



Imran's remarks are hate speech against country: Marriyum

Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb says Imran Khan's anti-Pakistan tirade is hate speech against the constitution and the country, not freedom of expression. Talking about division of the country was in fact projecting the enemy's agenda. Imran's statements are against the constitution and an open attack on the federation.



Govt earning Rs50 on per litre petrol: Tarin

Former finance minister Shaukhat Tarin says federal government is earning Rs50 on petrol and Rs80 on diesel. The federal government is still crying after increasing the prices of petroleum products by Rs60. We had given a subsidy of Rs 20 on petrol and Rs 24 on diesel and the incumbent government did not make important decisions on time.

Simultaneously published from Islamabad, Lahore and Multan

Protection for long march

SC returns

PTI's plea with objection

Staff Report

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court (SC) on Thursday returned Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan's petition for long march. The Supreme Court's registrar raised objections to the petition, noting that the top court had already issued an order on the matter, and the PTI had not moved the relevant forum. "The petitioner (PTI) has not approached any other appropriate forum available under the law for the same relief and has also not provided any justification for not doing so," the SC's registrar said while raising the objection. Among other issues, the top court's registrar said the plea mentions "controversial issues" in paragraphs 4, 5, 12, and 14.

PTI Chairman Khan had abruptly announced the end of his "Azadi March" on March 26 and had given the government a six-day ultimatum to announce a date for a general election. He had later said he called the march off due to fear of "bloodshed". Just after PTI Secretary-General Asad Umar filed the plea in the apex court yesterday morning, Khan had announced that his next plan of action would rely on the court's ruling.

Earlier, PTI filed a petition in Supreme Court seeking court's permission for Islamabad long march. Ali Zafer Advocate submitted the petition in the Supreme Court on behalf of PTI Secretary General Asad Umar, while the Interior Ministry, IG Islamabad and Home Secretaries were mentioned as the parties. In the petition, PTI requested the court to direct the Federal and Punjab Government to allow the long march and also to avoid any arrests, violence and use of force.

Economic coop

Syed Naveed Qamar, Federal Minister for Commerce and his counterpart Dr. Mehmet Mu Minister of Trade of Turkey has signed joint ministerial statement on developing bilateral trade and Economic Relations Between Türkiye & Pakistan.



Photo: PID

Govt prioritizing promotion of foreign investment: PM

Urges Pak-Turk cooperation to address post pandemic issues, vaccine development

ANKARA/ ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday said promoting foreign investment in Pakistan was one of the top priorities of his government. PM Sharif, who is on a three-day visit to Turkey, stated this in a meeting with a delegation of a Turkish company Sutas Group headed by its Board President Muharrem Yilmaz. The prime minister said the government was removing the hurdles faced by investors during the last four years.

He said the government was ensuring employment opportunities and setting up industries in the country. The delegation of Sutas Group expressed deep interest in investing in the dairy sector in Pakistan. The prime minister

issued directives to the concerned Pakistani authorities to extend cooperation to the Sutas Group.

PM warns Imran Khan 'not to cross limits' by giving threats against country

Prime Minister Shehbaz emphasized that Pakistan and Turkey should continue to address health and economic challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and step-up cooperation in vaccine development.

The prime minister, in a meeting with Turkish Health Minister Dr Fahrettin Koca who called on him during his three-day official visit here, congratulated over the commendable handling of COVID-19 by Turkey. During the meeting, the prime minister stressed the importance of enhancing bilateral cooperation in the health sector. He appreciated President Recep Tayyip Erdogan for transforming the health system in Turkey in the last two decades.

He recalled several joint initiatives undertaken by the Turkish government in Pakistan in the health sector especially in health services, pharmaceuticals, digital health and training and capacity building of medical professionals.

Shehbaz Sharif greatly admired Turkish generosity witnessed during the 2005 earthquake and 2010 floods. He particularly appreciated the establishment of Recep Tayyip Erdogan Hospital in Muzaffargarh following the massive floods in Pakistan.

He advised the Turkish-Pakistan Joint Working Group (JWG) on Health to undertake in-depth discussions on various aspects of bilateral health cooperation. The prime minister underscored the importance of following up on various initiatives including collaboration in the establishment of pathology labs, enhanced functioning of Pakistan Kidney Liver Institute (PKLI), and automobile ambulances.

Good news

Chinese banks to refinance Pakistan with \$2.3b funding

LAHORE: Finance Minister Miftah Ismail on Thursday said that the government has reached a refinancing agreement worth \$2.3 billion with Chinese banks. In a tweet, he said that "the terms and conditions for refinancing of RMB 15 billion deposit by Chinese banks (about US\$ 2.3 billion) have been agreed". "Inflow is expected shortly after some routine approvals from both sides. This will help shore up our foreign exchange reserves," the finance minister wrote.

The news comes as a lifeline as the country is already facing an uncertain economic situation due to a delay in the revival of stalled multibillion-dollar International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme.

The agreement with Chinese banks is expected to bolster the reserves and enable the country to make import payments while lending some support to the rupee as well which has lost over 25% since the start of the outgoing fiscal year 2021-22.

The restoration of Pakistan's delayed IMF programme rests on the government's capacity to make fiscal adjustments of about 2.5% of the gross domestic product (GDP), or Rs2,000 billion, by increasing revenues and reducing expenditures in

Govt jacks up POL prices Rs30 per litre

the upcoming budget 2022-23.

The IMF's wish-list or demands do not end here, as the government must end petrol subsidies of Rs39 per litre and diesel subsidies of Rs53 per litre, raise electricity tariffs by Rs8 per unit via an increase in base tariff and fuel price adjustments, and increase gas tariffs by 20% on average to demonstrate its commitment to implementing the much-needed 'reforms agenda' under the advice of the IMF programme.

NEPRA hikes power tariff by Rs7.91 per unit

ISLAMABAD: Already overburdened by inflation, increased oil prices, food items, Pakistanis were in for a shock when the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) on Thursday decided to increase the power tariff by Rs7.91. According to a notification issued by the regulatory authority, the average national tariff for 2022-23 has been fixed at Rs 24.82. The NEPRA has sent the tariff to the federal government after which the federal government will issue a notification on the average increase. According to the regulatory authority, the reason for the tariff hike is capacity cost, rising fuel prices in the global market and depreciation of the rupee.

The Rs 7.91 hike in power tariff came two days after NEPRA approved an increase of Rs3.99 per unit in the power tariff on account of FCA for

the month of April 2022. This decision had placed an additional burden of Rs51 billion on the power consumers while the price hike will not apply to K-electric and lifeline users. A hearing was held in NEPRA over the proposal to raise the price of power tariff by Rs 4.5 per unit. The CPPA, while applying for the April fuel price adjustment, stated that 12.55 billion units of electricity were generated last month.

It is to be noted that the talks between the government and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) took place in Doha, the capital of Qatar, in which the international lender demanded the government increase in electricity tariffs and prices of petroleum products after which the government on May 26 increased the prices of petroleum products by Rs 30.

Imran has lost sanity after losing power: Maryam

Asks him to clear position regarding country's division statement

Staff Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML-N) leader Maryam Nawaz on Thursday while reacting to PTI Chief Imran Khan's recent statement said that Imran Khan should answer the nation who gave him ideology to divide the country into three parts. While holding a presser in Islamabad, Maryam said that no one can harm Pakistan but there will be 300 pieces of Imran Khan's politics, adding that he has lost senses following his ouster.

The PML-N leader further said that Imran betrayed his workers during long march and left them alone while he was enjoying helicopter ride. Taking a dig at PTI Chairman, she said Imran's entire politics is based on 'spreading chaos and anarchy'. She lambasted PTI Chairman Imran Khan for talking about dividing the country into "three parts" and asked him who influenced him to talk about that. "Whose



ideology is it? Did Zac Goldsmith influence you to this ideology or Israel?" the politician asked while speaking to the media in Islamabad. Zac Goldsmith is the brother of Khan's ex-wife, Jemima Goldsmith. Reacting to Imran's statement when he maintained that "Pakistan would break into three parts if the establishment does not take the right decision," Maryam said that the entire nation has taken notice of his words and is angered by them. She said that "Imran has lost his sanity after losing power but the

truth is that power never belonged to him, to begin with," she said. "Whoever said such a thing about the country, his own party will break into 300 pieces." She said that the mandate Imran Khan is grieving over was "false" and one that he "snatched from the public." "I have never seen a person becoming restless for power to this extent," she added. The politician appealed to the government to "form a medical board comprising psychologists and mental health experts to examine Imran's mental state."

Dollar continues slide against rupee

KARACHI: The slide of the US dollar against the rupee continued on Thursday after the government's decision to implement conditions for the release of a \$1 billion tranche from the IMF and ban on non-essential imports. In the interbank, the US dollar shed Rs0.28 to trade at Rs197.59 while in the open market, the greenback traded between Rs197 and 202. It is pertinent to mention here that the PKR continued to regain some ground against the USD in the interbank market. According to data issued by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), the local currency gained by 59 paisas against the US Dollar and settled at Rs197.87 in the interbank market on Wednesday. The PKR has fought back and gained by Rs4.14 after reaching an all-time high of Rs202 against the greenback on May 26, 2022. The local currency gained by 30 paisas in the open market too and settled at Rs198. Recent negotiations with the IMF and a possible accord have halted the downward streak of the PKR in the open as well as the interbank market.

People know real power lies with establishment: Imran Khan

Vows to remain undeterred till fresh elections are announced

SHANGLA: Former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan on Thursday, while giving establishment example of Soviet Union's collapse due of its weak economy, asked them to intervene as the people are aware that the real power lies with them. Addressing a rally here on Thursday, he said that the establishment could stay neutral if it wants but people know you have the power, and the way the thieves are bringing the country down, people are watching towards you [establishment]. The former prime minister while taking a jibe at the government for increased in the prices of petrol and diesel by Rs30 said that the government cannot buy oil from Russia at 30% lesser prices because the United States "does not permit" them to do so.

He went on to say that his government was planning to sign a deal with Russia, but it was toppled with the help of a regime change scheme. He vowed to keep holding rallies and continue his anti-government campaign till general elections are announced. The former prime minister said that he is staying in the province for two more days to prepare everyone for the "Azadi March" anew.

"I am strengthening all my organizations in the province and planning everything," he said. Last week, Khan had abruptly called off the long march,



saying the decision to continue it would have led to further chaos and bloodshed.

Criticising the government's decision

Imran Khan granted three-week transit bail from Peshawar High Court

sion to increase the prices of petroleum products by Rs30 per litre, Khan said that the government cannot buy oil from Russia at 30% lesser prices because the United States "does not permit" them to do so. "Our government wanted to strike a deal with Russia, but it was overthrown with the help of a regime change scheme," the

ousted premier said. He said that the "puppets" of the US were now running the country after he was ousted through a "foreign conspiracy" and the "government is imposing Israel and India's agenda" on the nation.

PTI Chairman Imran Khan on Thursday was granted a three-week transit bail against a surety of Rs50,000, from the Peshawar High Court (PHC), ahead of another long march he plans to lead in the coming days. The former prime minister reached out to the PHC for protection against his possible arrest in case he marches to Islamabad again. PHC Chief Justice Qaiser Rasheed accepted the plea. Imran had appeared in court to file his plea in a personal capacity. However, media representatives and reporters were barred from attending the hearing as the court's doors were closed when Imran arrived.

IIOJK in focus

Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan, called on President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, Islamabad on Thursday.



Photo: PID

Forex reserves drops below \$10 billion

Bureau Report

KARACHI: The foreign exchange reserves dropped by \$378 million to reach \$15.771 billion, reaching the 29-month low level.

Statistics released by the State Bank of Pakistan shows, the reserves held by the central bank decreased to \$9.72 billion in the week ended May 27. That's roughly a 50% drop from August and enough to pay for less than two months of imports.

The shortage of dollars could worsen as the nation forecasts its trade deficit will widen to a record \$45 billion in the year ending June. Authorities have raised fuel and electricity prices, a key condition to unlock the remaining \$3 billion of an existing loan by the multi-lateral lender.

Meanwhile, the foreign reserves held by the private banks also witnessed a sharp decline to \$15.771 billion, witnessing a decrease of \$378 million.

President to discuss Indian barbarism in IIOJK with MLAs

India forcing Kashmiri Pandits to migrate to pave way for Muslims' genocide

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi on Thursday said members of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly and other political representatives of the State would be invited to discuss the atrocities being committed by the Indian government against the innocent Muslims of the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). Talking to Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan here at Aiwan-e-Sadr, he said the President House would extend the invitation in coordination and consultation with the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan.

The President condemned the unlawful and politically motivated conviction and life imprisonment of Hurriyat Leader Yasin Malik by the Special Court of the National Investigation Agency in India.

He called upon the international human rights organizations and the United Nations to take serious note of the human rights violations being committed by the Indian Security Forces against Muslims of the IIOJK and other minorities in India. The AJK prime minister requested the President for the provision of appropriate

budgetary allocations for the Azad Jammu and Kashmir government to ensure its development and progress besides catering to the increasing needs of Kashmiri refugees.

The Indian government, like it did in the decade of 1990s, was again forcing the Kashmiri Pandits to migrate from the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), and the blame for this migration was once again being put on Pakistan and the Kashmiri freedom lovers. According to credible information reaching here, after getting the occupied valley free from Hindu Pandits, a plan of Muslims' genocide would be implemented. The plan was aimed at trying to artificially alter the demography of Muslim population in the occupied valley.

The Indian government was implementing a plan to settle the Pandits at separate colonies on Israeli pattern. However, the Kashmiri Pandit community was protesting over the BJP government's discriminatory treatment. With Kashmiri Pandits already unsatisfied over failure of fulfilling the promise of providing security and the poor law and order situation in the valley, efforts were also being made by the Indian government to create hatred between the Kashmiri Pandits and

Muslims.

According to the information, the talks of atrocities on Hindu Pandits in IIOJK were nothing but mere lies and propaganda. Since the civilians were never ever targeted in the Kashmiri freedom struggle, the claim of targeting Pandits was also incorrect. India has been portraying since decades the Kashmiris' freedom struggle as terrorism. Under a planned strategy, India through buying some people in IIOJK promoted them as militant organizations and defamed the original freedom struggles.

Hurriyat leadership, which never forced the Kashmiri Pandits to leave IIOJK, was even today ready to take responsibility of protecting Hindu Pandits. Muslims, who were in favour of the Kashmiri Pandits' presence in IIOJK, also wanted their participation in the Kashmiris' self-determination.

The illegal Indian act of August 5, 2019 not only made the life of Kashmiris miserable but also turned the whole region into destabilization and unrest. According to the information, contrary to Indian claims that the situation in IIOJK was returning to normalcy was, in reality, a rhetoric and lie for the outside world. The real situation in IIOJK was altogether different.

IK supporter of strong army: Qureshi

Raises questions over new delimitation of constituencies

Staff Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Shah Mahmood Qureshi on Thursday said that Imran Khan's love for the country is known by everyone and he is a supporter of strong army. Former foreign Minister Qureshi said that every citizen of Pakistan can even die for the security and survival of the country and people know when we did mistakes in the past, Pakistan was divided and due to our mistakes from past, Balochistan saw political turmoil and warmongers in past also tried to make 'Pakhtoonistan'.

"People must learn from their mistakes in the past," he said. Qureshi further added that fighting with the economic instability is a very big challenge for us and due to the current political situation, the country can go bankrupt, adding, God forbids if the country will be bankrupted,

more restrictions will be made on the country and our defense assets will also be affected by these restrictions. The PTI leader went on to say that Pakistan Army protects our national, geographical, ideological boundaries. Imran Khan wants institutions to be strong.

Qureshi raised questions over the new delimitation of constituencies. The former federal minister claimed that there is no constitutional or legal justification for the new delimitations.

"Fresh delimitations were conducted for personal gains," Shah Mahmood said, adding that everyone one knows who will benefit from this delimitation. The PTI leader also said that the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has lost its credibility. "If the watchdog failed to fold fair and transparent elections, a new political crisis will arise," he added.

FIA submits details of high profile cases to SC

Our Correspondent

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) submitted the details of high profile cases to the Supreme Court of Pakistan on Thursday. FIA stated that several cases of embezzlement in Sugar Mills against disgruntled PTI leader Jahangir Tareen are under investigation, 4.3 billion in one case and 2.2 billion in the other. The agency further added that Jahangir Tareen and Ali Tareen are accused in other cases as well. A case of embezzlement in investment is also under investigation against former MNA. He is accused of embezzling Rs 3.3 billion in investment. The Chinese scandal against him is also being investigated.

According to the FIA, the EOBI corruption case is being heard. Money laundering case against Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Punjab Chief Minister Hamza Shahbaz is also under investigation.

A challan has been filed against both of them in a money laundering case of Rs 16 billion. Both have not yet been charged. While Salman Shahbaz Sharif, Malik Maqsood and Tahir Naqvi are absconding in money laundering case.

Irregularities

NAB summons ex-WAPDA chief Muzammil Hussain

ISLAMABAD: The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has summoned former Wapda chairman Lt. Gen (Retd) Muzammil Hussain over alleged irregularities in Tarbela Hydropower Project IV. The accountability watchdog has summoned ex-chairman of Wapda, Muzammil Hussain for hearing on June 06. "The national exchequer has lost whopping 753 million dollars due to irregularities in the project," the NAB said in its notice.

The accountability bureau has asked the former Wapda chief to appear before the NAB with documents to present his stance over the matter. The bureau has alleged Muzammil Hussain of abuse of powers and misuse of government funds. "In last three years the exchequer has suffered billions of rupees losses owing to corruption in Wapda."

Former Wapda chairman has also been accused of wrong payments to contractors. The 1410 megawatts Tarbela Hydropower Project IV has been nearing completion but it has highest per unit construction cost in the country. Former Wapda chairman Muzammil Hussain had submitted his resignation to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in the first week of May.

Article 63-A challenged in Supreme Court

Staff Report

ISLAMABAD: A petition was filed in Supreme Court against Article 63-A of the Constitution which is related to the status of defecting lawmakers. The petition, which was filed on Thursday by Advocate Zulfiqar Bhatta, stated that Article 63-A of the Constitution is against democratic norms and freedom of expression. The federal government and law ministry have been made respondents in the

petition. "The SC verdict regarding the interpretation of Article 63-A of the Constitution has put an end to the democratic process of no-confidence motion," the petition read. The petitioner pleaded with the apex court to restore de-notified lawmakers until decision on the plea.

The plea comes after the SC recently had announced its verdict on the interpretation of Article 63 (A), declaring that defective votes will not be counted in

the Parliament. The decision was made with a majority of 3-2, Justice Jamal Mandokhel and Justice Nazeer Alam dissented from the decision. CJP observed that changing loyalties in the parliament damages the integrity of democracy. The verdict by the larger bench of the apex court was a 3-2 split decision, with a majority of the judges not allowing lawmakers to vote against party line in four instances outlined under Article 63-A.

Trade deficit up by 57.85% in 11 months

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's trade deficit in the 11 months of the fiscal year 2021-22 has increased up to \$43.33 billion, which was \$27.44 billion in the first 11 months of the fiscal year 2020-21. According to the data issued by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), an increase of 57.85% has been noticed in the trade deficit of the country in the last 11 months. The PBS told that Pakistan exported goods worth \$28.84 billion from July 2021 to

Resolutions against PTI chief's remarks filed in Punjab, KP assemblies

Bureau Report

LAHORE/PESHAWAR: Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML-N) on Thursday submitted a resolution in Punjab Assembly condemning PTI Chairman Imran Khan's recent controversial statement. The resolution was submitted by PML-N lawmaker Sadia Taimoor and the resolution stated that PTI Chairman Imran Khan wanted to spread anarchy in the country under a conspiracy.

The nation is with the Pakistan's Armed forces and Pakistani people will never allow Imran Khan's evil

intentions to succeed, the resolution further stated.

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chapter also filed an adjournment motion in the Provincial Assembly against the statement of former Prime Minister and PTI Chairman Imran Khan. The motion was submitted by PML-N MPA and provincial spokesperson Ikhtiar Wali in the KP Assembly. He requested Speaker KP Assembly to stop proceeding of the house and allow debate on Imran Khan's Pakistan split remarks.

The motion said that Imran Khan

has hurt the nation by presenting the agenda about breaking Pakistan apart. In his motion, Wali said that Imran Khan was continuously giving statements against the country's establishment that created concerns among the nation.

"The people of Pakistan wanted to know that on whose agenda Imran Khan was giving such irrational statements."

The people wanted to know on whose agenda Imran Khan was making such statements. The motion calls for a debate in the Assembly on the nature of this important issue.

Moody's Investors Service downgrades Pakistan's outlook to negative

"Agreement with IMF could take longer than expected," Moody's warn.

SINGAPORE: Moody's Investors Service Thursday downgraded the outlook on Pakistan's rating to negative from stable and affirmed the 'B3' local and foreign currency long-term issuer and senior unsecured debt ratings.

The decision to change the outlook to negative is driven by Pakistan's heightened external vulnerability risk and uncertainty around the sovereign's ability to secure additional external financing to meet its needs.

"Moody's assesses that Pakistan's external vulnerability risk has been amplified by rising inflation, which puts downward pressure on the current account, the currency and — already thin — foreign exchange reserves, especially in the context of heightened political and social risk," a statement issued by the credit rating agency read.

It further added that Pakistan's weak institutions and governance strength add uncertainty around the future direction of macroeconomic policy,

including whether the country will complete the current International Monetary Fund (IMF) Extended Fund Facility (EFF) programme and maintain a credible policy path that supports further financing.

However, it stated that the decision to affirm the B3 rating reflects Moody's assumption that, notwithstanding the downside risks mentioned above, Pakistan will conclude the seventh review under the IMF EFF programme by the second half of this calendar year, and will maintain its engagement with the IMF, leading to additional financing from other bilateral and multilateral partners.

In this case, Moody's assessed that Pakistan would be able to close its financing gap for the next couple of years.

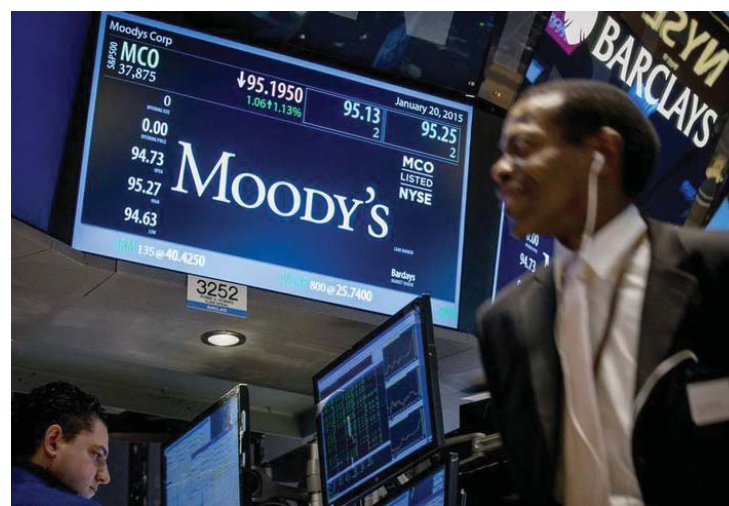
"The B3 rating also incorporates Moody's assessment of the scale of Pakistan's economy and robust growth potential, which will provide

the economy with some capacity to absorb shocks. These credit strengths are balanced against Pakistan's fragile external payments position, weak governance and very weak fiscal strength, including very weak debt affordability.

Moody's maintained that the B3 rating affirmation also applies to the backed foreign currency senior unsecured ratings for The Third Pakistan International Sukuk Co Limited and The Pakistan Global Sukuk Programme Co Ltd. The associated payment obligations are, in Moody's view, direct obligations of the Government of Pakistan.

"Concurrent to today's action, Pakistan's local and foreign currency country ceilings have been lowered to B1 and B3, from Ba3 and B2," the statement read.

It identified the government's relatively large footprint in the economy, weak institutions, and relatively high



political and external vulnerability risk as major drivers behind the two-notch gap between the local currency ceiling and sovereign rating

"The two-notch gap between the

foreign currency ceiling and the local currency ceiling reflects incomplete capital account convertibility and relatively weak policy effectiveness, which points to material transfer and convert-

ibility risks notwithstanding moderate external debt."

The rating agency expects Pakistan's current account to remain under significant pressure, on the back of elevated global commodity prices through 2022 and 2023.

It is mentioned that Pakistan's current account deficit has widened to a cumulative \$13.8 billion since the start of the current fiscal year in July 2021 up until April 2022, compared to a deficit of \$543 million in the same period a year earlier.

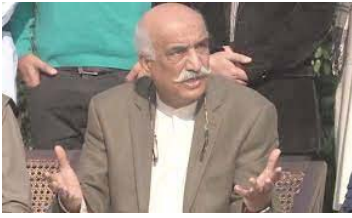
"In the absence of an equivalent inflow in the financial account, the rapid widening of the current account deficit has led to a large drawdown of the foreign exchange reserves," the statement read.

Moody's projected that the current account deficit would clock in at 4.5-5% of GDP for fiscal 2022 (ending June 2022), slightly wider than the government's expectations. Agencies

New dams vital to bolster agri, achieve self-sufficiency in food: Minister

Khurshheed Shah says 20% work on Mohmand dam completed while remaining work would be completed by 2026

MOHMAND: Federal Minister for Water Resources, Syed Khurshheed Ahmed Shah here on Thursday said that construction of new dams were vital for bolstering agriculture productivity, fulfilling people's water requirements and achieving self-sufficiency in food.



Talking to media persons after visiting different sections of the under-construction Mohmand dam costing Rs 309.6 billion, the Federal Minister said this multifaceted project was very important for the country's economic and agricultural water needs besides providing clean drinking water to Peshawar and adjoining areas.

He said 20 percent work on Mohmand dam has been completed while the remaining work would be completed by 2026. "Pakistan is an agricultural country and construction of new dams is required to bolster agriculture production and ensure food

security," he said.

He said large dams have a direct impact on the economy and if four new dams were built then not only our economic and agricultural growth would improve but immensely help in paying out of the country's debts.

With completion of Mohmand dam, he said, the water shortage problem of Peshawar would be addressed. Over 300 million gallons of water per day would be provided to Peshawar from Mohmand dam for drinking purposes with Rs957 million benefits.

Likewise, the project would provide

2.86 billion units of environmentally friendly electricity to the national grid every year with an estimated Rs45.76 billion annual revenue.

The Mohmand dam hydro-power project is being constructed on River Swat about five kilometers upstream of Munda headworks in Mohmand district. Construction work on Mohmand dam is progressing at a good pace and despite COVID-19 pandemic, work on the project continued on its 14 different sites.

Federal Minister Khurshheed Shah said that there was a time when Pakistan had provided Rs200 million financial assistance to Germany.

To a question, Khurshheed Shah said Pakistan can't afford political instability and chaos. He said the people of KP would make Imran Khan accountable for his broken promises in the 2023 general election.

"Where are one million jobs, five

million houses and one billion trees in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa," he said, adding the PTI government has failed to address the peoples' problems and economic issues despite obtaining about Rs 22,000 billion record loans during last three and half years.

To a question about Imran Khan's recent statement about Pakistan's split, Syed Khurshheed Shah strongly deplored it and said that Pakistan was an atomic power and no one can cast an evil eye on it.

He said Pakistan has a powerful army which is always ready for safeguarding the motherland besides countering any external and internal challenges.

He said that the coalition government was working tirelessly to take the country out of existing economic and other challenges and put the economy back on track. "The government will complete its tenure and the election will be held on time," he said.



KARACHI: Mrs. Sadia Rashid, President Hamdard Foundation Pakistan inaugurating a new labor room at Naimat Begum Hamdard University Hospital (NBHUH) in Nazimabad. Dean Faculty of Medicine Dr. Asim Jaffery, Medical Director Hospital Dr. Tamim Akhtar and Registrar Hamdard University Kaleem Ahmed Siddiqui were also present on the occasion.

Zoha Rahman, a true voice for South Asian actors

LAHORE: In a recent interview by South AsianToday, Zoha Rahman, a British actor of Pakistani descent highlighted the importance of how representation matters, but what matters more is the content that is being offered to the South Asian actors.



Zoha Rahman was recently featured in Spiderman: No way home and the Indian movie 83. And now she will also be seen playing in Ms Marvel.

When asked about how she feels about Muslim representation in the West, she had some very valid points to highlight.

"Tokenism allows certain characteristics under the guise of being inclusive, but all it does is reinforce harmful stereotypes," she points out.

She further added on by elaborating on how the industry looks at South Asians, "Most of my auditions and offers are for 'oppressed' Muslim characters, or for characters who constantly feel the need to break away from their culture and faith to be liberated. I rarely see casting calls for a character not specifically ethnic or Muslim; that puts me in a box because I'm seen as brown and Muslim before I am seen as an actor. It's almost like I won't be believable as a love interest or best friend because how can someone who looks like me represent something so normal! This is why my role in Spider-Man: Far From Home was so refreshing, I was just a student having fun with her friends on a school trip, and I happened to be Muslim too!"

Over time we have seen how South Asian actors are type casted or are given a certain genre of roles that are never really in the limelight or under a positive light. And this is something Zoha Rahman wants to see a change in and equal opportunities given to South Asian actors to show their craft and skill set in all avenues of acting and screen.

PFA discards over 17,00 liters substandard juice

By Raza Naqvi

ATTOCK: The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) on Thursday disposed off 1700-litre substandard fake pulp and substandard juice during a raid on a beverage warehouse located on Hazara road in Jehri Kass area in Hassanabdal. The enforcement team of the department imposed fine on food business operator (FBO) for his involvement in adulteration and counterfeit.

The authority said that harmful chemicals were used in the preparation of juice in the low-grade packaging and were distributed in district Attock, Haripur, Rawalpindi and other neighboring towns. "The juice was prepared for the sale of children, which was packaged in different sizes packets of tetra pack and supplied to the market," said deputy director PFA Punjab Mehtab Ahmed Khan.

According to him, business operators were using non-food grade color, chemicals and expired flavors in the preparation of juices. He said that authority is taking every necessary step to ensure wholesome and pure food for masses. We are working over every precautionary measure to standardize the standard quality food for general public.

Development Work

KARACHI: Workers are busy in excavating the dig with the help of heavy machinery at Orangi Town Nullah for construction work in Provincial Capital.



Photo: Online

KP cabinet approves subsidy on flour in province

The cabinet also approves draft bill for regularization of services of 675 contract doctors in health department

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa cabinet chaired by Chief Minister Mahmood Khan on Thursday approved provision of subsidized flour to masses across the province.

The KP Minister for Higher education told media after the cabinet meeting that under the subsidy, the 20 kg bag would be sold at Rs 980 and 10 kg bag at Rs 490 from this month, adding the supply of wheat would be ensured to flour mills this month after which the subsidized flour would be made available at specific shops and sale points.

The Cabinet expressed grave concern over reduction in the number of seats

of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in National Assembly.

The cabinet also expressed concern over alleged misappropriation in the voter lists as reported by the public through complaints and decided to take up the matter with the Election Commission and if it was not resolved, the matter would be taken to the court.

He said the cabinet had approved a draft bill for regularization of services of 675 contract doctors in the health department. These doctors had been serving as medical officers in different parts of the province since the outbreak of Corona pandemic.

The Cabinet also approved creation of 34 posts for IT cadre in the Excise and Taxation Department, including Director, Deputy Director and Assistant Director. It also approved the adjustment of 296 employees including sub-engineers and other staff of CDLD project in the Local Government Department.

The Cabinet approved adjustment of 33 Khasadar and 77 Levis officials in KP police while an additional fund of Rs 265 million was also approved for water supply schemes to Mingora and Kohat under its Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Cities Improvement Project.

Meeting held to review arrangements about LG polls

NAWABSHAH: Provincial Election Commissioner Sindh Aijaz Anwar Chohan chaired an important meeting of officials of all the three districts Shaheed Benazirabad, Sanghar and Naushehro Feroze of Shaheed Benazirabad Division to review arrangements regarding local government elections scheduled to be held on June 26, 2022.

The meeting reviewed arrangements regarding water, electricity, proper arrangements of light, washrooms, sanitation, furniture, security, training of polling staff and other requirements for local government elections.

Addressing the meeting Chohan said that holding of transparent national and local government elections in the country is an important responsibility of Election Commission of Pakistan.

He said that holding of elections in the province would be ensured at stipulated time. Chohan said that submission of 32000 nomination forms by different political parties and independent candidate in Shaheed Benazirabad Division is a record that indicates the increase sense in general public and a pleasing act, which provides political strength in countries.

He said that Presiding Officers taken from Education and other all departments would be provided required training and expertise in filing Form 11 and 12 so that it could not become a source of complain and slackness.

He directed Deputy Commissioners of respective districts to hold meetings with officials of education department and Returning Officers to ensure provision of required facilities at polling stations while social media and Whatsapp groups be formed for better link between divisional and district level officials so that polling staff and voters specially female voters shall not face expected problems.

He said that administration and polling staff shall be made bound to behave indiscriminately with all political parties and independent candidates.

Indonesian CG announces 28 scholarships for Pakistani students

Our Correspondent

KARACHI: Under the Indonesian Children's Friendship Program, 28 students from Pakistan will be given scholarships on merit through a scholarship scheme. We will work together to improve the balance of trade between Pakistan and Indonesia. Dr. June Kuncoro Handiningrat, Consul General of Indonesia in Karachi expressed his views while addressing the Korangi Association of Trade and Industry (KATI) during a lunch-on-meeting at KATI. KATI President Salman Aslam, Senior Vice President Maheen Salman, Standing Committee Chairman Rashid Siddiqui, Former President Masood Naqi and Johar Qandhari besides Consul of Indonesian Economic Affairs Djumara Supriyadi were also present on the occasion.



KARACHI: Consul General of Indonesia Dr. June Kuncoro Handiningrat presenting a souvenir to Salman Aslam, President of Hudengrat KATI. Maheen Salman, Masood Naqi, Johar Qandhari and Salman Sabri are also present.

The Consul General of Indonesia added that Pakistan is the hub of Central Asia together with Indonesia both these countries have the largest Muslim population. He said that investors and traders of both countries could provide cheap items to the pilgrims on the occasion of Hajj.

The Consul General of Indonesia said that the Indonesian Promotion Center has

been set up at the Consulate in Karachi to promote friendly relations with Pakistan and also launched the Indonesia Pakistan Portal to facilitate Pakistani traders and tourists in Indonesia. He said that every effort would be made to promote bilateral trade so that Indonesian investors could visit Pakistan and explore investment opportunities.

Earlier, KATI President Salman Aslam said that Pakistan was the main importer of edible oil and paper from Indonesia. While there were two trade agreements between Pakistan and Indonesia in which 232 products could be traded.

However, there is no trade balance between the two countries. Pakistan's imports are high while Indonesia's imports from Pakistan are very low.

Pakistan must be prepared to address lawfare challenges: Law Minister

CLAS holds a conference on 'Lawfare and Pakistan's Response'



Staff Reporter

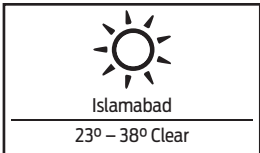
ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Law and Security held a conference on 'Lawfare and Pakistan's Response' in Islamabad. The conference was attended by eminent lawyers and jurists that included Justice (retired) Ali Nawaz Chowhan, Barrister Ali Zafar, Ahmer Bilal Soofi, Maj General Irfan Arshad, Mohsin Kamal, Dr. Salma Shaheen, Barrister Muhammad Ahmad Pansota, Taimur Malik and Imtiaz Gul. Law papers on Pakistan's response to law fare were presented at the conference. CLAS also launched their report on 'Lawfare and Pakistan' during the event. The report contains several recommendations that can be adopted by Pakistan in order to create a comprehensive law-fare strategy.

The Chief Guest of the event, Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar, Federal Minister of Law and Justice applauded and encouraged the audience to further promote international law and lawfare, so that the nation can take a serious front

towards lawfare strategy. While discussing lawfare, he termed it as a modern day warfare tactic and said that Pakistan must be prepared to address future lawfare challenges. He stressed upon the significance of international law and the need for Pakistan to focus on international law in order to build a comprehensive narrative at international forums.

Dr. Chaudhry Faisal Mushtaq, Chairman Executive Board, CLAS introduced the Centre and thanked the audience for their participation. He stressed upon the fact that it is the responsibility of each and every national of Pakistan to strengthen Pakistan's position on lawfare.

Justice Ali Nawaz Chowhan, Honorary Chairman, Legal Forum for the Oppressed Voices of Kashmir discussed the use of lawfare by the Western states through sanctions. He also mentioned how it is only a matter of time until lawfare is used against other issues such as water and therefore said it is very important that Pakistan develops a lawfare strategy.



SERVICES

Namaz Timings

Fajr 3:17 am
Zohr 12:06 pm
Asr 5:04 pm
Maghrib 7:14 pm
Isha 8:55 pm

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 561111
MH 561116
MH 561116
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

COMPLAINTS

Water Tanker Service
E-7, F-10 & F-11 9204654
G-5, G-6, G-7, G-8, 9203883
G-9, G-10, G-11, G-12, H-8 9266316
Wapda Islamabad 9217579-80
Sui Gas Complaint 119, 9272249
Wasa Water Tank

Tanveer hails work being done by WFP in Pakistan

Says government is committed to eliminate malnutrition

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training Rana Tanveer Hussain on Thursday acknowledged the contribution of WFP in enabling Pakistan to address numerous social issues primarily related to nutrition in women and children.

Welcoming the country director of World Food Programme (WFP) Mr Chris Kaye in his office, Rana Tanveer appreciated the work being done by WFP in Pakistan.

The meeting was attended by Secretary and Additional Secretary of the Ministry of FE & PT.

He said that the government of Pakistan is committed to eliminate malnutrition and stunting especially in children and students.

Rana Tanveer discussed in detail the issue of out of school children.

He said that there are approximately 22 million out of school children, rectification of which is amongst the top priorities of the government.

He said that once admitted retention of

students is also a big challenge that needs to be overcome. Federal Minister said that special programmes need to be introduced to enhance the overall learning capacity of students as well.

Federal Minister was briefed about the School Meals Programme. Rana Tanveer was informed that the program is aimed at supporting appropriate nutrition and encouraging attendance of students especially young girls.

Federal Minister said that both mental and physical growth of students is of utmost importance.

He said that a pilot project of the School Meals Programme should be launched in the Federal Territory. He welcomed any support which can lead to healthy students who are ready to learn.

Federal Minister said that a large-scale school and ration programme should be developed for the entire country. He said that WFP and Ministry of FE & PT should work together to develop a proposal which

will be placed before and deliberated upon in the Interprovincial Education Ministers Conference headed by the Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training, Rana Tanveer emphasized that the meal and ration programme will lead to reduction in school children's issues.

Rana Tanveer said that with the support of WFP a database should be put together that projects the ground reality of students in each Tehsil of Pakistan in order to develop effective interventions. He said that the global learning experience and technical expertise of WFP can highly contribute towards this objective.

Rana Tanveer said that the students are the future of this country and that we have put highest priority on their physical and mental needs. At the end he thanked Chris Kaye and WFP for their contribution towards resolving social issues in Pakistan and reiterated his resolve towards working together with WFP to address the challenges of the public education system.

Traditional Art

RAWALPINDI: A shopkeeper is displaying traditional decorated parts with truck art, at his shop along the Carriage Factory Road, to attract customers in City.



Photo: Online

ANF recovers over 3kg ice

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in its operation conducted at Islamabad International Airport recovered over three kg Ice from the possession of a passenger.

According to ANF spokesman, ANF Rawalpindi foiled a bid to smuggle Ice from Islamabad to Bahrain and recovered 3054 grams Ice which was tactfully concealed in trolley bag of a passenger namely Muhammad Khalid resident of Peshawar, going to Bahrain through flight no.GF-771.

He informed that a case has been registered against the accused and further investigation was in progress.

Shifting Yasin to isolated cell in Tihar jail deplorable: Mushaal

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Mushaal Hussein Mullick, wife of jailed Kashmiri Hurriyat Leader Yasin Malik, condemned shifting of Yasin Malik to an isolated cell in notorious New Delhi's Tihar jail, who she said an attempt to push him to the jaws of death.

Mushaal while talking to media along with Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervaiz Arshaf expressed apprehension that her husband could be silently killed because notorious Narendra Modi government scared of lion of Kashmir even in jail.



The Hurriyat leader said that Yasin's activities were being monitored through close circuit cameras in isolated cell, who has been award-

ed life sentence by an Indian kangaroo court in a sham trial. Mushaal lamented that occupation authorities were using all brutal tactics to silence the voice of Chairman Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front after their failure to buy his consciousness.

She said that the symbol of resistance was caged in a small isolated cell just to make him psychological patient.

Mushaal said that level of brutalities of Indian fascist authorities could be judged from the fact that his mother and sister have been denied access to him in jail.

The hurriyat leader stated

that look at the duplicity of the world justice that despite repeated request neither she nor his 8-year-old daughter were allowed to see him for the last few years.

She appealed to the international community, human right organizations and OIC to take cognizance of the victimization of Yasin by the Indian government to ensure protection of his life as his life was in danger.

She also asked Speaker National assembly to raise voice for release of her husband Yasin Malik in international forums including written a letter to speakers of assemblies of different countries.

Shazia Sikander wins Fukuoka's Arts and Culture Prize

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: Japan's Fukuoka Prize Committee has announced the Fukuoka Prize 2022.

Ms. Shazia Sikander, Pakistan-born miniature artist, has won this Fukuoka Prize in the category of Arts and Culture for introducing innovation in the traditional art forms using latest digital technology in the world of miniature painting, which follows conventions dating back to the Mughal Empire.

This Fukuoka Prize was established in 1990 by Japanese Fukuoka city and Fukuoka City International Foundation and is given to individuals, groups or organizations for their splendid work in preserving Asian culture.

The prize aims to increase awareness of Asian cultures and to institute a broad framework for exchange and mutual learning among



the peoples of Asia. This year marks the 32nd anniversary of the inception of the Fukuoka Prize. Over the last 31 years, prize has been presented to 118 leading figures in their respective fields.

Fukuoka Prize is awarded in three categories that include Grand Prize, Academic Prize and Arts and Culture Prize. Besides Ms. Shazia Sikander, this year's Prize laureates include Japanese Taiko Drummer Mr. Hayashi Eitetsu for Grand

Prize and Historian Prof. Timon Screech from U.K for Academic Prize. In September this year, the laureates will be invited to Fukuoka, Japan officially for receiving their respective award.

There were three Pakistani recipient of the Fukuoka Prize in the past. Late Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, the legendary qawwali maestro, Dr Uxi Mufti, specialist in the preservation of folk heritage and Ms. Yasmeen Lari, architect, architectural historian, heritage conservationist.

Born in Lahore, Ms. Shazia Sikander earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in 1991 from the National College of Arts (NCA) in Lahore. She was awarded "Tamgha-e-Imtiaz" (Medal of Excellence) by the Pakistani government in 2005 in recognition of her outstanding contribution in the field of arts. She now lives in New York.

Job Fair held at NUML Rawalpindi



Staff Reporter

RAWALPINDI: Faculty of Engineering & Faculty of Management Sciences of the National University of Modern Languages (NUML), Rawalpindi Branch organized an open house & Job Fair in the University on Thursday.

Pro Rector Rawalpindi Branch Brig (Retd) Muhammad Ibrahim inaugurated the events while Heads of Departments, faculty members and large number of students attended the event.

Pro Rector Brig (Retd) Muhammad Ibrahim in his address said that it was the initiative of the Rector NUML Major General (Retd) Muham-

mad Jaffar and NUML Rawalpindi followed the instructions to provide opportunities to the students to find jobs.

He said that open house display is the regular feature but inviting various companies to facilitate the senior students to get jobs right after the completion of their studies. He further said that companies interviewed more than 1000 students and the able ones will get jobs. He was of the view that it is the era of competition; students must have to diversify their skills to get good jobs.

At the end he appreciated the students for their innovative projects and hoped that NUML Rawalpindi students will play proactive role in national devel-

Health Corner

Eating eggs can boost heart health

ISLAMABAD: Researchers have shown how moderate egg consumption can increase the amount of heart-healthy metabolites in the blood, publishing their results today in eLife.

The findings suggest that eating up to one egg per day may help lower the risk of developing cardiovascular disease.

Eggs are a rich source of dietary cholesterol, but they also contain a variety of essential nutrients. There is conflicting evidence as to whether egg consumption is beneficial or harmful to heart health.

A 2018 study published in the journal *Life*, which included approximately half a million adults in China, found that those who ate eggs daily (about one egg per day) had a substantially lower risk of heart disease and stroke than those who ate eggs less frequently.

Now, to better understand this relationship, the authors of this work have carried out a population-based study exploring how egg consumption affects markers of cardiovascular health in the blood.

"Few studies have looked at the role that plasma cholesterol metabolism plays in the association between egg consumption and the risk of cardiovascular diseases, so we wanted to help address this gap," explains first author Lang Pan, MSc at the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Peking University, Beijing, China.

Pan and the team selected 4,778 participants from the China Kadoorie Biobank, of whom 3,401 had a cardiovascular disease and 1,377 did not. They used a technique called targeted nuclear magnetic resonance to measure 225 metabolites in plasma samples taken from the participants' blood. Of these metabolites, they identified 24 that were associated with self-reported levels of egg consumption.

Their analyses showed that individuals who ate a moderate amount of eggs had higher levels of a protein in their blood called apolipoprotein A1- a building-block of high-density lipoprotein (HDL), also known as 'good lipoprotein'. These individuals especially had more large HDL molecules in their blood, which help clear cholesterol from the blood vessels and thereby protect against blockages that can lead to heart attacks and stroke.

The researchers further identified 14 metabolites that are linked to heart disease. They found that participants who ate fewer eggs had lower levels of beneficial metabolites and higher levels of harmful ones in their blood, compared to those who ate eggs more regularly.

"Together, our results provide a potential explanation for how eating a moderate amount of eggs can help protect against heart disease," says author Canqing Yu, Associate Professor at the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Peking University. "More studies are needed to verify the causal roles that lipid metabolites play in the association between egg consumption and the risk of cardiovascular disease." (Courtesy Science Daily)



Chairman Dr. Asjad Hameed The Diabetes Centre (TDC) Islamabad, Lt Gen Muhammad Haroon Aslam HI (M), SBT, (Retd), Chief Guest at 'World No Tobacco Day' celebrated at TDC, CEO TDC Mr Tahir M. Abbasi, HOD Marketing Mr Shahzad Lodhi and Executive Coordinator to CEO, Dr Sana Moazzam prior to beginning of event at TDC.

IHC clubs all petitions against legal amendments

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court on Thursday directed to club all the petitions challenging change in procedure of the overseas vote. Petitioner Muhammad Iqbal argued in the court of Chief Justice Athar Minallah that the recent amendment by the government in the law was against the constitution. Justice Athar Minallah said that the overseas Pakistan have not been disenfranchised in the amendment. "If the nine million overseas Pakistani citizens will vote in a single constituency," he questioned.

"The procedure for overseas Pakistanis vote is a complicated issue. Everyone bring petition to the court but no one knows the law," chief justice IHC remarked. "In the United States 13 states of America deny the right to vote to their overseas citizens," Justice Minallah remarked. "It is the mandate of the institutions to decide the procedure of vote," he added. The court adjourned further hearing of the case until June 03 (tomorrow).

It is to be mentioned here that the National Assembly on May 26 approved a bill, reversing reforms introduced by the previous PTI government for voting right to overseas Pakistanis. After the amendment, the overseas Pakistanis would not be able to cast their vote from abroad, however they could cast their votes while residing in Pakistan. Moreover, it has been suggested that reserved seats should be introduced for Pakistani diaspora and the matter was sent to a standing committee for a final approval.

Week-long-polio immunization drive concludes

ISLAMABAD: A week-long national immunization drive against polio concluded on Thursday during which over 43 million children under the age of five years received lifesaving vaccines across the country.

The campaign was synchronized with Afghanistan so that children on both sides of the border received vaccines at the same time and are protected from polio. Over 340,000 trained and dedicated polio workers were engaged in the vaccination drive to inoculate the children at their doorstep. A supplementary dose of Vitamin A was also administered to the eligible children.

Dr Shahzad Baig, Coordinator of the National Emergency Operations Centre, Polio Eradication Initiative (PEI), expressed satisfaction over the successful conclusion of the immunization campaign.

"Pakistan has made enormous progress over the last 18 months, but we need to drive even harder to achieve the results we want. We need to ensure all eligible children are vaccinated during each campaign to build their immunity against polio," Dr Baig said.

He said that the programme has intensified its efforts to address challenges related to vaccine hesitancy, community engagement and service delivery, to counter the long-standing issues following the emergence of new polio cases in South KP.

There have been six cases reported in North Waziristan recently after a gap of 15 months. The programme has taken various initiatives to reduce the risk of virus transmission, focusing on specific geographical areas.

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 (mszk786@gmail.com)
 Bureau Chief Lahore: **Syed Afraz Ali Nazish**
 (afrazalishah@gmail.com)
 Islamabad Office: Rose Plaza, I-8 Markaz.
 Karachi office: Flat No. C.3.A. One Comfort, Block No 11.
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 Whatsapp: **0346-5008408**

Global Maritime Security Initiatives

Yan Yan

The current international situation is complicated. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to spread, and the crisis in Ukraine looms large. Unilateralism and hegemonism go hand in hand. In the maritime field, traditional and non-traditional security challenges are emerging one after another, and maintaining the global maritime order faces continuous and severe challenges. At this moment, improving global maritime security governance has become increasingly urgent. The implementation of the global security initiative proposed by China in the maritime field should be a preferred path.

In the face of these challenges, I believe that exploring the implementation of China's first-ever Global Security Initiative in the maritime domain will have great benefits in helping achieve common maritime security around the world. Therefore, we should first adhere to the general principle of settling maritime disputes and conflicts by peaceful means, including dialogue, consultation, and diplomatic efforts. Historical experience has shown that this is still the most effective way to maintain world peace and stability. This principle should become

the bottom line acknowledged by all countries to achieve common maritime security.

Second, we should try to enhance the governance of global maritime security through "bilateral cooperation first, multilateral second." We can start with the relatively easy bilateral cooperation, based on which we need to gradually expand the scale of cooperation and eventually build a multilateral cooperation mechanism that substantially benefits all participants. In this process, certain countries may attempt to divide the region and exclude the majority of regional countries from the multilateral mechanism based on ideology. We should pay extra attention to such a practice and resolutely oppose the "pseudo-multilateralism" that creates exclusive cliques.

Third, we should adhere to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter to strengthen global maritime security governance in various forms and means. The institutional design of the UN Charter highlights the goals of common security and permanent peace for mankind. In recent years, China has deeply participated in the negotiations on new rules to maintain the maritime order. This includes agreements on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction and regulations on the exploitation of minerals in the international

seabed area.

The implementation of the Global Security Initiative in the field of oceans is a matter of peace and prosperity of oceans all over the world. Only by resolving maritime disputes peacefully, promoting maritime cooperation under the concept of a maritime community with a shared future, as well as proactively strengthening the international order and rules of maritime security governance, can we truly safeguard the common maritime interests of mankind and realize the beautiful vision of lasting peace and universal security.

Maritime insecurity is also compounding the terrorist threat emerging from the Sahel. These growing and interlinked threats call for a truly global and integrated response. A response that addresses these challenges directly as well as their root causes—including poverty, a lack of alternative livelihoods, insecurity, and weak governance structures. Maritime security is also being undermined by challenges around contested boundaries and navigation routes, and depletion of natural resources through illegal or unreported fishing.

Maritime security is a global issue with numerous stakeholders having varying interests. Cooperation and coordination are required on a multilateral and bilateral basis along with international organizations and

nongovernmental organizations. Key among these groups is the International Maritime Organization (IMO). National Security Presidential Directive 41/Homeland Security Presidential Directive 13 establishes U.S. policy guidelines to enhance national and homeland security by protecting U.S. maritime interests. The National Strategy for Maritime Security (NSMS) and its eight supporting plans, including the Department-led International Outreach Plan, implement this policy directive. Actions to implement this policy are taken in a manner that facilitates global commerce and preserves the freedom of the seas for legitimate navigation and other activities. Continual coordination with foreign governments and other partners and stakeholders assures the achievement of maritime security.

Piracy, particularly off the coast of Somalia, has become an urgent maritime security matter. Attacks on shipping vessels can be expected to increase without enhanced international efforts. Pirates have received million dollar ransoms for the release of hostages, and Somali-based pirates have disrupted critical humanitarian aid deliveries to Somalia. An international Contact Group on Somali Piracy has been established to facilitate discussion and coordinate the activities of states and international organizations to suppress

piracy off the coast of Somalia pursuant to UN Security Council Resolution 1851.

UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reported that a 2009 programme, initially established to address the Somali piracy threat, is now its largest initiative, with a budget that has grown from \$300,000 to over \$230 million. The Global Maritime Crime Programme encompasses some 170 personnel based in 26 countries who provide capacity building and support for legal reform, simulated trials and maritime training centres. Yet, the challenges to maritime security continue to grow, and our responses must keep up. The UN agency chief encouraged the Security Council to take action towards implementing the related legal framework, building capabilities, expanding partnerships and promoting crime prevention response. There is dire need to reduce vulnerabilities. Pirates, criminals, and terrorists exploit poverty and desperation to seek recruits, gain support, and find shelter. To counter these threats, we need to raise awareness and educate people, especially youth, while providing alternative livelihoods and support for local businesses.

The author is Director of the Research Center of Oceans Law and Policy in the National Institute for South China Sea Studies. Courtesy Global Times

Horrible Golden Temple massacre

The death, destruction and sacrilege caused during Operation Blue Star pierced the heart not only of the Sikhs but also of many Punjabi Hindus. The devastation it caused in the personal lives of so many millions has still not been fully recorded and acknowledged because the political divide over the attitudes towards Operation Blue Star has overshadowed the human stories. In a bloody climax to two years of fighting between the Indian government and Sikh separatists, Indian army troops fight their way into the besieged Golden Temple compound in Amritsar—the holiest shrine of Sikhism—and kill at least 500 Sikh rebels. More than 100 Indian soldiers and scores of nonbelligerent Sikhs also perished in the ferocious gun and artillery battle, which was launched in the early morning hours of June 6. (Sikh groups dispute this figure and say thousands died, including a large number of pilgrims who were there for an important Sikh festival). The army also attacked Sikh guerrillas besieged in three dozen other temples and religious shrines throughout the state of Punjab. Indian officials hailed the operation as a success and said it "broke the back" of the Sikh terrorist movement.

The Sikh religion, which was founded in the late 15th century by Guru Nanak, combines elements of Hinduism and Islam, the two major religions of India. The religion is centered on the Indian state of Punjab in northern India, where Sikhs comprise a majority and speak Punjabi. In the 1970s, agricultural advances made Punjab one of India's most prosperous states, and Sikh leaders began calling for greater autonomy from the central government. This movement was largely peaceful until 1982, when the Sikh fundamentalist Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and his followers launched a separatist campaign in Punjab.

Employing terrorism and assassination, Bhindranwale and his guerrillas killed scores of political opponents and Hindu civilians in the name of establishing an autonomous Sikh Khalistan, or "Land of the Pure." Most Sikhs did not support Bhindranwale's violent campaign, in which the extremists also assassinated several Sikhs who spoke out against the creation of Khalistan. To appease the Sikhs, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi nominated Zail Singh to be the first Sikh president of India in 1982, a significant choice because the Sikhs comprise a small percentage of India's overall population. Most Sikhs distrusted Singh, however, because as Indian head of state he generally supported Gandhi's policies. Meanwhile, the separatists occupied the Golden Temple and other Sikh holy sites and turned them into armed bases.

The Golden Temple, known as the Harmandir in India, was built in 1604 by Guru Arjun. It was destroyed several times by Afghan invaders and rebuilt in the early 19th century in marble and copper overlaid with gold foil. The temple occupies a small island in the center of a pool. There are a number of other important buildings in the 72-acre temple compound, including the Akal Takht, which is the repository for Sikhism's Holy Book of scriptures and the headquarters of the religion.

To suppress the separatist revolt, which had claimed more than 400 Hindu and Sikh lives and virtually shut down Punjab, Prime Minister Gandhi ordered Indian troops to seize control of the Sikh bases by force in June 1984. On June 1, army troops surrounded the Golden Temple and exchanged gunfire with the rebels, who were heavily armed and commanded by a high-ranking army defector. The Sikhs refused to surrender, and in the early morning of June 6 army forces launched an assault on the temple compound. By daylight, the Sikhs were defeated.



NATO in post Ukraine war

Mohamed Chebaro

Many people claim that the world before the war in Ukraine will never be seen again. It certainly seems that, instead of reducing nations' reliance on NATO, the Russia-Ukraine conflict has actually reinforced the need for the transatlantic alliance, even among traditionally neutral countries. If the pandemic ushered in second thoughts about the benefits of globalization, the war in Ukraine has put defense policies and the need to rearm and cement alliances to ensure nations' security individually or as part of blocs at the forefront of the travails of most Western countries.

Clearly, NATO is not going anywhere anytime soon, as Western countries are scrambling to increase their defense spending and improve their armies' readiness and capabilities for what looks like a new cold war.

So, thanks to Russia, countries are rushing to abandon neutrality and are making bids to join NATO, the EU and other structures in a bid to shield themselves from the winds of change blowing from the east. Alarmingly, the tenets of sovereignty, the right to self-determination, nonaggression, respect of international laws, interdependence and the promotion of a quasi-liberal economy have been shaken. Therefore, the next decade is likely to witness a shift toward militarism, power posturing and the shrinking of neutrality as more European states look to join the NATO alliance, a military behemoth we all thought was "brain dead," as French President Emmanuel Macron said in 2019. Moscow has long been apprehensive of NATO's enlargement and, though its Ukraine operation was started in an attempt to deter further enlargement, the invasion has actual-

ly served to refocus states' efforts to be part of various security umbrellas. Individual states are also increasing their defense spending, while NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg expects the summit in Madrid at the end of June to be a "historic" opportunity to strengthen the alliance in the face of Russian aggression and to "chart the way ahead for the next decade," including welcoming new members like Sweden and Finland.

To remain relevant, NATO needs to redefine its strategic priorities, which Stoltenberg said should include facing Chinese ambitions, the rise of anti-democratic states, climate change and instability in Africa. This is all in addition to the pressing issue of finding the necessary consensus among member states to continue their support for Ukraine in a way that deters further aggression from Russia.

It was France's withdrawal from the alliance's military command structure in 1966 that pushed it to produce a report that guided its philosophy for the next 50 years. The 1967 report produced by then-Belgian Foreign Minister Pierre Harmel called for the pursuit of a "two-track approach," combining strong military deterrence with the willingness to embrace detente and dialogue with the Soviet Union. The alliance's drive for a quasi-stable world did not deter NATO from welcoming old Warsaw Pact nations through its Partnership for Peace program, which Moscow itself joined in 1994. The NATO-Russia Council, whose work has been suspended since Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, promoted partnership and cooperation to strengthen security and stability in the Euro-Atlantic sphere. Its principles included calling for the respect of democracy, pluralism and the rule of law, refraining from the use of threats or force, the prevention of conflict, and cooperation in peacekeeping under the UN's authority.

It is in this spirit that NATO must conduct

a new strategic review in order to realign its priorities so that it can survive and stay relevant in the long term. Challenges such as the changing nature of warfare, asymmetric wars, hybrid conflicts, the taming of cyberspace, terrorism, migration and climate change, while ensuring a technological edge, are the issues in play if the alliance is to remain relevant. Most pressing though is to find a formula to end the conflict in Ukraine that will not reward Russia for its invasion, while providing its current or future leadership a ladder on which it can climb down and return from the cold, maybe through refraining from calling the current war "a battle between democracy and autocracy," as it has been framed by US President Joe Biden. This might alienate countries like China, which can play a role in persuading Russia to change course, despite the many lines crossed on the leadership level that cannot easily be uncrossed.

Even if Russian President Vladimir Putin is persuaded to end the war by Ukraine ceding territory, which could be seen as a form of appeasement, it is going to take decades to return to the relatively stable Russian-NATO relations that existed before February's invasion. And though everything must be done to avoid a new cold war, Russia is unlikely to see the sanctions against it removed soon. So, it could continue as it did in the past decade — testing NATO and Western resolve through countless soft-power disinformation campaigns and direct action like cyberattacks on infrastructure. This is why NATO will remain a cornerstone for Western countries to adapt to and deal with the challenges that could be seen as existential to peace, stability and the freedom of the world generally and to Western countries specifically.

The writer is a British-Lebanese journalist, media consultant. Courtesy Arab News

Energy crisis

Europe returns to nuclear power

Jon Van Housen & Mariella Ra-daelli

As energy prices soar in Europe, whispers are growing louder about something unthinkable to many since the '70s: a return to nuclear power. Due to strenuous efforts in de-carbonisation and even environmentalists were already quietly including nuclear power among possible solutions in the energy mix of the future. Now the conflict in Ukraine is drawing energy use and autonomy into even sharper focus. Reliant on gas and oil from Russia, Europe is feeling the squeeze as it supports Ukraine. Not only is energy much more expensive, it has been cut off entirely to some countries. The invasion "redefined our energy security considerations," said Fatih Birol, head of the International Energy Agency. "I would expect that nuclear may well make a step back in Europe and elsewhere as a result of the energy insecurity." Belgium's Energy Minister Tinne Van der Straeten called the invasion of Ukraine "a life changer." He now embraces further use of nuclear power.

It's a tough spot for Germany — 34 per cent of its oil and 55 per cent of its gas comes from Russia. A complete cut-off of supplies would plunge Germany and the rest of Europe into recession. Despite opposition, several countries are plunging ahead in full support of nuclear energy, but the industry has notoriously long lead times. France, which already generates 70 per cent of its energy through nuclear power, is determined to get its Flamanville plant online in 2024 after a cost overrun of 12 billion euros and a delivery date 10 years late. Finland's most modern nuclear power plant, which started operating last month, was supposed to be finished in 2009. To emphasize

the UK's renewed interest in nuclear energy, Prime Minister Boris Johnson visited the country's Hinkley Point nuclear plant this month, but it will be at least four years before it goes online.

Yet even before a Russian energy crunch threatened Europe, French President Emmanuel Macron vowed to double down on the country's commitment to atomic power, calling for a "renaissance" in the nuclear industry. In the lead-up to his campaign and re-election as president, Macron announced a vast programme to build up to 14 new reactors, saying it would help make France carbon neutral by 2050. Promising to ensure safe operations, Macron said French nuclear regulators were "unequaled" in their professionalism. He said the decision to build new nuclear power plants was a "choice of progress, a choice of confidence in science and technology." Tom Greatrex, chief executive of the UK's Nuclear Industry Association, agrees with the French position, contending that nuclear energy is not only carbon-free, but is also consistent and reliable, making it perfect for backing up intermittent new energies. By its very nature, power generated by the wind and sun varies a great deal.

He notes that the International Energy Agency and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change have included nuclear power in their projections for a net-zero future. "The best time to build a nuclear power station was 10 years ago," Greatrex says. "The second-best time is now." We will need clean energy for many centuries to come, he notes, adding that "it's not as if de-carbonization stops in 2030." Ironically, possible interrupted maintenance at the Chernobyl nuclear disaster site in Ukraine was high among the concerns over the Russian invasion. With concerns over Chernobyl now easing, leaders and consumers are clamouring for a solution to their energy needs — and nuclear has taken on a renewed shine.

Both the writers are international veteran journalists based in Italy. Courtesy Khaleej Times

Conversion to Islamic mode of finance to be revolutionary step: Miftah

WIFF-22 ends on asserting promotion of Islamic values for Islamic economy

KARACHI: Speakers Tuesday on the concluding day of World Islamic Finance Forum (WIFF-2022) emphasized on promoting Islamic social values for conversion of conventional finance system and the economy to a true Islamic ones, along with making required legislation, coming with revised financial policies and restructuring of financial institutions.

The forum was organized by Institute of Business Administration's Center of Excellence for Islamic Finance. The theme of this international forum was "Development of Islamic Finance Ecosystem for Global Prosperity".

The speakers included renowned local and foreign researchers, religious scholars, economists, bankers and finance experts besides government functionaries. Besides panel discussions on different topics relating to Islamic finance, presentations were made and research papers were read by finance experts.

They said unless Muslim Ummah as a whole did not realize that practicing Riba (interest) was the war with Allah Almighty, true and fast conversion to Islamic financial system and the economies would be difficult. Not only the Muslims were at loss because of riba but it led to serious social and economic disorders for the entire humanity.

Muslims societies and the governments would have to prove their commitment and binding to Islamic teachings where riba was strictly prohibited. At the governments and institutional levels, concrete steps were required to successfully execute this great task of conversion to Islamic econo-



mies, they emphasized. They also underlined the need for looking out of the existing banking system and find the practical solutions to convince the people for shifting to Islamic mode of financial transactions.

The two-day international forum on Islamic finance recommended formation three or four working groups on different areas of financial system, of these one will be on fintech, for fast possible conversion of the financial system and the economy.

Through video-link speech, Minister for Finance and Revenue Miftah Ismail assured all possible support to the efforts by State and private institutions towards conversion to Islamic finance system. By the next year, he said, the target was 35 percent Islamic banking.

And within next five years, he said, as per ruling of Federal Shariah Court of Pakistan the entire financial system was to be converted to Islamic one. Although the time seemed to be short yet the government would not spare any effort to meet the deadline, he pledged.

He appreciated the efforts of IBA for successfully arranging 3rd WIFF and that it would prove big contribution in converting to Islamic finance system in the country.

"No doubt, there are wonderful people in Pakistan on Islamic banking and research on it," he remarked.

The minister also acknowledged that madaris (religious institutions) had done great job for promoting Islamic bank-

ing by producing many Shariah scholars who were also working on the board of directors of public and private financial institutions.

Conversion to Islamic mode of finance would be a revolutionary step and no doubt it would bring blessings of Allah Almighty and prosperity for us, he said.

SBP's Acting Governor Dr. Murtaza Syed, who also participated through video-link, announced to constitute a working group tasked with sorting out the issues and find solutions for regular issuance of Sukkuks. The group would include representatives of Federal Ministry of Finance, and senior bankers from SBP and other banks, and Shariah financial experts.

He said Islamic banking was widely recognized as the fastest growing banking system throughout the world.

He mentioned that Islamic banks were medium sized and Fintech could play very important role in Islamic banking.

Prominent among the participants were Chairman of IBA-CEIF and former governor SBP, Dr. Ishrat Hussain, IBA's Executive Director Dr. S. Akbar Zaidi, Director IBA-CEIF, Ahmed Ali Siddique, IBA-CEIF's Programme Director and Associate Professor Dr. Irum Saba, President Meezan Bank Limited, Irfan Siddiqui, Dr. Yahya Abdul Rehman from USA,

Dr. Mohamed Eskandar Mohd. Rashid from Hamad Bin Khalidfa University, Rafe Hanif from Malaysia and Omar Sheikh from UK Islamic Finance Council. APP

Gulf Islamic Investments fully acquires digital lender ATGB

DUBAI: UAE-based private equity company Gulf Islamic Investments has fully acquired Anglo-Gulf Trade Bank (AGTB), a digital trade finance lender, from Mubadala Investment Company for an undisclosed sum.

AGTB is a digital bank licensed by the Financial Services Regulatory Authority of the Abu Dhabi Global Market, and is described as the world's first digitally enabled trade bank, GII said on Wednesday.

ATGB is a joint venture between AGTB Holdings, a Rowland family-controlled company, and Mubadala.

It aims to address a growing gap in the trade finance market and support commerce between companies in the Middle East, the UK and Asia through blockchain technology.

Digital banks have become more popular, largely driven by an increasingly technology-savvy customer base and increased preference for online banking after the Covid-19 pandemic.

Digital-only banks are not a new concept in the UAE. In the first half of 2017, Emirates



NBD launched Liv. bank, which is aimed at millennials. Mashreq, Dubai's oldest lender, also unveiled Mashreq Neo in the same year.

Abu Dhabi Islamic Bank, the biggest Sharia-compliant lender in the emirate, set up a digital-only bank called Amwali last

year to tap into the UAE's growing segment of technology-savvy youths.

However, independent digital banks are also entering the market, including Al Maryah Community Bank, which secured a licence from the UAE Central Bank in April last year.

This was followed by the launch of the UAE's first independent digital bank, Zand, which caters to retail and corporate clients.

The latest digital bank to receive in-principle approval in the region is Wio, whose shareholders consist of Abu Dhabi holding company ADQ, investments holding company Alpha Dhabi, e& (formerly Etisalat) and First Abu Dhabi Bank, the UAE's largest lender by assets.

The total capital invested in Abu Dhabi-based Wio is Dh2.3 billion (\$626 million), plus "in-kind contribution", ADQ said earlier this year. ADQ and Alpha Dhabi hold a controlling stake of 65 per cent while e& holds 25 per cent. FAB has the remaining 10 per cent. Agencies

BankIslami sponsors WIFF 2022

Staff Reporter

LAHORE: BankIslami, Pakistan's leading Islamic financial institution, proudly sponsored the prestigious, annual World Islamic Finance Forum 2022 (WIFF) as their exclusive gold banking partners. The two-day conference, held in Karachi on the 30th and 31st of May, was organized by IBA-CEIF in the spirit of bringing together the best researchers, academicians, leading Islamic bankers, Shariah scholars and prominent personalities representing global financial institutions.

Syed Amir Ali, President and CEO, BankIslami was part of the panel discussion titled "Implementing Industry Vision". Mufti Irshad Ahmed, Chairman, Shariah Board BankIslami Limited was also a panelist at one of the sessions held at the conference.

Among the main objectives of the WIFF 2022 was to acknowledge enhancement through the participation of academia and industry professionals. The desired outcome was to bridge the gap between academia and industry with the use of focused research that can be put into practice. The conference invited research papers and case studies to impart Islamic finance knowledge via real-life examples. The main themes of the research papers and case studies included; Islamic social finance, Islamic crowd funding, Islamic finance and principles of responsible banking, women's participation in Islamic finance, Green Economy, Digital currency and Islamic finance, Islamic microfinance, Agribusiness, Shariah governance framework, and more.

Commenting on the occasion, BankIslami President & CEO, Syed Amir Ali noted, "The potential of the Islamic finance sector is increasingly recognized all over the world, and through this sponsorship, we are proud to support the World Islamic Finance Forum in achieving inclusive growth in Pakistan. This conference sheds light on Islamic financial services for all segments of the population, and how it can contribute to infrastructure funding. Pakistan undoubtedly is on its way to the forefront of significant Islamic finance developments and BankIslami will continue playing a major role in its advancement in the nation."

A conference of this scale invites attendance from business leaders, investors, entrepreneurs and academic leaders from around the world, promoting more opportunities for growth and investment within the Islamic Finance ecosystem of Pakistan. BankIslami remains at the forefront of driving change across the Sharia-compliant banking industry in Pakistan.

Indonesia raises \$548.62m in Islamic bonds auction



JAKARTA: Indonesia raised 8 trillion rupiah (\$548.62 million) in an Islamic bonds auction on Tuesday, the Finance Ministry said in a statement, below an indicative target of 9 trillion rupiah.

Total incoming bids were 20.22 trillion rupiah at Tuesday's auction, larger than the 17.02 trillion rupiah of bids in the previous sukuk auction on May 17.

The Islamic bonds sold on Tuesday also carried lower yields compared to similar notes in the previous auction. Zawya

ITFC signs agreement with Maldives

SHARM EL SHEIKH: The International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC), a member of the Islamic Development Bank Group (IsDB), has renewed a Murabaha Trade Financing agreement for US\$ 175 million to support the import of essential commodities with the State Trading Organization (STO), Maldives.

The financing facility will support the procurement of essential commodities, including petroleum products, staple food and medicine and medical equipment.

The facility agreement was signed by Eng. Hani Salem Sobol, CEO, ITFC and Husen Amru Mohamed Rashed, CEO and MD, State Trading Organization, Maldives on the sidelines of IsDB 2022 Annual Meeting, SPA



EIGHTEEN, DIB sign Shariah Compliant Off-Plan Financing Agreement

Staff Reporter

KARACHI: Eighteen and Dubai Islamic Bank (DIB) join hands to support Government of Pakistan's vision in providing innovative Mortgage Financing solutions and promoting world class housing units in the country, with key focus on Non-Resident Pakistanis (NRPs). As per this arrangement, Dubai Islamic Bank will provide Off-Plan Mortgage financing (under construction projects) to resident and non-resident Pakistanis for purchasing villas and apartments in EIGHTEEN housing project near New Islamabad International airport.

To commemorate this auspicious event, signing ceremony was held at Dubai Islamic Bank's Head Office in Karachi in which senior management from State Bank of Pakistan, Dubai Islamic Bank & Elite Estate Pvt. Limited were present.

Tarek Hamdy, CEO of EIGHTEEN, expressed his views, saying "it is indeed a historic moment for both



the institutions, as we recognize the importance of mutual co-operation for the growth and support of housing sector in the country. Such collaborations will play a key role in the promotion of off plan and on plan housing finance and realizing the government's vision of attracting investment of overseas Pakistanis in the real estate sector of Pakistan."

Speaking on the occasion Junaid Ahmed, President & CEO of Dubai Islamic Bank Pakistan said that "Dubai Islamic Bank takes yet another lead in offering Pakistan's First Shariah Compliant off-plan financ-

ing. The Bank is aggressively working towards supporting the housing and construction industry which in turn will provide affordable housing finance to Pakistanis particularly, the overseas Pakistanis. Dubai Islamic Bank is the market leader in providing home finance through Roshan Apna Ghar (RAGP), a product providing subsidized financing to overseas Pakistanis, with ease of reparability of funds. The Bank also holds a significant share in mortgage finance market and this collaboration will further strengthen our role in this sector."

ADIB witnesses significant increase in digital banking

40% of customers' personal finance applications are now taking place digitally on its mobile app

ABU DHABI: Abu Dhabi Islamic Bank (ADIB), a leading financial institution, has announced that it has registered a significant increase in its digital banking channels usage during the first quarter of 2022. According to ADIB, 40% of customers' personal finance applications are now taking place digitally on its mobile app, up from 30% in Q1 last year.

The Bank currently has over 700,000 customers who are digitally active, a testament to the growing demand for digital services including personal finance. In order to meet the increasing demand for services and products that are available through its digital channels, ADIB announced the launch of the 'Express Finance Cashback Campaign', which provides customers with the ability to retrieve up to 1000 AED when applying for personal finance using the mobile app. The Campaign which will run till July 5, 2022 includes up to two instalment postponements every year with a first installment payment grace period of up to 120 days.

ADIB express finance was launched to provide custom-



ers with easier access to personal finance through ADIB mobile app. This service, which was developed in ADIB's digital lab, aims to enable eligible customers to obtain financing instantly. Pre-approved ADIB customers seeking personal finance can now complete all application steps on their smartphone via ADIB's state of the art mobile app and receive their funds the same day without the need to visit any of our branches or to manually sign on any document. While the process for customers is quick, easy and secure, the risk methodology applied by

the bank is still rigorous to ensure customers are getting a finance facility within their means.

Sameh Awadallah, Acting Global Head of Retail Banking at ADIB, commented: "We are witnessing an increasing demand from customers for services on digital channels, which is a natural and expected trend given the high pace of adoption of digital technologies, which customers today prefer as a convenient option to conduct their banking transactions wherever they are and without the need to visit the branches. Digital banking is a

cornerstone of our growth strategy. We are now beginning to reap the significant benefits of our investment in the digital transformation strategy, which is translated in the strong growth in the number of users of our digital platforms and the transactions made through it. As part of our endeavor to establish ADIB as the most innovative Islamic bank, we seek to enhance the features of our digital banking services to ensure that customers can access the full range of banking services that we offer through our online platforms and mobile app. We are committed to keeping pace with this trend and working to provide more digital products and services."

ADIB is currently promoting its digital transformation program in order to enhance productivity and improve the banking customers experience. ADIB has witnessed a rapid growth in the rate of use of its digital channels. And has recently won several awards in recognition of its success in digital banking solutions and retail banking, including the "Best Islamic Digital Bank" award from Global Finance magazine. Zawya

Bull & Bears
PSX 100-Share
Index Fluctuation

Pakistan: PSX 100-Share Index		
Current	Prev. Close	
42,237.91	42,756.04	
Day's High	Day's Low:	
42,822.77	42,132.98	
Index Value	Change	
4,201,502,632	- 518.13	
Percentage	Time	
-1.21%	2 Jun, 2022 5:00 pm	
Europe: FTSE 100 Index		
Index Value	Change	
7,532.95	- 74.71	
Percentage	Time	
-0.98%	1 Jun, 4:35 pm GMT+1	
USA: Dow Jones Industrial Average		
Index Value	Change	
32,813.23	0.00	
Percentage	Time	
0.00%	1 Jun, 4:57 pm GMT-4	
Asia Pacific: Nikkei Stocks Average		
Index Value	Change	
27,413.88	-44.01	
Percentage	Time	
-0.16%	2 Jun, 3:15 pm GMT+9	
Open Market Forex Rates		
Currency	Buying	Selling
Australian Dollar	140.4	141.65
Bahrain Dinar	527.34	531.84
Canadian Dollar	156.84	158.19
China Yuan	25	25.25
Danish Krone	28.6	28.95
Euro	207.5	209.5
Hong Kong Dollar	25.27	25.62
Indian Rupee	2.55	2.63
Japanese Yen	1.44	1.48
Kuwaiti Dinar	647.67	652.67
Malaysian Ringgit	45.28	45.73
New Zealand \$	129.24	130.44
Norwegians Krone	21.18	21.48
Omani Riyal	515.68	520.18
Qatari Riyal	54.47	54.97
Saudi Riyal	51.9	52.5
Singapore Dollar	144.77	146.07
Swedish Korona	20.31	20.61
Swiss Franc	207.17	208.92
Thai Bhat	5.78	5.88
U.A.E Dirham	53.2	53.8
UK Pound Sterling	243.5	245.5
US Dollar	196.4	198.5

PSDP volume likely upto Rs 700b in budget 2022-23: Ahsan Iqbal

Planning Minister says efforts will be made to raise upto Rs200b more through public-private partnership

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal on Thursday said that the volume of the Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) is likely upto Rs 700 billion in Budget (2022-23), which will increase more development opportunities in the country.

At the same time, he said that efforts will be made to raise upto Rs 200 billion more through public-private partnership, which will accelerate development projects.

Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal expressed these views while addressing a press conference here at the Press and Information Department.

He said that in a total, 44 percent of PSDP projects are provincial projects and the remaining 46 percent are federal projects. "We have ample opportunities," Ahsan said. "We had taken PSDP to Rs.1000 billion during previous tenure of PML-N government. However, former Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf government had brought to Rs. 500 billion, which till now it wanted to reach Rs. 2000



billion." He said the government will work mostly on youth issues and water scarcity and other issues, which are very important for the sustainable economic development of the country.

The minister said that there was no work on the projects of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in the previous regime, but only a

few of these projects started during our tenure.

He said that work on 9 Special Economic Zones (SEZs) of CPEC was to be completed by 2020 but not a single SEZ was completed by the PTI government.

Ahsan said that Chinese industrial relocation was possible only with the completion of these 9 CPEC SEZs, which did not happen.

He said that the Chinese government was more interested in the Hattar Special Economic Zone (SEZ) project, but the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) provincial government decided to transfer the project to Rashakai SEZ.

"Now the government is trying to include Hattar SEZ also." The minister said that the PML-N government strongly condemns the anti-Pakistan statement of former Prime Minister Imran Khan.

He said that the security of the country is the first responsibility of the state in which no negligence will be tolerated.

He said no one would be allowed to speak on other sensitive issues, including the country's nuclear program.

He said that the former Prime Minister Imran Khan should not be embarrassed to say such things as he has been ousted from the government and he should show political seriousness.

He said that in the past, the government of PTI had led the country towards an economic crisis which the present government was trying to rectify. Agencies

SMEDA CEO, Deputy Governor SBP discuss SME Financing

Bureau Report

LAHORE: Hashim Raza, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA), in a meeting with Ms. Sima Kamil, Deputy Governor State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) today, discussed modalities of the special initiatives proposed in the SME Policy for enhancing SMEs' access to finance. The meeting was also attended by other senior SBP officials.

Deputy Governor SBP said that SME sector is priority of the SBP, which has also been reflected in the recent SME financing schemes of the bank. She assured to extend the fullest cooperation in further improving the access to finance for SMEs. The initiatives introduced in the new SME policy in this regard would be looked after carefully, she added.

CEO SMEDA Hashim Raza, while expressing his views on this occasion, highly applauded SBP's efforts to help promote SME financing through banking industry. He acknowledged that the SBP's conducive policies towards SME financing had encouraged SMEs to approach formal sector for meeting their financing needs. However, he said that the space for further



ease for the SME financing is required in banking industry.

It is notable that the annual borrowings of the SMEs stands at Rs.450 billion, which is only 6.5 percent of the total loans. The government borrowing is 55 per cent

to 65 per cent and the remaining share is captured by the corporate, auto and housing sectors. The SME financing, in this scenario, falls at the lowest end and has a room for another chunk of about Rs.900 billion loans from the formal credit market.

PMIC, GrowTech Services partner to enhance crop yields

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Microfinance Investment Company (PMIC) and GrowTech Services Ltd. have signed the agreement for the Technical Assistance Grant under PMIC's Challenge Fund launched in January 2022. GrowTech Services Ltd. was selected through a competitive and transparent. Under the first round of Challenge Fund the thematic area "Accelerating access to finance and increasing income of small farmers" would help 1,000 small farmers receive crop related information through extension services. Satellite imagery, soil testing, efficient water, fertilizer and pesticide usage, linkages with input providers and facilitating farmers in crop sales as well as provision of financial services are part

of the package offered by GrowTech to farmers on a sustainable basis. These interventions would ultimately result in lower input costs, increased crop yield, positive environmental impact, and higher incomes of the farmers.

Speaking on the occasion, Yasir Ashfaq, CEO of PMIC iterated PMIC's commitment to financial inclusion and social impact in the country and Challenge Fund is part of the strategy to build new institutions and models that would accelerate access to finance to the underserved segments of the country. He said that the upon successful implementation of the pilot, the model will be replicated across the country to improve crop yield, lower input costs, and improve the incomes and livelihoods of small farmers.

TowerCos to drive economic growth across emerging markets

Study by edotco and Roland Berger finds

Spokesman Report

KUALA LUMPUR: edotco Group, a leading integrated telecommunications infrastructure services company in Asia, launched a study in collaboration with Roland Berger titled, "Towering Above: Building Tomorrow's Digital Infrastructure in Asia". The study estimates that Tower Companies (TowerCos) can help Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) save up to US\$10 billion through infrastructure sharing and result in cumulative savings of up to US\$67 billion for consumers due to affordable 5G connectivity by 2025. Further, the study also shows that TowerCos can enable sustainable digital connectivity by reducing up to 17 million metric tonnes in carbon footprint by 2025.

The report, launched during a panel discussion featuring edotco, Roland Berger and the International Finance Corporation (IFC), explores the critical roles and potential impact of TowerCos across nine key Asian markets - Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Bangladesh, Pakistan, the Philippines, Myanmar, Cambodia and Sri Lanka.

The report also demonstrates how TowerCos are stimulating sustainable digital connectivity to realise incremental socio-economic benefits for industries, societies and governments, in addition to assessing how key policies and regulatory reform recommendations can unlock such opportunities.

According to the report, digital infrastructure is becoming a critical digital economy enabler, with 5G expected to transform the industry. TowerCos are now transforming their roles to become digital infrastructure providers, in addition to working closely with industry stakeholders to undertake deeper forms of active infrastructure sharing. Not only are these services critical to stimulate development during the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, but such partnerships are also crucial for preparing economies for the 5G era - an age that will further revolutionise network usage and unlock new opportunities while easing the MNOs' investment and deployment challenges.

"While MNOs are rapidly expanding their network in low Average Revenue Per User (ARPU) markets such as Asia, they

face a significant challenge in keeping their cost per GB under control while striving to meet the industry demands and adhering to regulators' intended policy and regulatory outcomes. These can only be addressed sustainably through a higher degree of infrastructure sharing," said Gayan Koralage, Director of Group Strategy, edotco Group.

The report also noted that - despite Southeast Asia and South Asia being among the fastest-growing sub-regions in terms of average data usage per user - MNOs have not been able to capitalise on the traffic trend. This is causing the continuous decline in ARPU, making it challenging for MNOs to generate returns that commensurate with their cost of capital.

"In overcoming the MNOs' investment conundrums, solutions based on software-defined networking and a stronger partnership with next-generation TowerCos can foster greater scalability, speed and cost advantages. Such partnerships are rapidly unfolding in developed markets, showcasing the TowerCos' emerging catalytic roles in business, society and the environment," he added.

TECNO becomes 4th most selling smartphone brands of 2021

Staff Reporter

LAHORE: The leading smartphone brand, TECNO ranks fourth in 2021 in terms of units sold. Camon 18 became one of the most selling phones of the last quarter entitling TECNO to be the Fourth "Most Selling Smartphone Brand of 2021".

TECNO has recently won the title of "Fastest Growing Brand of the Year Awards 2021" with the hot seller Camon 18 series. The series received such an amazing response from the consumer due to its stylish design, exceptional photography, and camera features.

By adhering to its core strategy of "think globally, act locally" (Glocal), TECNO has reached millions of users worldwide, expanding the business to more than 70 countries and regions.

Kelvin Zeng, CEO of TECNO Mobile Pakistan



expressed his joy on this occasion,

"We are overjoyed with the back-to-back success of TECNO phones. We sold thousands of units of Camon 18 phones in a very short time, outdoing many expectations. We are overwhelmed by the appreciation and love we have received from our Pakistani consumers. We are now working on our Camon 19 series which will be launched very soon in Pakistan."

The most awaited Camon 19 series has already bagged the prestigious "MUSE Design" Award for its outstanding design. The series is expected to soon be launch in Pakistan.

Country's flawed economic model will not last long

The country's system is serving elite, says President of PEW

Staff Reporter

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) on Thursday said the governance and economic model of the country is a combination of flaws and contradictions which will not last long.

The present governance system is broken and it is the mother of all ills, therefore it should be changed, it said.

There is no concept of economic justice in Pakistan which is constantly weakening the coun-

try, said Dr. Murtaza Mughal, President of PEW.

In a statement issued here today, he said that investment in sectors like education and health is very low in the country, while not a single social sector is performing.

He said that persistent debts, weak governance, absence of political stability, unsatisfactory law and order situation, a crumbling justice system, ineffective tax system, corruption and poor

accountability have plagued the country.

Dr. Murtaza Mughal said that the foundations of the country are shaking, calling for urgent drastic measures to save it. He said that the system is serving the elite and their power and resources are increasing rapidly while the life of a commoner has become a living hell.

The system is protecting the elite, and the country is being run in a way for decades, which

is resulting in brain drain and flight of the capital.

Many industries have also shifted to other countries while investors are not willing to invest in Pakistan despite matchless tax benefits. He said that as long as important matters in the country are under the full control of unrelated persons, there will be no rule of law.

Justice and accountability system can deliver when the institutions are allowed to be independent, otherwise, the country will have no future, he warned.

Gold prices up by Rs1300 to Rs.138,600 per tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold witnessed an increase of Rs.1300 per tola and was sold at Rs.138,600 on Thursday against its sale at Rs.137,300 the previous day in the local market.

The price of 10 gram 24 karat and 22 karat gold also increased by Rs.1112 and was sold at Rs.118,827 as compared to Rs.117,713 whereas that of ten gram gold increased to Rs.108,925 compared to its sale at Rs.107,903, All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.



The price of per tola and ten gram silver remained stagnant at Rs.1570 and Rs.1,346 respectively.

The price of gold in international market increased by \$25 and was traded at \$1856 compared to its sale at \$1831, the association reported. Agencies

Google introduces 'Umang Pakistan'

To support mental health crises

Spokesman Report

KARACHI: Google on Wednesday launched a suicide hotline one box for Pakistan. This feature enables users to connect quickly with a suicide helpline at the top of the Search results page. Anyone in Pakistan searching for suicide-related queries such as "suicide support", "how can I commit suicide" will now be shown the 'Umang Pakistan' helpline.

Recognized by the WHO, Umang is a mental health helpline that offers support to vulnerable Pakistanis ideating or planning suicide.

This partnership between Umang and Google aims to help tackle the rising issue of suicides in Pakistan. According to WHO estimates, there are around 130k to 270k cases of attempted suicide in Pakistan each year. Meanwhile, Search interest in mental health issues has been on the rise. Topics such as "anxiety", "depression" and "suicide" all peaked in the 2020-21 period in the country, according to Google Trends.

Farhan Qureshi, Regional Director, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, at Google shared "As we see from Trends, Pakistanis are looking for answers about their mental health. We understand time is of the essence when searching for help, especially for those who may be facing suicidal thoughts. We hope that this feature aids vulnerable users in finding help in times of need"

Kinza Naeem, Founder & CEO Umang Pakistan also shared "Mental health is the biggest unaddressed problem of our era, specially at a place like Pakistan where more than 40% of the population is suffering from some degree of mental health issues. We are utterly grateful to google for this timely partnership. I am certain that together we will be able to reach out to the maximum number of people in dire need of mental health support and break the taboo around it nation-wide."



Arslan Ash wins another Tekken tournament

Tekken master defeats Gen 3-0 with his signature character Zafina

Spokesman Report

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Tekken prodigy Arslan Ash adds another feather to his now-huge, feathery cap after winning Combo Breaker last Sunday in Chicago, USA. Ash participated and went through the brackets with ease, finally facing the 21-year-old Genki "Gen" Kumisaka from Japan in the grand finals.

The Tekken master defeated Gen 3-0 with his signature character Zafina and was ecstatic about his victory at such a platform.

"I had heard others say it was expected that I would face Gen in the finals and it came true," said Ash. "I had a crazy experience. I had been gaming all the time for the last two weeks and practicing all the time. It paid off so, I'm extremely happy."

He said he was happy to meet all the



players from around the world. "The thing is the players had been studying me

and preparing for me. It's nothing new, we all do. But things are getting difficult now and so, I had to up my game as well. In all, it was a great experience and I'd love to go participate again."

Ash last participated in an international tournament back in December 2021 when he won the CEO 2021 in Florida by defeating a fellow Red Bull esports athlete from North America, Anakin. Ash returned after nearly six months and continued his reign on the top without missing a beat.

The Lahore-based e-athlete first became an overnight sensation when he won EVO Japan and EVO USA consecutively in the same year in 2019. He was then declared the ESPN Esports Player of the Year 2019 and since hasn't looked back, earning victory after victory in Tekken competitions around the world.

West Indies announce blockbuster cricket summer

KINGSTON: Cricket West Indies announced an action-packed summer of cricket at home.

The Windies are set to play two Tests, nine ODIs and 11 T20Is at home between June and August where they will host Bangladesh, India and New Zealand in the Caribbean Islands as well as the United States of America.

Bangladesh will be the first team to arrive on the Caribbean shores, where they will play two Tests, three T20Is and as many ODIs. The tour will begin with two Tests in Antigua and St Lucia before the white-ball action starts in Dominica and Guyana.

The two Tests against Bangladesh will be a part of the current ICC World Test Championship cycle,

where West Indies are placed seventh with a point percentage of 35.71. The Tigers are a spot below with 16.67%.

Six days after the conclusion of the Bangladesh series on 16 July, India's white-ball tour will commence, starting with three ODIs from 22 to 27 July at the Queen's Park Oval in Trinidad and Tobago. The first T20I will be played in Trinidad, followed by two in St Kitts and the remaining two in Broward County Cricket Stadium in Lauderdale, Florida.

The scintillating summer of cricket will conclude with three T20Is and three ODIs against New Zealand between 10 to 21 August. The Black Caps were originally set to visit the Caribbean in 2020 but the tour had to be rescheduled due

to COVID-19.

The ODIs against Bangladesh, India and West Indies will be a part of the ICC Cricket World Cup Super League, which will help determine the seven spots (India gain direct entry as hosts) for the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup next year.

West Indies are currently 10th in the CWCSL standings with 60 points in 16 games. The remaining two games in the ongoing series against the Netherlands, as well as the nine ODIs in the summer, give them an opportunity to rise up the table and secure automatic qualification for the World Cup under the new leadership of Nicholas Pooran.

"We are delighted to announce the match schedule for the men's international

calendar at home for the rest of the year," said Johnny Grave, CEO of CWI. "We know our supporters will be delighted with the news that the matches are being played all across the region as well as those living in the USA will be able to see their favourite players in action."

"The upcoming summer is expected to feature 30 days of top-quality entertainment for our fans as we look ahead to hosting three teams of differing styles in all three formats, which will surely whet the appetite. We are mindful that COVID-19 is still present, and we again want to thank the various Governments and other stakeholders who have worked with us to ensure the matches will be played in a safe environment."

Celtics reach first Finals since 2010



SAN FRANCISCO: With star defender Marcus Smart as a vocal leader plus scoring spark from Jaylen Brown and Jayson Tatum, the Boston Celtics have reached their first NBA Finals since 2010.

The trio of 20-something stars united to lift the Celtics from a 23-25 start into a best-of-seven showdown for the crown against Golden State that starts Thursday.

"We all just got comfortable with each other through experience," Brown said Wednesday. "We've been playing together so long. So you learn each other's tendencies and traits and how to speak to each other and how to basically just be a better teammate."

Brown, 25, was taken third overall by Boston in the 2016 NBA Draft while Tatum, 24, was picked third in the 2017 draft and guard Smart, 28, was selected sixth in the 2014 draft.

Together they advanced as far as the Eastern Conference finals three times in four seasons before finally reaching the NBA Finals this season, Smart winning the NBA Defensive Player of the Year award and serving as an outspoken leader.

"Over time, you learn, you make mistakes, you argue, you fuss, you fight," Brown said. "But once you've been together for so long with a core group, and you've been in the Celtics organization as long as Smart has been, you find different ways to be an example."

Smart notably called out Tatum and Brown early in the season, but his example has helped the two top scorers to find their own voice in the locker room as well as showing off their skills on the court.

"Marcus is emotional as a player in the things he says and the way he plays and wears it on his sleeve," Celtics coach Ime Udoka said.

"Nothing said publicly had not been said privately. Although it may rub people wrong because it was said publicly, that was something we were working on behind the scenes every day.

"Marcus, as well as the others, their leadership and being vocal has been invaluable to the group. Jayson and Jaylen have grown in that area and do it their own way. That mix of leadership and different styles benefits our team."

Ukraine beat Scotland to keep World Cup dream alive

GLASGOW: Ukraine manager Oleksandr Petrakov dedicated his side's 3-1 win over Scotland to reach a World Cup play-off final to the trenches of his war-torn homeland.

In their first competitive match since Ukraine was invaded by Russia, Andriy Yarmolenko, Roman Yaremchuk and Artem Dovbyk scored the goals to set up a clash away to Wales on Sunday for a place in Qatar later this year.

"This victory was not for me or for the team members, it was for our country. This was a huge victory for Ukraine," said Petrakov.

"They did everything for the people they play for, the Ukrainians.

"For the people watching them back home: the armed forces in the trenches, the people working in the hospitals. They say thank you to us and we say thank you to them."

The match had been



moved from March, just weeks after the war began, to give Ukraine the chance to fulfil the fixture.

Six of the starting lineup for the visitors are still contracted to Ukrainian clubs and had not played competitively for months.

Manchester City's Oleksandr Zinchenko broke down in tears on the eve of the game as he described how much it would mean to take Ukraine to the World Cup.

But led by the exceptional Zinchenko, they showed no signs of rust or letting the expectation of a nation

weigh heavily on their shoulders.

"We played for those who fight in trenches, who fight with their last drop of blood. We played for Ukrainians who suffer every day," added Petrakov.

"We still have the Wales game in front of us. We will do everything to make Ukrainians proud."

The Ukrainian players entered the field draped in yellow and blue flags before an emotionally-charged national anthem which was applauded from all sides of the stadium.

Among the Ukrainian

support, children held up signs saying "stop war."

However, once the action got underway, it was the small band of travelling supporters who had far more to cheer.

Scotland goalkeeper Craig Gordon kept his side in the game early on with stunning saves to deny Viktor Tsygankov and Yarmolenko.

Ukraine's greater poise and technical ability soon told, though, as from Ruslan Malinovskyi's through ball, Yarmolenko's perfect control allowed him to lob the onrushing Gordon to make it 1-0 just after the half-hour mark.

Scotland had been unbeaten in eight games, but rarely threatened a response to keep alive their hopes of reaching a first World Cup since 1998.

"Unfortunately, it's passed us by," said Scotland captain Andy Robertson. "After a really positive campaign, we've let ourselves down tonight."

Messi stars as Argentina beat Italy

LONDON: Lionel Messi stole the show as Copa America holders Argentina powered to a 3-0 win against European champions Italy in the Finalissima at Wembley on Wednesday.

Inspired by the peerless Messi, Argentina raced into a two-goal lead in the first half of the prestigious friendly thanks to strikes from Lautaro Martinez and Angel Di Maria.

Paulo Dybala capped Argentina's rout, but after a disappointing season with Paris Saint-Germain by his sky-high standards, it was the sight of Messi back to his imperious best that took the spotlight.

The 34-year-old's eye-catching display featured two assists and was worthy of his rare appearance at one of football's great cathedrals.

Thrown into the air by his jubila

nt team-mates after the final whistle, Messi said: "Today was a nice test because Italy are a great team. We knew it was going to be a nice game and a nice setting in which to be champions.

"It was a beautiful final, full of Argentinians. What we experienced here was beautiful."

It was another memorable moment for Argentina, who have qualified for this year's World Cup as they extend the golden glow from the victory over Brazil that ended their 28-year wait to win the Copa America in 2021.

Argentina were already established as one of the leading contenders to win the World Cup and defeating Italy was another statement of intent from La Albiceleste, who are now unbeaten in 32 matches.

If Messi can play at this level in Qatar, Lionel Scaloni's side will

be a force to be reckoned with as they chase a first World Cup title since 1986.

"Everything changed after the Copa America. Now we are enjoying ourselves and things are happening much more easily. We are excited but must keep our feet on the ground," Di Maria said.

For Italy, it was a disappointing return to Wembley 11 months after they beat England on penalties in the Euro 2020 final.

Roberto Mancini's team have gone into a steep decline since that triumph.

They failed to qualify for the World Cup after suffering a humiliating loss to North Macedonia in their play-off semi-final.

After the World Cup failure, Mancini is transitioning to a younger generation, with the forthcoming Nations League matches against Germany,

England and Hungary his real focus.

Mancini's overhaul effectively started at half-time when Italy said farewell to 117-cap skipper Giorgio Chiellini, who was substituted in his final game before international retirement.

"They were better than us. We were in the game in the first half but didn't do enough to turn it around after the break," Mancini said.

This was only the third Finalissima contest between the respective champions of Europe and South America and the first since Diego Maradona's Argentina beat Denmark in 1993.

Fittingly, Messi — the heir to the legendary Maradona — used the occasion to remind the world of his astonishing talents.

The 87,000 sell-out crowd created a colourful backdrop for



Messi's mastery, with Argentina's raucous fans turning the north London suburb of Brent into Buenos Aires for one ear-splitting evening.

Every touch from Messi lifted the decibel levels and he played a

Malinga returns to Sri Lanka in coaching capacity



COLOMBO: Lasith Malinga, the former Sri Lanka captain and legendary pacer, has been appointed the side's Bowling Strategy Coach for the white-ball leg of their home series against Australia next week.

Malinga's remit is to provide "tactical insight and technical expertise to help the on-field execution of strategic plans."

It's a role Malinga has occupied previously when Sri Lanka visited Australia in February for a T20I series. Sri Lanka suffered a 4-1 loss in that five-match series, although their bowlers impressed, with the Australian batters restricted to a high total of 164/6 across the five matches.

"Sri Lanka Cricket is confident that Malinga's vast experience and renowned death-bowling expertise, especially in the T20 format, will help the team immensely going into this all-important series," the SLC statement said.

Sri Lanka on Thursday named an 18-member squad for the upcoming T20Is, which included maiden call-ups for the young pair of Nuwanidu Fernando, the top-order batter, and Matheesha Pathirana, the right-arm pacer.

The three-match series is set to begin on 7 June in Colombo.

Argentina to prepare in Abu Dhabi

PARIS: Argentina will be based in Abu Dhabi as they prepare for this year's World Cup finals in Qatar after the Argentina Football Association (AFA) entered into a strategic cooperation agreement with Abu Dhabi Sports Council (ADSC).

The two-time World Cup winners will play friendlies in Abu Dhabi as part of their preparations for what is likely to be superstar Lionel Messi's final chance to win the trophy — he will be 35 by the time the tournament kicks off.

Messi came closest to lifting it when Argentina lost to Germany in the 2014 final in Brazil.

"After months of joint-work exchanges, ADSC together with the AFA, a long-term agreement has been consolidated," read a statement by the ADSC.

Abu Dhabi will host the Argentine national team preparing camp for the 2022 World Cup, which will include friendly matches in November.

"As part of Argentina's collaboration with the UAE, the SuperCopa Argentina finals will be played for four consecutive years in Abu Dhabi starting from this January 2023 until the year 2026.

"The Argentine Football Association thus becomes the first federation in Latin America to export a high global impact sporting event to the Middle East region."

Argentina have been drawn in Group C opening their campaign against Saudi Arabia on November 22 before facing Mexico (November 26) and rounding off their group matches against Poland November 30).

The quadrennial global football showcase gets underway on November 21 and runs till December 18.

Pak archery squad announced for European Cup

ISLAMABAD: A four-member Pakistan blind archery squad will represent the country at European Cup and World Ranking Event, penciled in for July 1-10 at Nove Mesto Czech Republic.

"The head of Para Archery Committee Shah Manzar Fareed, working under Pakistan Archery Federation has announced the squad," said a statement on Thursday.

The team includes Tanveer Ahmed (VI-2/3 archer), Waleed Aziz (VI-1 archer), Muhammad Ijaz (coach) and Syed Junaid Raza Shah (manager), which will leave on July 1 from Islamabad International Airport.

Tanveer Ahmed is the current World No. 2 in world blind archery rankings. He won silver medal in World Championship in February 2022 in Dubai.

Pakistan stun Thailand to qualify for Asian Rugby Div-1

Tahir Amin Malik

LAHORE: Pakistan rugby team qualified for Div-1 stage after a thrilling victory against the visiting Thailand team. Pakistan defeated the strong Thailand rugby team by 24-18 in the second match of the Asia Rugby Div-II Championship 2022 at Punjab Stadium on Wednesday night.

After losing the first game by 20-15, Pakistan team bounced back strongly and won the 2nd match by 24-18 points winning the series by 39-38 and qualified for the Asia Rugby Div-1 for the first time in their playing history.

Thailand fought hard in this encounter, but it was Pakistan team, which emerged the winner in the dying moments of the match. A large crowd including families and children witnessed and enjoyed the match.

Asian Rugby President Qais Abdullah, DG Sports Punjab Javed Chohan, Pakistan Rugby Union President Arif Saeed, Chairman Fawzi Khawaja, Secretary Salman Shaikh, Asia Rugby Chief Executive Johny Stavrinou, Tournament Director Ghaith Jalalaj and other top officials also witnessed the nail-biting encounter.

applied the finishing touch from close-range.

In first half stoppage-time, Martinez drove forward with bullish tenacity and slipped a perfectly weighted pass to Di Maria, with the PSG forward clipping a cool finish over Donnarumma.

Di Maria almost struck again on the hour, but his curler was brilliantly tipped over by Donnarumma as it fizzed towards the far corner. Messi was unstoppable, robbing Jorginho and embarking on a mesmerising run that finished with a save from Donnarumma.

Messi's name echoed around the stands as Argentina's fans paid tribute to their idol's latest masterpiece.

Dybala's clinical strike in stoppage-time came via a deft Messi pass as the maestro provided one final flourish.