied Monday on renewed supply fears as the EU debates banning Russian crude imports and following a weekend attack on Saudi facilities. Stock markets traded mixed, as Ukraine rejected a Russian ultimatum to surrender its besieged southern city of Mariupol. “Oil prices are up noticeably as the new week of trading begins,” noted Commerzbank analyst Carsten Fritsch as Brent and WTI won four percent. “The reason for the upswing is news that the EU appears to be considering a ban on oil imports from Russia.” EU foreign ministers gathered Monday to discuss adding sanctions on Moscow, with a raft of countries pressing for a ban on Russian energy. Germany, however, is reluctant as it relies on Russian gas. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov warned that an oil embargo “is a decision that will hit everyone”. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi presented a souvenir to the Tunisian Foreign Minister Othman Jerandi, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. - DNA

Belgium mourns after car kills six in carnival crash

BRUSSELS: Belgium mourned on Sunday after a car ploughed into a crowd of early morning carnival-goers, killing six people and injuring dozens of others as authorities ruled out an act of terrorism. The tragedy took place around 5:00 am (0400 GMT) as the carnival of Strey-Bracquegnies, a district in the former coal-mining town of La Louviere, was getting under way. “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 at the town's city hall. Investigators said the suspects were born in 1988 and 1990 and came from La Louviere, a town near the French border in Belgium's rust belt, and were not known to authorities for similar acts. - APP

PBF urged to “pull up its socks”

DNA

LAHORE: Vice President of Pakistan Businesses Forum (PBF), Ahmad Jawad said despite being a muslim country, Pakistan's share in the global Halal trade stands at a mere 0.26% which could be increased with the upgrading of Halal certification and provision of Halal storage facility. As global halal market has been projected to \$3.2 trillion by FY 2024 which needs to be tapped through timely strategy. Speaking at seminar, he said unfortunately not even a single Muslim country falls in the list of top 5 global exporters of the Halal products; in this regard country's industrial sector has to be brought in line with the global competitive trading trends to increase production and exports especially in halal market. “Our major export sector needs to increase production of commercial goods in line with global competitive markets, the country's industry must grow on global competitive trends to boost exports: It possible only through the latest technology, innovation and research and development. He said that without reestablishing trade ties with emerging global and regional markets, including Russia, Central Asian Region (CARs), Africa, Turkey, South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and improving regional trade integration, the country's economy would not improve. He said that the acquisition of new potential markets for trade diversification, through modern tools, was essential to increase the country's exports. He said that by focusing sectors including textile value addition, export in IT, alternative energy, housing, Halal food market, tourism, agriculture, gems and jewelry and research and development, country's exports can go beyond their potential and by effective implementation there is no doubt that we may touch \$100 bn mark figure.

Muawin, Jiye Tech join hands

LAHORE: Muawin, Pakistan's first business-to-business (B2B) buy-now-pay-later (BNPL) digital lending entity is pleased to announce an industry-first partnership with Jiye Technologies, one of the country's leading agri-tech platforms that digitally connects farmers and businesses through an enhanced lean supply chain model. The partnership is intended to empower the agricultural sector by working to improve financial inclusion in Pakistan. - APP

Russia deliberately bombing hospitals

DNA

BERLIN: German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock has accused Russia of war crimes in Ukraine, and said the European Union will provide \$1.1 billion (1 billion) in arms to the Ukrainian military to help it defend the country. Speaking to reporters in Brussels ahead of Monday's EU foreign ministers meeting, Baerbock said they will discuss additional measures to increase pressure on Russia to stop the war. “The latest images coming from Ukraine in these hours are heart-breaking. One sees how they're increasingly bombing the civilian infrastructure, deliberately bombing hospitals in the last couple of

days, and targeting theaters although they knew that people, families had taken shelter in these buildings,” she said. “Of course courts must decide on these. But for me, they are clearly and undisputedly war crimes. We as the European Union, and those countries who believe in a rules-based international order, we must take further steps to isolate this regime.” Baerbock said EU member states will increase their financial support, humanitarian aid and military assistance to Ukraine. “Today we'll take the political decision to further increase our military assistance, we'll provide 1 billion on military supplies, in order to demonstrate that we wholeheartedly stand with Ukraine, we want to protect the civilian population,” she said.

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Briefs

AM Zahid Mahmood appointed Vice Chief of Air Staff



DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Government of Pakistan has appointed Air Marshal Muhammad Zahid Mahmood as Vice Chief of the Air Staff. Air Marshal Muhammad Zahid Mahmood was commissioned in GD (P) Branch of Pakistan Air Force in April, 1987. During his illustrious career, he has commanded Combat Commanders' School and an operational air base. In his staff appointments, the Air Marshal served at Air Headquarters as Deputy Chief of the Air Staff (Personnel), Director General C4I and Assistant Chief of the Air Staff (Plans). Air Marshal Zahid Mahmood is a graduate of Combat Commanders' School, National Defence University Islamabad and Air Command & Staff Course, USA. In recognition of his meritorious services and valuable contributions to PAF, he has been awarded with Tamgha-i-Imtiaz (Military), Sitara-i-Imtiaz (Military) and Hilal-i-Imtiaz (Military).

Hong Kong to lift ban on flights from nine countries

HONG KONG: Hong Kong will resume international flights from the United States, Britain and seven other countries, the government said Monday as it announced a loosening of some of the world's toughest Covid-19 restrictions. The finance hub has struggled to maintain China's zero-tolerance policy during an Omicron-fuelled outbreak that has sparked a huge surge in cases and put the city in the spotlight with one of the highest Covid fatality rates in the developed world. After the highly transmissible variant fuelled a wave of cases, authorities banned flights from nine countries deemed high-risk - including the United States, Britain, France and India. But infections climbed rapidly. Hong Kong has recorded more than a million cases and 5,900 deaths this year, with the bulk of the toll among its unvaccinated elderly population. On Monday, Lam said Hong Kong will lift flight bans for the nine countries from April 1. "The epidemic situations in those countries are not worse than Hong Kong's, and most arrivals did not have serious symptoms," she said during a press conference. Hong Kong has also reduced the quarantine period for vaccinated arrivals starting April 1 to seven days in a designated hotel, followed by another seven days of at-home monitoring. - APP

Pak, US agree to strengthen bilateral relations

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and the United States of America have agreed to strengthen bilateral relations in the domain of economic security between the two countries. This was agreed during a meeting between US Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy and Human Rights, Azra Zeya and National Security Adviser Dr Moed Yusuf in Islamabad on Monday. Both the dignitaries discussed issues of mutual interest including bilateral relations, regional and global situation and humanitarian situation in Afghanistan. They stressed the importance of peace and stability in Afghanistan. - DNA

PM Khan hails progress in health, education sectors

The prime minister said establishment of Rehtmatul lil Alameen Authority was a big step towards the capacity-building of the young generation in accordance with the teachings and morals of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him)

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Monday said the government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf had made remarkable improvements in public sector development particularly health, education and economy. "No government in the past has ever taken steps for the welfare of common man as done by the PTI government," he said in his address here at the groundbreaking of a new 200-bed accident and emergency centre at Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) and another 300-bed Jinnah Hospital in Sector G-11/3. The prime minister said the provision of best facilities for emergency patients was in line with fulfilling the requirements of humanity. He said the quality medical facilities at PIMS and Jinnah Hospital would facilitate the growing population of the capital as per the international best practices. He expressed satisfaction that the new setup at PIMS would supplement the existing healthcare facilities and would also aid in reducing the burgeoning load of patients in Islamabad and the suburbs. He thanked the overseas Pakistanis to sponsor the architectural designs of the PIMS



emergency section. After 1985, he mentioned that Jinnah Hospital was the first public sector healthcare facility. Imran Khan said the government's national health insurance card was the best scheme in the public sector which was not even available in developed countries. "The vision behind the creation of Pakistan was establishing an Islamic socio-welfare state. Our health insurance is a major step in this regard to enable poor people get free medical treatment," he said. He termed the introduction of a uniform education system another milestone of his government that aimed at developing unity among the future generation. The prime minister said the establishment of Rehtmatul lil Alameen Authority was a big step towards the capacity-building of the young generation in accordance with the teachings and morals of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him). On the economy, he said all strong indicators were contributing to the financial stability of the country. PM's Adviser on Health Dr Faisal Sultan said the new PIMS emergency ward and Jinnah Hospital would be the state-of-the-art centres of healthcare. He said the government had brought immense improvement in the standard of public health facilities.

Media JAC condemns PM's remarks

KARACHI: In a statement issued, the Media Joint Action Committee has taken a serious note of the false allegations made by the Prime Minister against media in his public address on Sunday. Mr. Imran Khan alleged that media houses have been bought by political parties and some are also being funded from foreign sources. In effect, this amounts to accusing the media of corruption. The statement said JAC challenges the Prime Minister to prove these scandalous allegations. Being in the Government he has the resources to investigate and prove it. The Joint Action Committee asked the Prime Minister to understand that false and baseless statements about media houses will not serve any purpose. Media and journalists are performing their professional responsibilities guaranteed by the constitution. The JAC requested Mr. Imran Khan not to make such statements for political point scoring. The joint statement further stated that if proof cannot be provided for these allegations within a reasonable time, JAC reserves its right to approach the honourable judiciary for relief against these scandalous, false and defamatory allegations. - DNA



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan in a meeting with Minister of Defence of the Republic Azerbaijan Colonel General Zakir Hasanov. - DNA

'Halting purchase of vote crucial for democracy'

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Farrukh Habib on Monday said that to strengthen democracy in the country it was imperative to block the use of money for purchasing loyalties of the elected representatives. Talking to media persons here, he said that opposition leaders Asif Zardari, Shehbaz Sharif and Fazlur Rehman have played the unholy game of horse trading to topple the elected government. He said now the important matter was in the Supreme Court which would interpret the Article 63-A of the constitution. He said everyone saw that money was also spent in the Senate elections and Yousuf Raza Gilani's son admitted that the leaked video was genuine and the matter was in Election Commission of Pakistan. - APP

Youth pledges to uphold Quaid's legacy: ISPR

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Director General Inter Services Public Relations (DG ISPR) Major General Babar Iftikhar on Monday shared a brief video based on the monologue of youth addressing father of the nation Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah to renew their pledge to uphold his legacy-nation state of Pakistan with pride. In a tweet on his official Twitter handle, the ISPR DG shared the video with the theme of this year's 82nd Pakistan Day "Shad Rahe Pakistan" (May Pakistan be Happy). The video initiates the message with Tajdeed-e-Ehd (a renewal of pledge) where this snippet is a monologue delivered by today's youth. The metaphor of a house is used in the narration to represent strength and stature of the homeland, dearly gifted to the nation by her forefathers. "It's a reassurance given to our Quaid that his country, his nation has survived against all odds, has withstood the tests of time and is going to uphold his legacy with pride.

Political leaders criticise anti-army remarks

NEWS DESK

KARACHI: A number of politicians have demanded Prime Minister Imran Khan and the judiciary take action against the anti-army remarks made by a PTI leader. PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari said that the PM's social media team and MNAs' propaganda campaigns should be taken notice of as they are criticising the army's neutrality. "It should be taken notice of, be it through the ISPR or our judiciary. We will not let such propaganda succeed," he said, adding that it was a struggle for every institution of the country to work within its domain. The PPP chairman said: "The time has come when the media is talking about a neutral environment, and Imran and his social media team are trying to spread propaganda that institutions are not neutral, be it through provocation or creating a constitutional crisis."

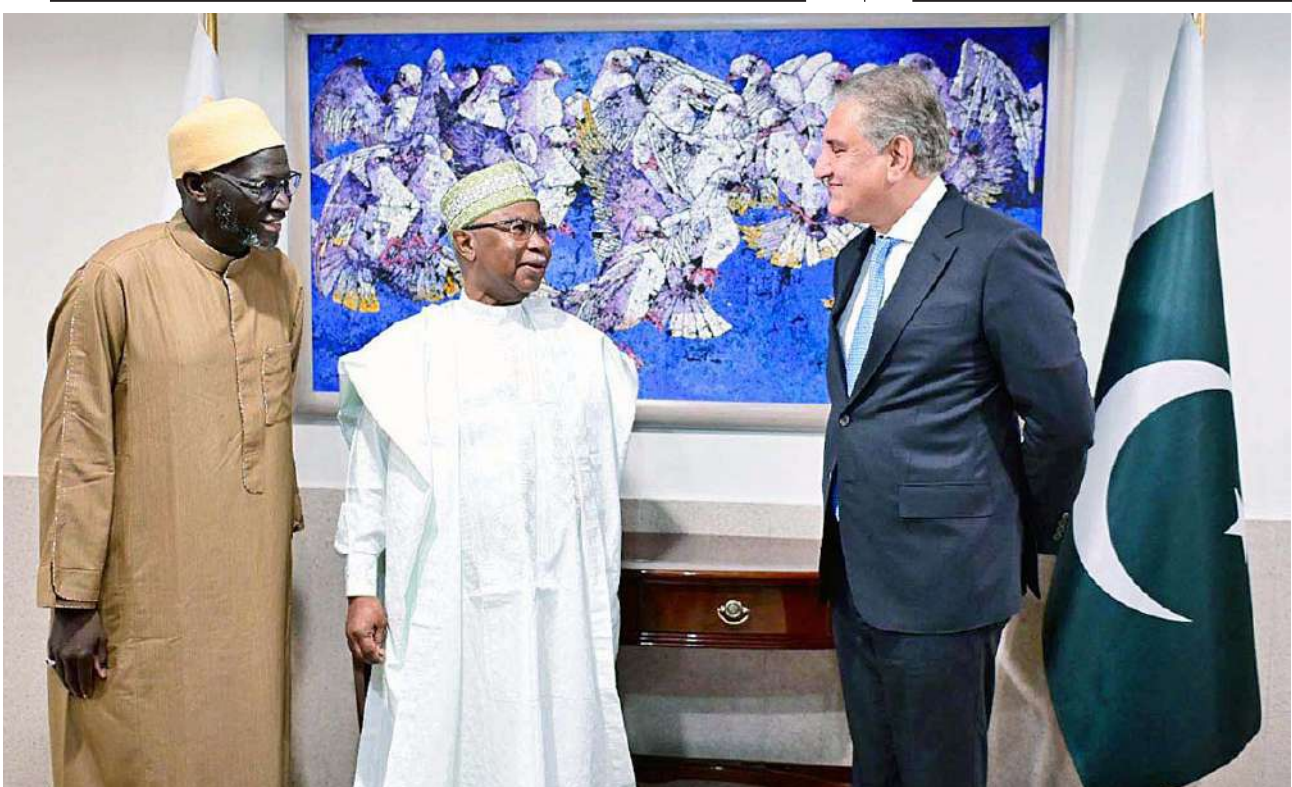
Nearly 3.5 million Ukrainians flee the country: UN

GENEVA: Nearly 3.5 million Ukrainians have now fled the country following Russia's invasion, the United Nations said Monday, praising neighbouring countries for showing overwhelming compassion towards their "extreme plight". More than 10 million people - over a quarter of the population in regions under government control - are now thought to have fled their homes, including the millions of internally displaced people. UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, said 3,489,644 Ukrainians had fled the country since Russia invaded on February 24 - a figure up 100,600 on Sunday's update. "Over the last four weeks, the world has watched in disbelief. Countless lives have been lost while millions of others have been completely upended," UNHCR chief Filippo Grandi said. "As if to counter the despair, we have also witnessed overwhelming acts of welcome and compassion as neighbouring countries, particularly local responders, have opened their hearts and homes to Ukrainians. "Millions around the world were rightly moved by the extreme plight of the Ukrainian people," he said, citing their "pain and sorrow... loss and anguish", and "relief at finding safety and trepidation of an uncertain future". Women and children account some 90 percent of those who have fled. 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. The UN's International Organization for Migration (IOM) said 186,000 people from third countries had fled Ukraine to neighbouring states. As of Wednesday, some 6.48 million people were estimated to be internally displaced within Ukraine, according to UN and related agencies, following an IOM representative survey. "Millions more may be affected if the war does not end," IOM said. Before Russia invaded, Ukraine had a population of 37 million in the regions under government control, excluding Russia-annexed Crimea and the pro-Russian separatist regions in the east. Meanwhile, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba called on China today to play an "important role" in efforts to resolve Kyiv's conflict with Moscow. "We share Beijing's position on the need to find a political solution to the war against Ukraine and call on China as a global power to play an important role in this effort," Kuleba said on Twitter. The call came after Kyiv last week urged Beijing to condemn President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine. - DNA

Ukraine says situation in Mariupol 'very difficult'

KYIV: Ukraine described the situation in Mariupol on Monday as "very difficult" and said it had been unable to establish a new safe corridor to evacuate civilians from the besieged city after it defied a Russian ultimatum to surrender. Mariupol, a port city on the Azov Sea, has been under siege and bombardment, with no food, medicine, power or fresh water, since the early days of Russia's invasion on Feb 24. Video footage of the city shows it has been devastated. Russia's military had ordered Ukrainians inside Mariupol to surrender by 5am (0300 GMT), saying that those who did so would be permitted to leave through safe corridors. "Of course we rejected these proposals," Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk said. She said agreement had been reached with Russia on creating eight humanitarian corridors to evacuate civilians from besieged towns and cities on Monday but Mariupol was not among them. Efforts to reach the city with humanitarian supplies continue to fail, she said. "The situation there is very difficult," she added. She gave no further details. Ukraine has accused Russian forces of bombarding buildings including hospitals and a theatre where it said people were sheltering last week. Russia denies targeting civilians. Russia's Defence Ministry has blamed "Ukrainian nationalists" for the situation in Mariupol. A Russian-backed separatist leader in eastern Ukraine said it would take more than a

week to take control of Mariupol. "I am not so optimistic that two or three days or even a week will close the issue. Unfortunately, no, the city is big," the Russian news agency Interfax quoted Denis Pushilin, head of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic, as saying. Defence Minister Oleksii Reznikov said the city's "heroic defenders" had helped prevent Russia marching on other big cities and saved many lives. In a related development, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba called on China today to play an "important role" in efforts to resolve Kyiv's conflict with Moscow. "We share Beijing's position on the need to find a political solution to the war against Ukraine and call on China as a global power to play an important role in this effort," Kuleba said on Twitter. The call came after Kyiv last week urged Beijing to condemn President Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine. China, which shares Russia's hostilities towards the US, has stayed silent on Putin's actions in Ukraine. Last week, US President Joe Biden warned his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping that there would be "consequences" if Beijing provided material support to Moscow. China's ambassador to the US said on Sunday his country was not sending weapons to Russia for use in Ukraine, but he did not definitively rule out the possibility Beijing might do so in the future. Other Western countries have also urged China to condemn Putin's Ukraine actions. - Agencies



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi received the Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Hisein Brahim Taha, upon his arrival at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. - DNA

Charter of Afghanistan Humanitarian Fund signed

ISLAMABAD: The Charter of the Humanitarian Trust Fund for Afghanistan was signed by the Secretary General, Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), HE Mr. Hisein Brahim Taha, and President, Islamic Development Bank, HE Dr. Muhammad Sulaiman Al-Jasser, in the presence of the Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi. The Trust Fund has been launched under the aegis of the Islamic Development Bank. Its establishment was one of the key outcomes of the 17th Extraordinary Session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, held in Islamabad on 19 December 2021. Addressing the Charter Signing Ceremony, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi emphasized that the dire humanitarian situation in Afghanistan warranted urgent action. He requested the OIC Member States, the Islamic Financial Institutions, donors and other international partners to make donations to the Trust Fund, recalling the OIC's decision to play a leading role in delivery of humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. He maintained that humanitarian assistance to the Afghan People would constitute an important facet of Pakistan's forthcoming Chairmanship of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers. The Foreign Ministers felicitated the President, Islamic Development Bank, and his team for launching the Trust Fund well within the stipulated timeframe of three months. He also acknowledged the efforts being made by the OIC Secretary General and his Special Envoy for Afghanistan for galvanizing international humanitarian assistance for the Afghan people. He emphasized the need to redouble the efforts in view of the urgent and ascending humanitarian needs of the Afghan people. In addition to its continued, multi-faceted economic and developmental assistance, Pakistan has already announced an assistance package of Pak Rupees Five Billion for Afghanistan. It remains firmly committed to supporting the Afghan People, in the wake of serious humanitarian challenges. - DNA