



# Islamabad POST

Friday, August 18, 2023

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**Iran FM in Riyadh for first Saudi visit since normalization**

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**China ready to boost co-op with South Asia**

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**Manchester City still hungry to win titles**

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## Delimitation schedule Elections certain to be delayed

Entire process of delimitation will take nearly four months: ECP

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Thursday announced the schedule of new delimitations to be carried out as per the new census approved by the Council of Common Interest (CCI) earlier this month. As per the schedule, the new delimitation of the constituencies across the country will be notified in December this year. The ECP schedule showed that fresh delimitation will take nearly four months, meaning the general elections in the country cannot be held within 90 days of the dissolution of the provincial and national assemblies. The ECP said delimitation of the constituencies will be held across the country from September 8 to October 7. It said the proposals regarding constituencies will be submitted from October 10 to November 8. The quota of constituencies of the national and provincial assemblies will be allocated from September 5 to September 7, the electoral body said. It added that the administrative matters related to the constituencies will be completed by August 31 while constituency committees of four provinces including Islamabad will be established by August 21. The electoral body said it will decide on the objections to the constituencies from November 10 to December 9, adding that the final publication of the digital census has been completed. As per the Election Act, the ECP is bound to draw new boundaries for hundreds of provincial and national assembly constituencies across the country, the statement added. Earlier this month, the CCI meeting chaired by then prime minister Shehbaz Sharif approved the final results of the 7th Population and Housing Census 2023 reporting the country's population at 241.49 million with a growth rate of 2.55%.

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## Caretaker PM vows free & fair elections

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar says the caretaker government will assiduously work to facilitate a free and fair election in the country. In a tweet, he thanked the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken for his good wishes. The caretaker Prime Minister said the government places importance on partnership with the United States and deeply values the shared commitment to economic prosperity, democracy and stability in the region. Earlier, the US Secretary of State, in a tweet, congratulated Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on assuming the office of Caretaker Prime Minister. Meanwhile, Caretaker Prime Minister has said Special Investment Facilitation Council will play a pivotal role in revamping country's economy. He was chairing a briefing in Islamabad on Thursday regarding the SIFC to bolster Foreign Direct Investment in the country. The Prime Minister said there is immense potential for foreign investment in tourism and infrastructure projects and special attention will also be given to the development of these sectors under the umbrella of SIFC. The Prime Minister said there is huge potential for foreign investment in the sectors of agriculture, mining and minerals, IT, energy and defense production.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi administers oath to members of caretaker federal cabinet. – DNA

## Syrus Qazi assumes charge as new Foreign Secretary

Ambassador Qazi brings with him an extensive experience



ANSAR BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador Muhammad Syrus Sajjad Qazi Thursday assumed the responsibilities as the 32nd Foreign Secretary of Pakistan. He has replaced Ambassador Asad Majeed Khan who retired from the government service upon attaining superannuation. Ambassador Qazi brings with him an extensive experience in bilateral and multilateral diplomacy with postings in India, the United States, and the United Nations in Geneva. He served as Ambassador of Pakistan to Hungary from 2015 to 2017 and to Türkiye from 2017 to 2022. Following the announcement, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs Ali Bagheri congratulated Qazi and wished him success in the "heavy responsibility you have taken on at this time."

"Pakistan is our friendly and brotherly neighbour, and I am happy to work closely with you," the Iranian official had added. In response, Qazi thanked Bagheri for the "warm felicitations" and reciprocated the desire to work closely in "further strengthening the close brotherly relations" between the two countries.

## 24 ministers and advisers Interim PM Kakar's cabinet takes oath

Jalil Abbas Jilani, Shamshad Akhtar, Sarfaraz Bugti among members sworn in; Poet Wasi Shah gets tourism ministry; senior journalist Murtaza Solangi get Information Ministry

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: President Arif Alvi on Thursday administered oath to members of newly appointed caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar's cabinet. The oath-taking ceremony began with the recitation of the Holy Quran at the President House in Islamabad, which was attended by Kakar, Punjab interim Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi and others. According to a list of cabinet members issued by the Presidency, 16 federal ministers took oath while the interim PM has also appointed three advisers.

**Federal ministers**  
Senator Sarfaraz Ahmed Bugti – Interior/ Overseas Pakistanis/ NARCO  
Jalil Abbas Jilani – Foreign Affairs  
Shamshad Akhtar – Finance and Revenue / Economic Affairs / Statistics/ Privatization  
Lt General (ret'd) Anwar Ali Hyder – Defence / Defence Production/ Aviation  
Murtaza Solangi – Information and Broadcasting  
Sami Saeed – Planning Development  
Shahid Ashraf Tarar – Communication (Railways/ Postal Services/ Ports/ Maritime Affairs)

Continued on Page 06

## Sindh Interim CM takes oath

STAFF REPORT

KARACHI: Sindh Governor Kamran Tessori on Thursday administered oath to Caretaker Chief Minister Justice (ret'd) Maqbool Baqar. Outgoing CM Murad Ali Shah and his cabinet members were also present at the oath-taking ceremony. Before attending the oath-taking ceremony, the former chief minister was given a guard of honour as he was leaving the provincial chief executive's residence. Earlier this week, after days of deliberation about who will be the next interim Sindh chief minister, the ruling Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) in the province and leader of the opposition of the dissolved assembly Rana Ansar, representing the Mutahidda Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P), had agreed on naming Justice (ret'd) Baqar for the post.

## Briefs US urges probe into church attacks

DNA

WASHINGTON: The United States called on Pakistan to probe the mob attacks against churches and Christian homes that broke out in Faisalabad's Jaranwala amid blasphemy rumors. Hundreds of men attacked a predominantly Christian area on the outskirts of the industrial city earlier in the day after allegations spread that the Holy Quran had been desecrated. "We are deeply concerned that churches and homes were targeted in response to reported Quran desecration in Pakistan," State Department spokesman Vedant Patel told reporters. He said that while the United States backed free expression, "violence or the threat of violence is never an acceptable form of expression." "We urge Pakistani authorities to conduct a full investigation into these allegations and call for calm," he said.

## Jaranwala incident COAS vows to bring culprits to justice

Says there is no space for such incidents of intolerance and extreme behaviour



DNA

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir on Thursday termed the Jaranwala incident "extremely tragic and totally intolerable", the military said in a statement. A day earlier, a mob vandalised and torched several churches and scores of houses after two men living there were accused of desecrating the Holy Quran, police and witnesses said.

"There is no space for such incidents of intolerance and extreme behaviour by any segment of the society against anyone, particularly against minorities," the COAS was quoted as saying by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR). He said this while addressing the participants of the yearly ISPR Internship Programme being attended by over 370 students from various universities across Pakistan. Gen Munir said that

Continued on Page 06

## Pakistan delegation pays visit to Afghanistan over border issues

They also demanded expediting visa issuance process and suggestion was also presented to constitute a liaison committee like that one formed in Ministry of Commerce for resolution of issues on early basis

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

PESHAWAR: A delegation of Pakistan Thursday paid a day long visit to Afghanistan for attending border committee meeting held regularly on fortnight basis for improving effective liaison and coordination for smooth operation of bilateral and transit trade on both sides of the border. The fifteen-member delegation was headed by Director Transit Customs Department, Arbab Qaiser Hameed. Additional Director Transit Trade, Shams Wazir, Additional Collector Appraisal, Muhammad Rizwan, Deputy Collector Appraisal, Mohib Khan and Director Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi were also part of

the delegation. Raees Gumrak (Customs) Nangarhar Province, Haji Fazle Hadi received the delegation on arrival at Afghanistan. The participants of the meeting discussed different issues including pendency in clearance of goods and presented different suggestion for resolution of problems. Speaking on the occasion, Director PAJCCI, Zia ul Haq Sarhadi demanded taking stake holders into confidence on 2010 agreement of Transit Trade which is facing delay in implementation. He demanded to make new Transit Trade Agreement of 2010 operational at the earliest otherwise business community will face a lot of problems. Zia demanded provision of loose cargo transportation in train which is not allowed. Transportation of containers on truck is very expen-

sive and putting extra financial burden on businessmen, he added. He appreciated holding of flag meeting at border which not only allows stakeholders of Afghan transit trade to meet but also share problems and hurdles they face in smooth sailing of transit trade. The representative from Afghan side demanded increase in permission to number of attendants with patients. They said only one attendant is allowed with the patient and government should allow a couple of more blood relations to arrive and give due time to the patient. They also demanded expediting visa issuance process and suggestion was also presented to constitute a liaison committee like that one formed in

Continued on Page 06

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## Jl to hold APC on merged districts' rights

PESHAWAR: Jamaat-e-Islami has announced that an all-party conference will be held on August 29 to address the rights of the merged districts in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Addressing a press conference here Thursday, Amir of Jamaat-e-Islami Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Professor Ibrahim expressed concern over unfulfilled promises of rights, construction, and development for the people of the former tribal areas. The conference will extend invitations to the central leadership of political parties within the province, he told. He highlighted that a previous conference was organized in May, focusing on the issues of merged districts. He demanded the restoration of 12 National Assembly seats for the merged districts and the resolution of objections to the tribal districts' census. He said that the commitment of allocating 100 billion rupees annually for the construction and development of the merged districts was not fulfilled.—APP

## StormFiber unveils fast internet service in Swat

DNA

PESHAWAR: StormFiber, a well-known fiber-broadband company has unveiled that it has expanded to the beautiful city of Swat, the very heart of Pakistan, celebrated for its unmatched natural beauty and cultural opulence. Often referred to as the "Switzerland of Pakistan," Swat now proudly joins StormFiber's digital network, becoming the 23rd city to benefit from its advanced connectivity. Achieving the milestone of deploying 100% fiber-optic internet coverage across the mountainous expanse of Swat, StormFiber has honored its commitment to facilitating a nationwide digital transformation. The quality broadband would effectively become a lifeline for Swat's influencers, entrepreneurs and talents, enabling them to bridge the gap to global opportunities. This modern gateway also holds the potential to redefine education, industry, and tourism for the region's residents. Fawad Yousaf Laher, the Managing Director of StormFiber, has conveyed the profound vision behind this move, saying "The diverse landscapes and rich culture of Pakistan are treasures deserving global recognition. Our expansion into Swat goes beyond mere infrastructure development; it stands as a symbolic stride to showcase Pakistan's allure on the international stage. Through our ultra-fast broadband services, we empower the local population to emerge as global ambassadors of their magnificent homeland." Maroof Ali Shahani, the Chief Operating Officer of Cyber Internet Services, emphasized the symbolic timing of this launch: "Our expansion into Swat on Independence Day perfectly aligns with our mission to enhance Pakistan's global image, particularly in the realm of tourism, through unparalleled broadband services." Sources suggest that StormFiber's ambitious expansion drive is expected to maintain its momentum throughout the year. As a result, the digital future of Pakistan appears more promising than ever before.

# Denmark can help Pak in many sectors of its economy

DNA

ISLAMABAD: H.E. Jakob Linulf, Ambassador of Denmark said that his country can help Pakistan in many sectors of its economy including renewable energy, climate change, agriculture and water management as Denmark has world's leading solutions in these areas. He said that Pakistan is a huge market and he is striving to promote more Danish exports and investment to Pakistan. He said this while talking to a delegation of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry at his residence that called on him led by Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President ICCI. Zafar Bakhtawari, former President ICCI and Secretary General UBG and Ameer Hamza Executive Member ICCI were in the delegation. Commercial Incharge of Denmark Embassy Aslam Pervaiz and Commercial Advisor Dania Basit were also present on the occasion.

The Danish Envoy said that trade drives nations forward and further increase in bilateral trade

to become a climate change resilient country. He also discussed many other areas that offer good

President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) said that bilateral trade between

between the private sectors of both countries should be the way forward to explore new areas of bilateral cooperation. He said that to achieve this goal, both countries should encourage regular exchange of trade delegations. He said that many Danish companies are already doing business in Pakistan in pharmaceuticals, logistics, construction and technology sectors and more should come to Pakistan to explore joint ventures and investment in areas of interest. Zafar Bakhtawari, former President ICCI and Secretary General UBG said that the impact of climate change is causing unusually heavy rains and flash floods in Pakistan due to which our economy suffers huge losses as the catastrophic floods in Pakistan in 2022 inflicted more than US\$ 30 billion damages and economic losses. He said that Denmark should cooperate with Pakistan in tackling these enormous challenges. He said that Denmark should explore joint ventures in Pakistan in solar and wind energy.



between Denmark and Pakistan would be very beneficial for both countries. He said that close cooperation of Denmark in the green field would help Pakistan

potential for bilateral cooperation between Denmark and Pakistan to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes. Speaking on the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari,

Pakistan and Denmark is less than US\$ 1 billion, which is much less than the actual potential of both countries. He said that developing close business linkages

## SCCI chief invites Belgium investors to invest in KP's important sectors

PESHAWAR: Acting President of Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI), Ijaz Khan Afridi invited Belgium companies to make investments in mines, minerals and other important sectors in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Prospects of enhancing mutual trade ties between Pakistan and Belgium are brighter, said Ijaz Afridi while speaking to members during a visit of the Ambassador of Belgium in Pakistan, Charles Delogne here at the Chamber's House on Thursday. The SCCI's acting president Commercial Attaché of the Belgium Embassy in Islamabad, Abid Hussain, Trade Officer Shoukat Niaz, Former presidents of the Chambers Zulfiqar Ali Khan, Sherbaz Bilour, former vice president Malik

Niaz Muhammad, members of the executive committee of the SCCI Naem Qasmi, Kashif Amin, Hafaf Ali Khan, Javed Ahmad Khan, Laal Badshah, Monawar Khurshid, Abdul Hakim Shinwari, Qurtul Ain and Ihsanullah, Fazl e Wahid, Sadaq Gul, Faiz Rasool, Ishtiaq Muhammad and others were present during the meeting. The President SCCI called for the establishment of business to business contacts, organizing joint exhibitions and taking benefits from each other's experiences to further strengthen the mutual economic cooperation between the two countries. Charles Delogne while speaking to members of the SCCI said that his country gave much importance to Pakistan to further enhance

the diplomatic and bilateral trade relations with Pakistan, because of which cordial diplomatic and trade relations were established between the two countries for the last 75 years. He said bilateral cooperation has been improved to some extent after granting of GSP+status to Pakistan. However, the envoy stressed the need for further enhancing bilateral trade and economic relations with Pakistan. Mr Delogne mentioned that his country was working on several social and economic uplift projects, including education, health and infrastructure sectors. He praised the resilience of the Pakistani nation for combating natural disasters, floods under the depressing economic conditions. He said

that his country would continue its cooperation in multiple sectors for the economic and social development of Pakistan. On the occasion, the Ambassador assured simplification of the process for issuance of business visa and will remove all hurdles/irritants in this regard. Earlier, the SCCI's former presidents Zulfiqar Ali Khan, Sherbaz Bilour and executive members pointed out various issues that were hampering bilateral trade and economic relations and gave a number of suggestions for their immediate solution. The participants stressed for fully reaping the benefits of GSP+status and further enhancing bilateral relations with Belgium and other European countries.—APP

## PRCS-KP completes distribution of aid after heavy rains in Chitral

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Red Crescent Society Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (PRCS-KP) on Thursday successfully completed the distribution of essential aid to families affected by the recent floods in Chitral District, following heavy rainfall. This assistance was provided to 118 families in various areas of Chitral, including the Kalash Valley. Relief items such as tents, blankets, and family hygiene kits were provided. In this regard, Habib Malik Orakzai, Chairman, Pakistan Red Crescent Society Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, stated that Chitral District is currently facing the effects of natural disasters in both the summer and winter seasons. These adversities have not only affected the region's infrastructure but have also deeply impacted the homes and fields of its residents. Our mission is to assist people in such situations as an Auxiliary body to the Government. However, it's imperative that we also play a role in mitigating the impacts of climate changes emerging in Chitral. During the distribution of relief items, our efforts have been supported by the German Red Cross. At this time, the Pakistan Red Crescent Society Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, in collaboration with the German Red Cross, is working to reduce the effects of climate change and to maintain the safety of local populations during disasters in various areas of Chitral. In this context, it's crucial for other organizations to also support the PRCS. On the other hand, during the relief distribution, Syed Ali Hassan, Secretary, Pakistan Red Crescent Society Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, informed media representatives that the recent heavy rainfall has severely affected Lower and Upper Chitral. Relief operations have been completed in Lower Chitral, but access to some areas in Upper Chitral remains difficult. Work will begin as soon as the roads are cleared.—APP

## EPD seals 18 industrial units, imposes Rs5.2m fine

LAHORE: The Environment Protection Department (EPD) sealed 18 industrial units and imposed over Rs 5.2 million fine besides registering FIRs over pollution during an ongoing drive to control smog. To control smog and air pollution, the EPD has started to take strict action and announced to charge fines on violations of the industrial and traffic rules. The EPD teams raided factories in northern Lahore engaged in burning expired batteries in industrial units and surrounding areas, and sealed units. EPD Director Naseem-ur-Reman told APP that ahead of the winter season, heavy smog and air pollution might create an alarming situation in Punjab and especially in Lahore. Therefore, keeping in view the situation, the EPD was making round-the-clock efforts, he added. Meanwhile, the Punjab government has announced anti-air pollution SOPs to curb pollution in Lahore, Naseem said adding SOPs against air pollution in the city were going below level.—APP

## PHC orders release of PTI workers

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar High Court (PHC) on Thursday ordered the release of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) workers who were arrested under the Maintenance of Public Order (MPO) while staging a protest in Shagla on July 7 against the Holy Quran's desecration in Sweden. Justice Syed Arshad Ali, who heard the pleas of PTI workers against their detention, asked the Additional Advocate General (AAG) to read the contents of the first information report (FIR). The AAG stated that accused were protesting in Shagla against the desecration of Holy Quran. As the protestors also raised slogans in favour of the PTI chairman, which might create a law-and-order situation, he maintained. Justice Ali observed that the protestors remained peaceful throughout.—APP

## "Landmarks of Pak" book by German artist launched at PNCA

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: A book launch was hosted by Mr. Pervaiz Akhtar, President of the German-Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry with support from the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany to celebrate the publication of a book on the drawings by the German artist Ute Elpers, entitled "Landmarks of Pakistan" on 17th August 2023 at the Pakistan National Council of Arts, Islamabad. The Chief Guest at the event was H.E. Mr. Alfred Grannas, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Guest of Honour was Ambassador Shahid Kamal, Former Ambassador of Pakistan to Germany, who initiated and pioneered the compilation of the book. Ute Elpers (1935-2019) was a highly gifted artist trained as a porcelain and ceramic painter who worked as a technical drawer in road and bridge construction. She also learned the art of using special ink pens. In 2005 Ute became member of the Humanity Care Foundation based in Muenster, Germany. She was encouraged by Col (R) FolkerFlasse, President of Humanity Care Foundation, a charitable organization



registered in Germany and Pakistan, to support its humanitarian work in Pakistan. In 2005 Ute started pen and ink drawings of historic buildings, monuments, mausoleums, shrines and landscapes. She portrayed through her pen and ink drawings the rich and diverse architectural and cultural heritage of Pakistan. The book "Landmarks of Pakistan" is dedicated to the memory of Ute Elpers, an artist with a humanistic spirit who helped those affected by natural disasters in Pakistan. Ute donated proceeds from the sale of her artwork to the Human-

ity Care Foundation to help people's suffering in the aftermath of the earthquake and floods that hit Pakistan in 2005 and 2010. Ute gifted 21 of her beautiful filigree ink drawings of landmarks of Pakistan to the Pakistan National Council of Arts (PNCA). Her drawings are a testament of her love for Pakistan. Her endearment towards Pakistan is reflected in a poem she wrote in 2013 titled "My Pakistan". To showcase Ute Elper's beautiful artwork Shahid Kamal, former Ambassador to Germany, Folker-

Flasee and Professor Farrah Mahmood researched and compiled her drawings on landmarks of Pakistan in the form of a coffee table book. The book is a bilingual edition in both English and German. Speaking at the occasion Ambassador of Germany H.E. Alfred Grannas admired the efforts of those involved in the successful compilation and printing of the coffee table book on the drawings of Ute Elpers. He was pleased to see the exhibition of Ute Elpers' beautiful drawings displayed at Pakistan National Council of Arts.

## Commissioner directs DCs to implement dengue action plan

MARDAN: Commissioner Mardan Division Yousaf Rahim Thursday directed the district administration of Mardan and Swabi to ensure strict implementation of the dengue action plan of the provincial government to prevent dengue fever. Addressing the monthly performance review/revenue meeting at his office, he urged the administrative and revenue officers to set monthly targets for achieving government revenue and to make effective strategies to achieve these targets. Additional Commissioner Mardan Naem Akhtar, Deputy Commissioner Mardan Captain (retd) Abdul Rehman, Deputy Commissioner Swabi Gohar Khan, Additional Deputy Commissioners, Assistant Commissioners and AACs of Mardan and Swabi participated in the meeting. Deputy Commissioner Mardan and Swabi gave a detailed briefing to the meeting about the various government targets in both the districts, the data of the achievement of the government revenue, the implementation of the tasks referred by the provincial government and the performance of the administrative officers. Commissioner Mardan Division Yousaf Rahim directed the administrative officers to keep a close watch on the prices of essential commodities and take full action against the elements responsible for the artificial price hike. He directed the Deputy Commissioners to ensure the implementation of the action plan regarding dengue fever in both districts and to monitor the implementation of the SOPs formulated in this regard so that the disease does not become an epidemic. He also emphasized on an effective awareness campaign about dengue. Commissioner Mardan Division also issued necessary instructions for timely payment of financial compensation to the heirs and injured persons of those who died in various accidents during the monsoon rains. The meeting was briefed about the activities going on from the platform of Reading Club and it was told that on the occasion of Independence Day, speech contests were conducted amongst students of schools in Mardan and Swabi and cash prizes were given to the position holders while more activities have been planned from the Reading Club platform after the opening of schools and colleges next month. Commissioner Mardan appreciated the performance of the Reading Club so far and directed that the Reading Club can play an important role in bringing the youth back to book reading and to the libraries. He directed that in this regard, the services of scholars and writers should be utilized in both the districts.—DNA

## Sindh reclaims forest land

MUMTAZ AHMED BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: DFO Khairpur forest division Ziyad Ullah Laghari is an excellent performer. He is known all over the country for his excellent work. He is a hardworking and courageous forest officer due to his work. He increased afforestation, protected forests and reclaimed forest land worth billions of rupees from encroachment by powerful politicians.

He has also worked hard on the Ten Billion Tree Tsunami Program TBTP with wonderful results. In a significant development, Khairpur, the largest district in Sindh, has successfully reclaimed a staggering 11,000 acres of valuable forestland from influential individuals. This monumental achievement comes as a result of determined efforts by DFO Khairpur Ziyad Ullah Laghari, who diligently followed the directives of the Honorable High Court Bench Sukkur. The reclaimed

forestlands, which include the Buth Ghumra Forest, Faridabad Forest, Ganang Katohar Forest, Keti Pir Sahib Forest, and many others, hold an estimated value in billions of rupees.

The retrieval of these lands from individuals affiliated with political parties is a groundbreaking achievement, signaling a renewed commitment to environmental conservation and proper land

utilization. This meticulous survey has led to the establishment of permanent boundaries for the majority of the forests, marked by the installation of sturdy cemented boundary pillars. This groundbreaking step ensures the safeguarding of approximately 146,300 acres of notified forestlands that were previously absent from revenue records. DFO Khairpur Ziyad Ullah Laghari's

unwavering dedication to preserving these precious forestlands is evident in his efforts to computerize all forestland records into the Revenue record of Right. This proactive approach serves as a vital safeguard against any future encroachments or disputes over the land.

It is important to note that DFO Ziyad Ullah Laghari has an impressive track record in land reclamation and environmental preservation. His previous tenure in District Ghotki saw the reclamation of 10,000 acres of forestland in the Mirpur Forest, Jarwar Forest, Sarhad Forest, and Waseer Forest areas. Moreover, his commitment to sustainable practices extends to the establishment of a Forest Lodge and Log Hut at Mirpur Forest, creating an inviting hub for eco-tourism enthusiasts and visitors. This monumental achievement in Khairpur District serves as a shining example of ring a greener and more prosperous future for all.



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## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### August

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- Aug 01/Switzerland National Day
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- Aug 01/Syria Armed Forces Day
- Aug 4/Bukino Faso National Day
- Aug 09/Singapore
- Aug 15/DPR Korea Independence Day
- Aug 15/India Independence Day
- Aug 15/Poland Armed Forces Day
- Aug 17/Indonesia Independence Day
- Aug 24/Ukraine Independence Day
- Aug 25/Uruguay Independence Day
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Emergency Ambulance.1122 & Rescue Services.4451122  
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Motorway Police.9270601-20  
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# Indonesian envoy hosts productive meeting with EO

EO Indonesia offers a unique platform for like-minded individuals to connect, share experiences and drive positive change in the wider society

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: H.E Mr. Adam M. Tugio, Indonesian Ambassador to Pakistan warmly welcomed a delegation from the Islamabad chapter of Entrepreneurs' Organization (EO) for a trade talk. The meeting explored avenues for collaboration between the young entrepreneurs and business communities of the two countries. Ambassador Tugio expressed his appreciation for EO Islamabad chapter's proactive approach in strengthening bilateral trade relations. The discussions encompassed diverse topics including trade and investment, entrepreneurship, economic empowerment of women and innovation. The envoy extended invitation to executive members of EO to participate in the upcoming Trade Expo Indonesia (TEI) 2023 and Halal Expo on October. "TEI will be showcasing Indonesia's vibrant and diverse manufacture products attractive to Pakistani business community", added Tugio. The envoy also underscored the



importance of fostering partnerships at the entrepreneurial level as it can pave the way for a more comprehensive cooperation be-

tween Indonesia and Pakistan. In light of this, the Embassy offered facilitating B2B meetings of EO with young entrepreneurs'

association of Indonesia (HIPMI) and Indonesian Chamber of Commerce on the margin of EO visit to participate in TEI.

Mr. Taimur Adil, President of EO Islamabad Chapter thanked the Indonesian Ambassador for the meeting and expressed enthusiasm for the collaborative endeavors. "We are excited about the potential for cooperation with the Indonesian Embassy and EO Islamabad Chapter is committed to exploring opportunities that drive economic growth and cultural understanding", stated Mr Taimur. He further added that EO is interested to visit and participate in Trade Expo Indonesia 2023.

Entrepreneurs' Organization (EO) is a global network of influential business leaders and entrepreneurs. With chapters located in over 75+ countries, EO aims to empower entrepreneurs through learning, collaboration and personal growth. Indonesian chapters of Entrepreneurs' Organization (EO) are dedicated to empower entrepreneurs for promoting positive change in the business and broader community. EO Indonesia offers a unique platform for like-minded individuals to connect, share experiences and drive positive change in the wider society.

## FGFR showcases welfare, rehab achievements

ISLAMABAD: The Faizan Global Relief Fund (FGFR), a welfare initiative of the Dawat-i-Islami Foundation has showcased its achievements in welfare, rehabilitation and relief efforts during the monster Monsoon Floods 2022 at the Pakistan Expo on Disaster Risk Reduction-2023 (PEDRR-23). The PEDRR-23, a three-day first ever expo on Disaster Risk Reduction that convened experts, and partners from international and national organisations working in the field of disaster management and relief for a brainstorming session to learn from shared experiences and lessons learnt in different natural calamities. Nouman Attari from FGFR told APP that the fund had organised the largest relief effort of the country with the participation of over 500,000 workers who took part in the FGFR activities in all the provinces of Sindh, Balochistan, Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) affected due to unprecedented floods in 2022. The fund, he said had also provided more than 5,000 meals per day distribution for food distribution at the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) tent city for flood-displaced people. However, the food distribution was ensured in the areas of Baajara, Sehwan, Mirpur, Talhar and Nawabshah whereas it was also extended to the areas of Jacobabad, Nasirabad and Sohbatpur. The fund had provided relief to more than 2,500 individuals in Jacobabad and over 2,000 people in Nasirabad and Sohbatpur, he added. He said that the fund also provided treatment to 70,000 plus livestock animals that got affected during epidemics spread after the floods.—DNA

# Qibla denounces Jaranwala incident

## FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Council of Islamic Ideology Chairman, Dr. Qibla Ayaz, Thursday vehemently denounced the recent incidents that unfolded in Jaranwala, highlighting the disconnect between such actions and the core principles of religion, national laws, and societal norms. He, in a statement, asserted that the occurrences in Jaranwala stood in stark contradiction to the teachings of Islam, which espoused reverence for places of worship and religious symbols across all faiths. "Our religion and our nation's laws are rooted

in respect, tolerance, and coexistence," stated Dr. Ayaz adding, "Acts of violence, targeting individuals based on their beliefs, or attempting to take matters into one's own hands due to alleged acts of religious blasphemy find no endorsement within Islam," he added. The chairman emphasized that legal recourse should be pursued without bias or discrimination against any individuals involved in fomenting animosity and hatred. "No matter the motivations, we are bound by our faith and our Constitution to ensure that justice prevails. Those responsible for promoting discord and hatred must

be held accountable under the full extent of the law," he added. Furthermore, Dr. Ayaz urged the government to take immediate and comprehensive measures to rehabilitate the affected homes and places of worship. He stressed that compensation should be extended to individuals who had suffered losses as a result of these distressing incidents. In a noteworthy development, the Council of Islamic Ideology, during its special session (Session Number 226) convened on December 20, 2021, addressed the Sialkot incident and presented a set of recommendations

to the government. The council asserted that to deter the occurrence of such heinous events, stringent punitive measures need to be implemented against the perpetrators involved. The council's recommendations included the establishment of specialized courts dedicated to expeditiously handling cases related to such incidents. These courts, as proposed, would operate around the clock, ensuring prompt and fair trials. The objective is to deliver tangible and appropriate penalties to those responsible for inciting criminal activities, orchestrating such actions, and utilizing places of worship to propagate divisive ideologies.

## Belgium to support promotion of education in merged districts

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Belgium Charles Delogne on Thursday called on Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ghulam Ali here at the Governor's House. In the meeting, discussions were held on bilateral issues, trade relations and enhancing people-to-people relations between the two sides, said a press release issued here. The two sides also discussed issues related to providing better education opportunities to the youth of the merged tribal districts. The governor said that Belgium should provide support for promoting education in the merged districts of the province and special scholarships for the youth. He suggested that Belgium should introduce an educational project that could bring the youth of merged districts forward in the field of education. Ghulam Ali also underlined the need to strengthen bilateral trade and people-to-people ties with Belgium. The Belgium envoy said the two countries had a history of 75 years of strong public and diplomatic relations. The two countries were celebrating the anniversary of 75 years of diplomatic relations, he added. He assured that the youth of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa would be supported to bring forward in the education sector.—DNA

## Around 4,781 requests for health financing approved

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety has approved 4,781 requests of deserving patients for health financing from May 2022-March 2023 under the 'Tahafuz programme'. "A total of 15,729 requests of the deserving patients have been approved for health financing since the inception of the programme" an official source revealed. The initiative is aimed at catering to the catastrophic health expenditures of deserving patients through fourteen impaneled hospitals based in Islamabad, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Balochistan, Sindh, Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), irrespective of geographical limitations and domicile. Tahafuz is a Public Sector Development Program (FY-2021-2024) demand-driven initiative designed to protect the extremely poor from catastrophic health expenditures. The program is also providing healthcare assistance to the poor who fall under the pre-defined eligibility criteria primarily based on BISP or National Socio-Economic Registry Poverty scores i.e. PMT—APP

# HEC condoles demise of Dr. M. D. Shami

ISLAMABAD: Higher Education Commission (HEC), Pakistan has condoled the sad demise of Dr. Misbah-ud-Din Shami, full-time Member the erstwhile University Grants Commission (UGC) viz. now Higher Education Commission (HEC). In his message on behalf of the entire higher education community, Chairman HEC Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed expressed deep sorrow over the passing away of Dr. M. D. Shami. He expressed his condolences with the bereaved family and lauded his immense services in the higher education sector and the education in Pakistan as a whole, which will be remembered. Dr. M. D. Shami carried out research work in the areas of Inorganic Analytical Chemistry, Chemical Process Technology, and Chemical Crystallography. He remained Member Advisory Committee on Education, Government of Pakistan, for four years since 2014. He also served as Vice President Pakistan Academy of Sciences from 2011-2014. In addition, he extended his services to different key organisations at top positions. In recognition of his services, Dr. Shami was awarded Sitara-i-Hmtiaz by President of Pakistan in 1990. He was conferred upon various other awards including the Lifetime Achievement Award by Pakistan Institute of Chemical Engineers (PChE), Pakistan Academy of Sciences Golden Jubilee Medal 2002; Legend of Institute of Chemical Engineering & Technology, University of the Punjab; Medal by the High Council for Science and Technology, Jordan; Pakistan Talent Forum National Award; and Allama Iqbal Centenary Commemorative Medal.—DNA



ISLAMABAD : Secretary Education Wasim Ajmal presenting bouquet to Prof Sabah Faisal for her promotion in a ceremony held at Islamabad college for girls F6/2 on Thursday.—DNA

# Pakistan Navy Ship Saif visits Dubai UAE

## DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Navy Ship SAIF visited Dubai, UAE during deployment on Regional Maritime Security Patrol. Upon arrival, Pakistan Navy Ship was received by Defence Attaché of Pakistan at Abu Dhabi and Senior Officials of UAE Navy. During the port visit, Commanding Officer of PNS SAIF called-on Deputy Commander UAE Naval Forces and other senior Officials of UAE Navy. During the interactions, matters of mutual interests were discussed and enhancement of bilateral ties in all spheres was re-affirmed. The Commanding Officer of PN ship conveyed well wishes from Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi for the people of UAE in general and UAE Navy in particular.

PNS SAIF celebrated Independence Day of Pakistan at UAE. In this connection, a flag hoisting ceremony was held onboard the ship which was attended by DA (P) and children of Paki-

stani School at UAE. During the port stay, various bilateral activities including exchange visits onboard UAE Naval units, orientation visits of military installations and co-

ordination meetings were undertaken. Upon culmination of port visit, PNS SAIF conducted bilateral naval exercise with UAE Navy Ship SALAHA to enhance interoperability between

the two navies. Visit of PNS SAIF to UAE provided an opportunity for both brotherly countries to further enhance the existing close diplomatic ties and cordial relations.



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## Briefs

## Pakistan Food &amp; Culture Week celebrated in China

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Food and Culture Week was celebrated in Tianjin, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Thursday. It was a captivating journey into the heart of Pakistan's culinary heritage and cultural tapestry, offering attendees a unique opportunity to savor the delicious cuisine and experience the warmth of Pakistani people's hospitality. Addressing an opening ceremony, Aslam Chaudhary, Economic Minister at the Pakistani Embassy in Beijing said that the Pakistan Food and Culture Week wasn't just about culinary and cultural exchanges; it also played a role in fostering diplomatic relations and strengthening people-to-people bonds between Pakistan and China. He further said that the event provided a platform for cultural diplomacy, promoting understanding and friendship between the two nations. It allowed the people of Binhai, Tianjin, to experience a slice of Pakistani culture and traditions firsthand, dispelling misconceptions and fostering a deeper appreciation for the country's rich heritage.

## Red chillies can stimulate economic activities

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Hitech Hybrid Seed Association (PHSA) Shahzad Ali Malik on Thursday said the production and trade of red chillies stimulate economic activity, both locally and globally. Talking to a delegation of progressive farmers led by Pir Saddam Hussain Shah, he said red chillies hold significant importance in the economy due to their widespread use in various industries and cuisines, said a news release issued here. He said red chillies have applications beyond the culinary world and also used in the production of pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, and even in some industrial processes. This diversification of usage enhances their economic significance and makes them a valuable commodity in both domestic and international trade, he added. He said it contributes to the agricultural sector, providing income and employment opportunities for farmers and laborers involved in its cultivation, harvesting, and processing. In addition, red chillies are a key ingredient in the food and beverage industry, adding flavor and spice to a wide range of dishes and products, he remarked.—APP

## Naqvi directs to ensure free-of-cost medicines to patients

RAWALPINDI: Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi on Thursday directed the management of Benazir Bhutto Hospital (BBH) to ensure the provision of free-of-cost medicines to the patients. During a visit to inspect facilities at BBH, he reviewed the treatment of the patients in the new Emergency department. The CM interacted with the patients and their attendants and inquired about the medical facilities provided to them.

Taking notice of the patient's complaints about delays in medical check-ups and the X-rays process, Naqvi said that there should be no hold-up in check-ups and directed the hospital's administration to expedite the process of registration at the reception counter. During his visit, the CM in detail inspected various sections of the hospital and found some doctors were absent from their duties. He also inspected the sanitation situation of the BBH and directed the hospital's management to improve the cleanliness arrangement. Caretaker Information Minister Amir Mir also accompanied the CM during his visit.—APP

## FIO building confidence among public to get speedy justice

President Alvi said due to his personal efforts, awareness among the people about the role of Ombudsman had significantly increased. But still, he stressed the need to make more people aware of it

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday said the Federal Insurance Ombudsman was doing major work in building confidence among the general public to get speedy justice by following easy steps. The president said only few percent people knew about the ombudsman's role mainly because of less marketing and awareness campaigns. He said approaching the ombudsman was the cheapest and most effective way to get speedy justice. Addressing a Seminar titled 'Insurance Ombudsman and Concept of Speedy Justice at the Doorstep' here at Aiwan-e-Sadr, the president said all the five ombudsmen including Federal Insurance Ombudsman, Federal Banking Ombudsman, Federal Tax Ombudsman, Federal Harassment Ombudsman and the Federal Ombudsman were working under his office. The subject Sem-



inar 'Insurance Ombudsman and Concept of Speedy Justice at the Doorstep' is a series of seminars in which the high dignitaries of the insurance sector as well as from the business community were invited for their valuable views and vision for betterment and transparency in the insurance business. President Alvi said due to his personal efforts,

awareness among the people about the role of the Ombudsman had significantly increased. But still, he stressed the need to make more people aware of it. He also highlighted the role of media in creating awareness about the Ombudsmen's role and responsibilities adding that the good decisions by the ombudsmen must be publicized in

the national print, electronic and social media. He said ignorance was not an excuse, therefore the people should know about various ways to get justice through alternative means. The president highlighted that in many cases the decisions remained pending for decades in the mainstream judiciary due to overburden of work and other flaws. Therefore, he called

upon the people to utilize this channel which was relatively easy, more quick, and affordable for all. He said Alternative Dispute Resolution was the solution to reduce the burden on the mainstream judiciary. He also asked the insurance company owners to offer better products for the public to increase trust and remove doubts among the people about the insurance companies. Generally, he said the perception of insurance among the general public was not up to the mark which needed to be improved by building trust among them. Federal Insurance Ombudsman Dr Khawar Jamil said the office of FIO was acting upon the concept of providing speedy justice. "We are trying to enhance our outreach to grassroots level and we are also endeavoring to provide maximum relief to the complainants by settling their issues in an amicable manner and through mutual settlement", he added. He informed that during previous year the office had settled issues and provided relief worth of Rs 2.57 billion.

## Railways earn over 5mln from salons in last three years

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Railways has generated revenue worth Rs 5,269,315 through utilizing its 23 salons and inspection coaches for commercial purposes, during the last three years. "At present, Pakistan Railways has only 23 salons and inspection coaches with different dignitaries of the country who are entitled to use these salons when needed," an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP on Thursday. Giving the details, he said, "Two highly luxurious coaches have been allocated for the Prime Minister's Secretariat while four coaches have been allocated for the Minister for Railways, Secretary/Chairman of Railways, and another senior official in the ministry." The official said, "Only one salon has been allocated to the federal government while one each has been allocated to the Governors of Sindh, Balochistan, Punjab, and the provincial governments.—APP

## World Humanitarian Day to be marked on Aug 19

ISLAMABAD: World Humanitarian Day would be marked on August 19 (Saturday) across the globe including Pakistan, the day honors all humanitarians who have worked in the promotion of the humanitarian cause, and those who have lost their lives in the cause of duty. It aims to increase public awareness about humanitarian assistance activities worldwide and the importance of international cooperation. World Humanitarian Day is a day dedicated to humanitarians worldwide, as well as to increase public understanding.—APP

## Kyrgyz company sees promising investment in food sector

ISLAMABAD: A visiting delegation of Kyrgyzstan business community on Thursday described Pakistan as a promising destination for investment, especially in the food sector. Zhumadil Egemberdiev, who is heading the delegation of a company "Shoro," expressed keen interest to explore potential investment avenues and collaborations within Pakistan's vibrant food industry, particularly in the Punjab province. Talking to Chairman Kyrgyzstan Trade House and Coordinator to Federal Tax Ombudsman Meher Kashif Yousif, he stressed the need for focusing on a mutual goal of fostering economic growth and enhancing bilateral ties. He said recognizing the abundant resources, skilled workforce, and growing consumer demand within Pakistan, Kyrgyz businessmen were enthusiastic about the prospect of joint ventures and partnerships that could drive innovation, employment opportunities, and market expansion. Zhumadil Egemberdiev said the food industry, being an essential component of both countries' economies, offered a plethora of opportunities for collaboration. He said Kyrgyzstan's expertise in certain food products and processing techniques could synergize effectively with Pakistan's rich.—APP

## Iftikhar Ali Malik retires from trade politics due to health reasons

ISLAMABAD: Former President of SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry, patriotic and non-controversial octogenarian trade leader of South Asia Iftikhar Ali Malik Thursday announced retirement from trade politics due to health reasons. He rendered a remarkable milestone of half a century of dedicated service to the traders' community in Pakistan, said a news release issued here on Thursday. His unwavering commitment, visionary leadership, and tireless efforts have left an indelible mark on the trade landscape of South Asia. His decision to retire from trade politics and relinquish the Chairmanship of the Founder group of the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry is a testament to his selflessness and desire to pave the way for new leadership. He handed over this position to Misbah Ur Rehman, a veteran trade leader, who undoubtedly has big shoes to fill. Iftikhar Ali Malik remained president of the Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Lahore chamber, Director of NBP, member of Ravi Urban Development Authority, president and patron-in-Chief of the Rowing club, member of PM special task force on the economy and other trade-related bodies. It is pertinent to mention here that Iftikhar Ali Malik Chairman Guard Group is the only trade leader in Pakistan who never availed even a single penny benefits and spent all international and domestic boarding lodging and travelling expenses from his pocket and didn't burden on the national exchequer which speaks of his sound character.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: The Canadian High Commissioner posing for a picture with the representatives of various NGOs.—DNA

## Over 200 Chinese businessmen participate in Pak exhibition

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The participation of over 200 Chinese businessmen in Pakistan's first International Food and Agriculture Exhibition Karachi shows China's great interest in Pakistan's agro products and their exports to China. The largest participation from China was confirmed by the Ambassador of Pakistan to China Moin ul Haque in a recent tweet. The ambassador termed it as the biggest ever delegation of businessmen from China showing the country's greater interest in Pakistan's agriculture industry. The event attended by more than 680 delegates

from Africa, China, US and Oceania was also appreciated by the Pakistan business community. They called it a great initiative to promote Pakistan's agricultural and food potential and proposed to hold such events in future also. According to Gwadar Pro, Chela Ram Kevlani, Chairman of Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan (REAP), extended his profound appreciation to the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) for flawlessly executing FoodAg 2023. Kevlani commended the exceptional event as a pivotal platform for effectively connecting rice exporters with international buyers. The event witnessed \$410

million worth of deals and the signing of 10 MoUs, bringing together more than 221 exporters who showcased over 500 high-quality products to the world. The products in focus included meat and poultry products, processed food, rice, salt, sea food, tobacco, vegetables, spices, juices, nectars, biscuits and confectionery, dairy, dates, dry fruits, fruits, honey, beverages, oil, and cereals. According to TDAP the objective of FoodAg was to introduce Pakistani products in the conventional and non-conventional markets to enhance the agro based exports and to facilitate the availability of raw and value-added products to the in-

ternational community. Pakistan being an agricultural country contributes 22.7 percent to the National GDP and provides employment to around 37 percent of the population. Cotton, sugarcane, rice, wheat and maize are the major crops cultivated in the country along with many minor crops. Pakistan is among the top ten producers of wheat, rice, cotton, sugarcane, mango, dates and mandarin. As per the statistics, Agro-Food exports contribute 17% to the national exports of Pakistan. The main products exported are rice, meat, fruits & vegetables, tobacco, spices and seafood.

## Singh-Pak joint venture inspires transportation sector with E-rickshaws

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a development for Pakistan's transportation sector, a joint venture between Chinese and Pakistani companies is set to commence production of electric two-wheelers and three-wheelers, commonly known as rickshaws in the country. The collaboration is expected to bring about positive changes in the local market, reducing carbon emissions and promoting eco-friendly transportation options, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Thursday. The joint venture was formed in April by Chinese electric vehicle manufacturer Benling Group, Chinese battery manufacturer Dongjin Group and Pakistani auto company Crown Group to leverage their expertise to introduce cutting-edge electric mobility solutions to the Pakistani market. Two-wheelers and three-wheelers are widely used in Pakistan for public transportation and are a vital part of the country's mobility ecosystem. By electrifying this segment, the vehicles to be produced here are expected to address the growing demand for efficient and



environmentally friendly transportation options in densely populated urban areas, where traffic congestion and air pollution have become major concerns. In a recent interview with China Economic Net, Hu Ge, General Manager of Dongjin Pakistan noted that "it is expected that the first batch of materials, batteries and equipment for the production of electric two-wheelers and three-wheelers will arrive in Pakistan after customs clearance next week. We are excited about the launch of the first batch of electric two-wheelers and three-wheelers manufactured by our joint venture late this month or in ear-

ly September." With the production facility located in an industrial zone near Karachi, the joint venture partners are committed to ensuring that the electric vehicles produced in Pakistan meet international quality standards. Batteries are a key component of electric two-wheelers and three-wheelers, affecting their range, performance, environmental impact and overall usability. One of the most important reasons for holding back the development of electric two-wheelers and three-wheelers in Pakistan is the limited technology of local batteries. In this regard, the joint venture has specially designed a battery for Pa-

kistan that is higher than the standard of Chinese electric two-wheelers and three-wheelers to cope with Pakistan's actual road conditions and can achieve a two-year service life. Furthermore, the joint venture aims to create employment opportunities for local communities through the establishment of a supply chain and after-sales service network. Hu said that "in the process of cooperation, we will continue to transfer the manufacturing technology of electric two-wheeled and three-wheeled vehicles to Pakistan, and gradually realize localized production and expand cooperation with auto-parts companies in the park."

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Off: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad

## Calls will not be answered

**I**N an interview on the sidelines of the Australian American Leadership Dialogue in Canberra on Sunday, one of the United States' senior military officials claimed that China's military was becoming dangerously arrogant. Lieutenant General Stephen Sklenka, deputy commander of the US "Indo-Pacific" Command, said that the People's Liberation Army was fueling the risk of military clash with the US by refusing to communicate with US commanders in the "Indo-Pacific". It seems that the US' top brass have a unique understanding of what "dialogue" entails. Dialogue doesn't mean someone in the US military picking up a phone and making a call to China to issue orders to the Chinese military. In the words of Tan Kefei, spokesperson for the Chinese Ministry of National Defense, dialogue cannot be without principles, while communication cannot be without a bottom line. Washington lacks sincerity in claiming it is reaching out for communication between the two militaries. Beijing has made it clear that the US should lift the illegal unilateral sanctions it has imposed on Chinese Defense Minister Li Shangfu to create a favorable atmosphere and conditions for dialogue and communication between the two militaries. In 2018, the then Donald Trump administration sanctioned Li and China's Equipment Development Department - which he was in charge of at the time - for acquisitions of military aircraft and missile system equipment from Russia. Given the communication channels between the PLA and the US' allies are operating smoothly, the US side feels there is no need for direct communication with the Chinese military and that it can exploit China's principled position to its own advantage. While claiming to believe in the importance of maintaining open lines of communication with China in order to responsibly manage the relationship, the US side is trying to portray China as acting irresponsibly and dangerously by claiming that it is the Chinese side that is refusing to talk. Sklenka made that clear the next day when he said that he saw value in Chairperson of the House of Representatives China Select Committee Mike Gallagher's idea of positioning US hypersonic missiles in Australia and other key locations across the Pacific. Even under such circumstances, China has left the door open for dialogue with the US. On July 12, Chinese Ambassador to the US Xie Feng met with US Assistant Secretary of Defense Ely Ratner, and urged the US side to remove the obstacles to bring military-to-military relations back to the right track. It behooves the US to act responsibly to ensure the communication channels between the two militaries are reopened, if it really thinks, as it claims, communication is essential to reduce the chances of miscalculation and inadvertent escalation, and lowering the risk of a clash.

## Promises Unmet

**T**HE Afghan Taliban's recent celebration of two years since their resurgence to power is marred by the stark realities that have defined their rule. While they boast of achievements, it is undeniable that little substantial progress has not been made. The international community's refusal to recognise their government highlights a key challenge: the global lack of acknowledgment. Senior Taliban leaders took the stage during the anniversary event, touting their accomplishments. However, their silence on reopening educational institutions for girls speaks volumes. Despite pockets of support for girls' education within their ranks, the Taliban's supreme leader remains unyielding on the matter, causing division within their leadership. The pivotal issue lies in the Taliban's stance on women's rights and education. Kabul's obstinacy on this matter hampers foreign recognition, which remains an elusive aspiration. To truly achieve progress and gain international standing, the Taliban must acknowledge the necessity of granting their citizens, especially women, fundamental rights. Additionally, the persistent menace of terrorism within their borders tarnishes their claims of victory and advancement. Their inability to effectively combat internal terrorism casts a shadow on their rule. While they brandish their sizable military force, the ongoing threat of terrorism contradicts their claims of security. Their strained relationship with neighbouring Pakistan exacerbates their predicament. The accusations and counter-accusations regarding militant activities on Afghan soil weaken their regional position. The Taliban's assertion that Pakistan's internal security problems are not their concern only heightens tensions. Furthermore, the Taliban's rejection of an inclusive government structure has been another hindrance to their global recognition. This policy stems from their chief's rejection of past regimes, indicating an unyielding stance. While they claim inclusivity, reality is often far from their narrative. In light of their second anniversary, the Taliban's intentions to bring about positive change and security are mired in their actions. While they speak of an "Islamic system," it is clear that their interpretation of such a system diverges greatly from the international community's expectations. The suppression of women's rights, curtailment of freedoms, and ongoing violence undermine their claims of progress. Ultimately, if the Taliban seek genuine progress and international acceptance, they must take substantial steps. Prioritising women's education and rights, dismantling terrorism from within, and engaging constructively with neighbouring countries are imperative. Only by addressing these fundamental challenges can the Taliban begin to build a reputation that resonates positively beyond their borders.



## White color of our flag is not so white after all...

Qamar Bashir



**Mr. Ahmad Qureshi wrote: "This is a moment that has shamed us all Pakistanis. Those Pakistanis involved in burning a church must be punished to the fullest extent of the law. As a Pakistani citizen, we stand by our Pakistani Christian brothers and sisters in this hour of deep pain and anguish". The prime-time talk programs were much more uplifting and gave me even more optimism. Participants expressed dismay that as a country, we are unable to give protection and safety to our minority, who live in continual dread for their lives and property**

**I** WAS browsing the Twitter when suddenly I came or cross "Safe Our Soul" message from Bishop Azad marshall which shook me from the core of my heart. It said, "Words fail me as I write this. We, Bishops, Priests and lay people are deeply pained and distressed at the Jaranwala incident in the Paisalabad District in Pakistan. A church building is being burnt as I type this message. Bibles have been desecrated and Christians have been tortured and harassed having been falsely accused of violating the Holy Quran. We cry out for justice and action from law enforcement and those who dispense justice and the safety of all citizens to intervene immediately and assure us that our lives are valuable in our own homeland that has just celebrated independence and freedom". I felt so ashamed and helpless, but I still wanted to do something and find a stronger shoulder than myself to unload the burden of my conscience, which was none other than the president himself, and I forwarded the Bishop Azad's message to the president knowing him very well, and I was confident that this wise man, who has a lot of compassion in himself for anyone in distress, would do some magic. My broken heart was not satiated, so I felt compelled to go through the comments offered by our Pakistanis on Bishop's "SOS" in order to find some consolation. I was relieved to see that the majority of the comments were in solidarity with the Christian community, condemning the heinous and abhorrent act of burning the church and desecration of the Holy Bible and demanding that the perpetrators be tried under the country's blasphemy laws to give the perpetrators exemplary punishment to at least give some respect to "white part of our national flag" that represents minorities. Many sane minded Pakistan registered their anguish and pain in the following words. Mr. Abbasi wrote: "As a British Muslim from Pakistani background I am sickened of these extremist hypocrites who scream Islamophobia at the world and persecute minorities within Pakistan, sadly the problem is getting worse as no one can confront this jahil fanatic mindset except feed it further". Momin Mukhtar wrote: "Being Muslim, I am ashamed of this. Desecration of church has nothing to do with Islam. This is vandalism and extremism. We are ashamed". Cyanide wrote "A blasphemy case should also be filed against those who set fire to the church in Jaranwala and insulted the Bible. Contribute positively to this campaign by retweeting" Kulsoo Mughal: We are ashamed, sorry we failed to protect! An immense shame to all those Parliamentarians who voted to strengthen these blasphemous laws so we can witness such disgusting days Farhan Rizvi: "I am deeply saddened to hear about the incident in Jaranwala. The burning of a church, desecration of Bibles, and the mistreatment of innocent Christians is a distressing and unacceptable act. Such actions go against the princi-

ples of respect, tolerance, and freedom that any society should uphold. My thoughts are with all those affected. Condemning such acts and standing for justice is crucial to ensure the safety and rights of all citizens". Mr. Ahmad Qureshi wrote: "This is a moment that has shamed us all Pakistanis. Those Pakistanis involved in burning a church must be punished to the fullest extent of the law. As a Pakistani citizen, we stand by our Pakistani Christian brothers and sisters in this hour of deep pain and anguish". The prime-time talk programs were much more uplifting and gave me even more optimism. Participants expressed dismay that as a country, we are unable to give protection and safety to our minority, who live in continual dread for their lives and property. They are mostly excluded from mainstreaming and have been demoted to lower social strata. They demanded that it is a greater crime than the one committed by the miscreants on May 9th, and that all those involved in this heinous act be identified by Geo fencing, arrested and subjected to due process of law, given exemplary punishments, and the victims be compensated in the best possible ways. To my dismay, Twitter was also full of justifications for this act as a response to the burning of copies of the Holy Quran in Sweden and elsewhere, but their founding father, Khalifa, and prophet may not have provided them with guiding principles and guidelines on how to protect the followers of other religions and their religious symbols and places of worship, but we have. Our beloved Quaid said, "in course of time Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslims would cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense, because that is the personal faith of each individual, but in the political sense as citizens ...". The historic journey of Hazrat Umer Bin Khattab who was holding the reins of a camel (in some references donkey) while his slave was riding when they reached Jerusalem, as it was his turn to ride. Seeing this incredible sight of a Khalifa having, half of the known world under his sway, Mr. Sophronius, the Guardian of the city, immediately realized that this man will do justice to them and handed over the city keys to him. When he offered Umer to pray inside the church, Hazrat Umer refused saying, "If I prayed there, later Muslims would use it as an excuse to convert it into a mosque - thereby depriving Christendom of one of its holiest sites. Instead, Umar prayed outside the Church, where a mosque (called Masjid Umar - the Mosque of Umar) was later built. Mr. Sophronius got another surprise of his life, when he signed a treaty which protected the rights of the people of the city of all religions. In the treaty, Hazrat Umer gave them an assurance of safety for themselves for their property, their churches, their crosses, the sick and healthy persons of the city and for all the rituals which belong to their religion. Their churches will not be inhabited by Mus-

lims and will not be destroyed. Neither they, nor the land on which they stand, nor their cross, nor their property will be damaged. They will not be forcibly converted. Let us also recall another out of this world agreement which was signed by our beloved Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) with the citizens of other religions of Medina. The first article of the constitution said, "All the inhabitants of Medina, the Muslims as well as those who had entered the pact from the Jews, Christian, and idolaters, were "one nation to the exclusion of all others." All were considered members and citizens of Medina society regardless of religion, race, or ancestry. People of other faiths were protected from harm as much as the Muslims, as is stated in another article, "To the Jews who follow us belong to us and will merit help and equity. They shall not be harmed nor their enemies be aided." Any attack on another religion or tribe was considered an attack on the state and upon the Muslims as well. The lives of the practitioners of other religions in the Muslim society was also given protective status. The Prophet said: "Whoever kills a person who has a truce with the Muslims will never smell the fragrance of Paradise." (Sahih Muslim). Since the upper hand was with the Muslims, the Prophet strictly warned against any maltreatment of people of other faiths. He said: "Beware! Whoever is cruel and hard on a non-Muslim minority, or curtails their rights, or burdens them with more than they can bear, or takes anything from them against their free will; I (Prophet Muhammad) will complain against the person on the Day of Judgment." (Abu Dawud). We or anyone with a sane mind will not justify the desecration of copies of the Holy Quran in Sweden or elsewhere. However, as Muslims, if we desecrate the symbols of other religions or their places of worship, we become equally culpable and deserve to be hated and treated the same way. Therefore, as a nation, we must censure with the loudest voice and strongest possible manner any act of desecration of Holy scriptures, which are in fact sacred to us and a fundamental tenet of our faith. If we do not believe in the previous messengers and the divine books that were revealed to them, we forfeit the right to call ourselves Muslims. The same cannot be said about people of other religions, as their prophets and revealed books on them did not command them to believe in the Holy Quran and our Prophet (PBUH) in as many words as our Holy Quran did and as our Prophet did by his words and deeds. This has given us a greater responsibility than devotees of other religions to respect and care for people of other faiths and their beliefs. As our faith would be incomplete if we did not believe in any or all of the following articles of faith: "Belief in the Oneness of God, Belief in the Angels of God, Belief in the Revelations (Books) of God, Belief in the Prophets of God, Belief in the Day of Judgment, and Belief in Pre-Measurement (Qadar).

Waheed Hussain



**The government should reduce the budget and current account deficit. The government spending should be according to the income generated in the financial year. It should stop borrowing money from the lending agencies and entirely depend on its own resources. So, what was wrong with the advice. We need to set our house in order. The problem was not with the (IMF) or any other int'l financial institution...**

**I**NFLATION is a headache for every Pakistani. Price hike is affecting mental health of citizens. There is no remedy, no solution except adding up the cost of living. As expected, the prices of petroleum products have increased up to Rs. 20 per litre. The fresh price of petrol stands at Rs. 290.45, while the diesel has been fixed at Rs. 293.40 per litre. One may like it or not but the fact of the matter was that, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Standby Arrangement (SBA) program was responsible for the massive increase in the petroleum products. Similarly, the electricity and gas rates have also been jacked up due to IMF latest 10 months \$3 billion (SBA) program. Whatever, the former coalition government agreed with the "Fund", the same has been implemented to continue working with the IMF, otherwise, once again voices of default would start falling on our ears. Holding the caretaker Prime Minister Anwar ul Haq Kakar responsible for putting this additional financial burden on the public was not a fair opinion. There were two aspects of this issue, first increase in petroleum products, electricity and gas prices and its negative impact on the masses. The second was bad economic and financial policies, decisions and management by the successive governments pushing the country into bitter crisis. Every new government tried to address the issue of economy by taking loans from international financial institutions including (IMF) and friendly countries. Various governments completely failed to increase exports, attract foreign direct investments and remittances. It seemed that getting loans have been the easiest path that all the financial managers opted to run the governments and complete their tenure. Whenever, the prices of the petroleum products were increased, there were immediate raise in the public transport fare. The cost of transportation of various goods goes up. The factory owners, wholesalers and the retailers (shopkeepers) without wasting a minute increase the prices of products including the daily used food items. It's being observed that the rates of flour, rice, sugar, cooking oil, pulses, milk, spices vegetables, mutton, beef, chicken and other products have increased from 300 to 500 percent in the last few months. The cost of living in the country especially in big metropolitan cities like Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Peshawar and Rawalpindi have gone up. In the last two months the public have witnessed 300 percent increase in the electricity bills. A family which used to

receive Rs. 10,000.00 electricity bill in July 2022, this July the bill was increased to Rs. 35,000.00. Actually, the IMF has directed the government to reduce the circular debt of power and gas sectors, which has crossed the figure of Rs. 4000 billion. This amount was piled up, due to bad management of the energy sector by the successive governments. However, the political pattern in the country was that every new government used to hold the previous government responsible for the failures, yet, it has failed to bring any reforms or changes in the policies, rather committed the same blunders in handling the energy sector. The result was that the public was forced to pay for the land and generation losses, theft, and massive corruption in the electricity and gas departments. Persistent political considerations-favoritism have completely turned the energy sector dysfunctional. The sector has been bleeding, so now the public was bleeding too by paying huge amount of money through unjustified utility bills. The masses were taxed for the crimes committed by others. The prices of the petroleum products have been increased because of two reasons. First the devaluation of the rupee against the dollar and secondly, extra revenue generation agreement by the government with IMF by imposing Petroleum Development Levy and other taxes. It has been reported that in the current financial year, the government was tasked to collect extra Rs. 1700 billion through the PDL tax on the petroleum products. Apparently, we have experienced and observed that most of the people including the politicians blame IMF for the price hike in the country. What the IMF demanded was that the government should stop providing all kinds of subsidies to various sectors including the power sector and keep a fine balance between its income and expenditure. The government should reduce the budget and current account deficit. The government spending should be according to the income generated in the financial year. It should stop borrowing money from the lending agencies and entirely depend on its own resources. So, what was wrong with the advice. We need to set our house in order. The problem was not with the (IMF) or any other international financial institution or the friendly countries from whom we have been taking loans. The problem was with the successive governments and their financial managers, who could not provide any alternative solution. They always opted for the loans. Today, the biggest issue was payments

of loans or interests, which needs billions of dollars. In the current financial year government needs \$24 billion for the debt servicing. Since we don't have the dollars, therefore, the governments were forced to take loans for paying the previous loans and this cycle of payments had put unbearable burden on the public in the shape of price hike. There was a question to all the previous finance ministers and bureaucrats sitting in the finance ministry that if the IMF was the only solution to economic and financial ills, what they were doing for years and years serving the government. Just getting loans from the IMF and put the entire burden on public was madness and criminality. We must increase our exports to generate dollars. It needs comprehensive trade, commerce, industry and investment policies. It needs to reduce the discount rate providing extra funds to the business community to invest in the new technology (IT) projects and move on to hi-tech industry. Our Chinese friends can help us in these sectors. There were hundreds of ideas to improve the economy and get rid of the loans, but what we really need was the political stability in the country. The power struggle among the political parties and various stakeholders have damaged the country's image. When the governments instead of focusing on the actual issues indulge in fixing the opposition, the result was, what we were witnessing today in the country. The constant political instability has given birth to the uncertainty. The uncertainty was a poison to the economy. Until there was a political stability the economic progress and prosperity would be a dream, leading towards further inflation and price hike. In this situation the caretaker cannot give any relief or hope to the nation, rather it would add to the miseries inviting public rage and criticism. It was a request to all political leaders and various stakeholders to please for God's sake, give up your egos, just think about the country, its image, and public.

## Briefs

## PCB uploads 'rectified' version of WC video

DNA

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) on Wednesday uploaded a "rectified" version of its ICC World Cup 2023 video after it faced severe criticism for omitting legendary all-rounder Imran Khan from the original clip. In the caption of the video, the PCB clarified that "due to its length, the video was abridged and some important clips were missing. This has been rectified in the complete version of the video".

Apart from Imran, the new version of the video also included Pakistan's gold medal triumphs in the Asian Games of 2010 and 2014, Misbah-ul-Haq leading Pakistan to number one in Test rankings for the first time in history and Nida Dar becoming the first Pakistani player to claim 100 T20I wickets. Imran played 88 Tests and 175 ODIs for Pakistan over the course of his illustrious cricket career. His averages, 37 with the bat and 22 with the ball, kept him at the top of the quartet of star all-rounders, Ian Botham, Richard Hadlee and Kapil Dev being the others, who impressed one and all in Test cricket in the 1980s. During Imran's last 10 years of international cricket, he featured in 51 Tests, averaging a remarkable 50 with the bat and 19 with the ball. Imran also led Pakistan to their first series victory in England in 1987 but the best moment of his career came when the Men in Green clinched the 1992 World Cup trophy under his inspirational leadership. The cricketer-turned-politician is currently behind bars on corruption charges after a court convicted him in the Toshakhana case, sentencing him to three years in prison and later, the election commission disqualified him for five years from running for office.

## US CG calls on Zaka Ashraf

LAHORE: US Consul General William K. Makaniol, accompanied by his wife, paid a courtesy visit to Pakistan Cricket Board Management Committee Chairman Zaka Ashraf at the Gaddafi Stadium, here on Thursday. The meeting was held as part of farewell meetings for the US Consul General, whose two-year term is coming to an end. The meeting was held in a cordial manner, wherein as a gesture of solidarity, the U.S. Consul General pledged the support of the United States Government for the handicapped cricket team in Pakistan. Zaka Ashraf extended his best wishes to the U.S. Consul General for his future endeavours, and emphasised the significance of sports diplomacy in developing good relations between both countries. In return, the U.S. Consul General expressed his wishes to Zaka Ashraf and the PCB for the upcoming events. - APP

## Gilani condemns Jaranwala incident

LAHORE: In a strong condemnation of the Jaranwala incident, former prime minister Syed Yousaf Raza Gillani termed the incident a conspiracy against interfaith harmony. In a message issued on Thursday, Gillani asserted that this disturbing event was an affront to the nation's commitment to diversity and tolerance. Gillani passionately stressed that all minorities in Pakistan hold equal rights and absolute freedom to practice their faith in their places of worship. He urged law enforcement agencies to swiftly identify and bring the perpetrators responsible for this vile act to justice. In a gesture of unity and solidarity, he conveyed a message of peace and love on behalf of the entire nation to the Christian community. He underlined that the entire nation stands firmly by their side during this challenging time. Gillani expressed profound respect for the Christian community's contributions to Pakistan's journey towards freedom, progress, and success.

## Djokovic eases through on USA singles return

The victory was the 36-year-old's Serb's first time playing singles in Cincinnati since 2019, although he lost in doubles on Tuesday when he and compatriot Nikola Cacic were beaten by Britain's Jamie Murray and Michael Venus of New Zealand

SPORTS DESK

NEW YORK: Novak Djokovic eased to victory at the Cincinnati Open in his first singles match in the United States in two years. The 23-times Grand Slam champion had been unable to compete in the US over Covid protocols. But rules for unvaccinated foreign travellers were relaxed in May, enabling him to return to competition. He won the first set 6-4 against Spain's Alejandro Davidovich Fokina, who later retired with a back issue.

The victory was the 36-year-old's Serb's first time playing singles in Cincinnati since 2019, although he lost in doubles on Tuesday when he and compatriot Nikola Cacic were beaten by Britain's Jamie Murray and Michael Venus of New Zealand. "Time flies. Four years seems like it was yesterday. It's definitely nice to be back," said the world number two, who will next face Gael Monfils. "I've had some really nice memo-



ries from this tournament.

"Winning it in 2018 obviously is a highlight for me, because it was the only Masters I hadn't won for years. I think I lost four or five

finals, mostly Roger [Federer]. "But I played well in the past and was really glad to have a chance to come back to the States. It's been two years - I missed it. Some

of the biggest tournaments in our sport are played on American soil. I'm just excited to play some tennis." Elsewhere, Australian qualifier Max Purcell beat third seed

Casper Ruud in three sets for his first victory over a top-10 ranked player. Purcell, the world number 70, saved six out of seven break points to win 6-4 3-6 6-4 and set up a meeting with three-time Grand Slam winner Stan Wawrinka.

The Swiss former world number three continued his return to form with a 6-3 6-4 win over American 16th seed Frances Tiafoe. Sixth seed Janik Sinner also bowed out, losing 6-4 7-6 (7-1) to Serbian Dusan Lajovic.

Russian third seed Daniil Medvedev moved into the last 16 with a 6-3 6-2 win over Italy's Lorenzo Musetti. Medvedev, who claimed the title in 2019 before going on to reach the US Open final, faces Germany's Alexander Zverev next. Zverev won 7-5 6-4 against Japan's Yoshihito Nishio, while Greek fourth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas and American ninth seed Taylor Fritz both also progressed. Tsitsipas plays Poland's Hubert Hurkacz, who knocked out Croatian defending champion Borna Coric.

## Conor McGregor should be forced through proper procedures: Poirier



NEW YORK: UFC star Dustin Poirier opened up on Conor McGregor's potential return to UFC in December. The Irishman has not been a part of the testing pool since breaking his leg against Poirier in their trilogy fight at UFC 264 in July 2021, as official records on US Anti-Doping Agency's (USADA) website show he is still yet to submit a drug testing sample since then. As per the UFC policy, McGregor needs to complete six months of mandatory drug testing before appearing in a fight but he has not yet joined the testing programme.

But, the Irishman has announced that he will take on Michael Chandler in December and the only way that can happen is if he is given an exemption. Poirier talked about this issue and believes that USADA would be making a mockery of itself if McGregor gets an exemption. "I like USADA, and I do think they're doing a good job of cleaning up our sport," Poirier told MMA News. "But for me, if they waive that (six-month testing period) and allow him to compete with no drug testing, it kind of just makes a joke of the whole thing.

"Just remove it completely. There shouldn't be grey areas. It's white and black with USADA, you take tests and pass them, you're able to compete. You don't take tests, you don't compete. "There was never a grey area before. We'll see what happens. I'm not sh\*tting on the UFC, I'm not sh\*tting on USADA. I don't want to accuse or say things about either company without them making an official decision. "I don't know what they're going to do with Conor and the drug testing thing. But if they do allow him to compete without drug testing, they're making a whole joke of USADA." It must be noted that the only way a UFC fighter can skip the mandatory drug-testing program is due to "exceptional circumstances". Former UFC Star Brock Lesnar used this defence to compete on short notice against Mark Hunt at UFC 200 in 2016. However, despite Lesnar winning with a unanimous decision, the result was later overturned to a no-contest after the WWE superstar failed both an out-of-competition and a night-of-fight drug test. Poirier is not the only one worried about McGregor making his return without going through proper procedures as earlier, Daniel Cormier questioned the potential USADA exemption for McGregor. - Agencies

## CCI's decision to be challenged in SC: PTI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) utterly rejected the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) schedule of holding fresh delimitation, announcing the party would challenge the decision of the Council of Common Interests before the Supreme Court (SC) today (Friday). In a strong reaction to the ECP's move of fresh delimitation, the PTI spokesperson said that the ECP's schedule of redrawing constituencies was based on malicious intent and a clear deviation from the Constitution. He said that in the case of premature dissolution of the National Assembly, the ECP was constitutionally bound to hold elections within stipulated 90 days. PTI spokesperson said that the ECP's schedule was a criminal attempt to prolong the tenure of the caretaker government in sheer violation of the constitution. He stated that in the wake of violating the SC's order on holding elections in Punjab and Pakhtunkhwa and breaching the constitution, the ECP was once again resorted to violating the constitution to delay the polls unlawfully and unconstitutionally. PTI spokesperson went on to say that in the light of the decision of the CCI, the redrawing of the constituencies could not be used as an excuse and justification to escape from the elections. He recalled that apart from the Prime Minister, the four elected provincial chief ministers were part of the CCI, adding that a major irregularity was committed by making the illegal caretaker chief ministers of Punjab and KP a part of the decision-making process in the meeting of the CCI. PTI Spokesman said that they were looking for poll escape route due to fear of crushing defeat because of the rising popularity of the PTI. However, he vowed that the party would resist all such conspiracies and attempts to deprive the people of their right to vote according to the constitution. - DNA

## Elections certain to be delayed

FROM PAGE 01

The CCI approval made it constitutionally mandatory for the for the ECP to hold elections following fresh delimitations in the light of the results of the 7th census. According to Article 51 (5) of the Constitution, the seats of the National Assembly to each province and the federal capital shall be allocated on the basis of population in accordance with the last preceding census officially published. The Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM)-led government dissolved the national and provincial assemblies of Sindh and Balochistan prematurely to allow the ECP to hold elections in the country within 90 days instead of 60 days if the legislature completed its constitutional tenure. Former federal ministers including Rana Sanaullah said that elections in the country can be delayed until March next year owing to the delimitation of the constituencies.

## Pakistan delegation pays visit...

FROM PAGE 01

Ministry of Commerce for resolution of issues on early basis. The Consul General of Afghanistan should also arrange a meeting of businessmen on fortnight basis to take a review of issues being faced by them. A demand was also made in the meeting to allow a cleaner along with drive of the truck on basis of visit permit. The participants observed that only driver cannot handle truck in case of any problem and a cleaner be allowed for his assistance without getting visa. The authorities of National Logistic Cell (NLC) were also requested to expedite work on construction of new terminal at Torkham to ensure speedy passage and clearance of goods laden trucks. The participants of the meeting were assured regarding coordination with Transit staff about clearing of pendency of T-1 documents. Afghan official informed that more than 25000 T-1 documents are cleared and work on remaining are on progress.

## COAS vows to bring culprits...

FROM PAGE 01

all citizens of Pakistan are equal amongst each other irrespective of religion, gender, caste or creed. He emphasised that no one will be allowed to take the law into their own hands and those culpable of committing such crimes will be brought before the court of justice. While addressing the participants, the army chief emphasised the role of youth towards national development. "Youth is future of Pakistan, which can contribute immensely towards peace, progress and prosperity of the country," he added. The army chief also highlighted the efforts of inimical forces towards creating and fomenting fissures, intolerance, mistrust and violent behaviour among the people to spread anarchy and unrest in the country. "It's imperative for the youth to discern the difference between truth, half-truth, lies, misinformation and disinformation," the COAS remarked.

## AC Milan spend big in attempt to reclaim title

MILAN: AC Milan have been the most active Serie A club during the transfer window as they look to recapture the Scudetto, but still look like they need further investment in key areas. Stefano Pioli's side won the league two years ago, but last season finished fourth, 20 points behind champions Napoli. That earned Milan Champions League football, but only after a points deduction for Juventus because of false accounting. Milan beat Napoli in last season's Champions League quarter-finals to reach the semi-finals for the first time since 2007, before losing to city rivals Inter. - Agencies

## Harry Kane reveals why he joined Bayern Munich

LONDON: English forward Harry Kane has revealed the reason behind leaving his boyhood club Tottenham Hotspur for Bayern Munich after spending 13 years at the North London club. Having his first-ever interview as a Bayern player, Kane - who has been criticised very often as the player has not yet won a major trophy in football - stated that he moved to the German club to compete at the highest level. "A lot of people talk about the trophies and why I came here, but ultimately it was to improve," Kane said in an interview with Sky Sports. "To feel a new pressure of having to win titles every year, having to go far in the Champions League and pushing myself to that limit. "If you are winning games, if you are winning titles, if you are winning Champions League titles and I'm the one playing up front, it's more likely that I am going to be the one scoring goals, which then allows you to win other individual awards "But that all comes from what you achieve as a team. That is my focus first and foremost and that starts this Friday." Bayern, without a shadow of a doubt, are favourites to win Bundesliga this season but it would be interesting to see how far they go in the UEFA Champions League with Kane leading their front. "There's a lot of pressure for Bayern Munich to win the league and go far in the Champions League, and that is what I am excited to challenge myself with. "When you are at a club like Bayern Munich you have to win. There are no questions about it. "If you don't win or you don't perform well there is going to be question marks over you. I have been able to handle that over my career, whether it is with Tottenham or with England. "Starting the new season, you always want to start well with a good result. An away game first will be tough but if we can win that we can set up a good bit of confidence for the rest of the month." Kane notched up 307 goals and 80 assists in 514 club appearances, so far, over the course of his career. Many were surprised to see the 30-year-old footballer giving up on his dream to become an all-time Premier League (PL) goalscorer as with 213 goals, he was only 47 goals behind the top scorer Alan Shearer who scored 260 goals in his staggering career. - Agencies



## PRCS, SZABIST ink MoU to boost humanitarian co-op

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) and Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Institute of Science and Technology (SZABIST) on Thursday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to enhance cooperation between the two institutions. Secretary General PRCS Muhammad Abaid Ullah Khan and Head of Campus SZABIST Mr. Khuro Pervaiz Khan signed the MoU on behalf of their respective organizations. Chairman PRCS, Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari, was present to grace the occasion.

Speaking on this occasion, PRCS Chairman Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari lauded the accomplishments of SZABIST across the academic spectrum, acknowledging their contributions to innovation, entrepreneurship, research, and science & technology. He conveyed his strong inclination to deepen the partnership between PRCS and SZABIST in various domains, with a focus on benefiting local communities. Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari outlined the PRCS's objectives of expanding its volunteer network, intensifying blood donation services, and extending humanitarian initiatives. Engaging young

individuals from schools, colleges, and universities, he emphasized, would be pivotal in realizing these goals. In response, Head of Campus SZABIST, Mr. Khuro Pervaiz Khan, extended the university's unwavering support and commitment to the national humanitarian initiatives spearheaded by PRCS. The MoU aims at building a working relationship between PRCS and SZABIST in mobilizing, recruiting and training youth volunteers from among students of the university. SZABIST will provide capacity building training session to PRCS staff and volunteers on interpersonal communication skills and stress management. It also provides a broad framework for cooperation between



the two institutions in enhancing mutual interest, fostering mutual understanding and contributing to various services. Under the MoU, SZABIST students will be offered voluntary opportunities to join PRCS as dedicated volunteers. The university will play an instrumental role in facilitating PRCS in setting up voluntary blood donation camps, a crucial step toward bolstering blood reserves and addressing the needs arising from disasters, thalassemia, hemophilia, cancer patients, and more. Both the organizations will boost cooperation on Climate Change Adaptation & Disaster Management, Livelihood & Sustainable Development research and health intervention. Additionally, both institutions will extend invitations to their respective officials, volunteers, and students for participation in training sessions, seminars, and conferences. The collaboration will further strengthen the interconnectivity between industry and academia. PRCS will provide internship opportunities to the students of SZABIST. PRCS will also provide First Aid Training to the students and faculty members of SZABIST. At the end, Chairman PRCS Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari and Head of Campus SZABIST Mr. Khuro Pervaiz Khan exchanged mementos.

## Briefs

## Iran sentences filmmaker to prison for screening film at Cannes

TEHRAN: An Iranian filmmaker and his producer reportedly face prison time and being barred from filmmaking after they showcased a movie at the Cannes Film Festival without government approval, drawing immediate criticism internationally from leading American director Martin Scorsese and others. Director Saeed Roustayi and producer Javad Norouzbeigi traveled to Cannes last year to show "Leila's Brothers," competing for the festival's grand Palme d'Or prize. The film focuses on a family struggling to make ends meet as Iran faces international sanctions and includes sequences showing protests in the Islamic Republic as a series of nationwide demonstrations shook the nation. The film also depicts security forces beating demonstrators protesting Iran's ailing economy, which has already sparked mass protests and bloody security force crackdowns killing hundreds. The family in it loses all its savings over the rapid depreciation of Iran's rial currency, something Iranians across the country have lived with for years.

Additionally, the aging patriarch, hoarding his family's wealth and forcing them into squalor for a chance at personal glory, can be seen as an allegory to Iran's theocracy.—APP

## Belarusian policy based on 'strong economy'

MINKS: Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko on Thursday said his country's policy is based on a "strong economy and powerful diplomacy."

"Unfortunately, through no fault of ours, the world today is completely unstable. Very powerful turbulent events are taking place in the world. And we have to be strong. Because it so happens that strength is always respected," Lukashenko said during a meeting with visiting Chinese Defense Minister Li Shangfu in the capital Minsk. According to a statement by the presidency, Lukashenko thanked Li for military cooperation, saying his country primarily relies on Beijing and Moscow in this regard. Belarus backs the idea of a multipolar world, and supports the territorial integrity and unity of borders and territories established after World War II, he added. "We are for non-interference in the internal affairs of states," Lukashenko said, expressing that Belarus has supported China for more than 30 years, underlining the need to "secure our states and our peoples."—Agencies

## Moscow court fines Google \$32,330

MOSCOW: A Moscow court on Thursday imposed a fine of 3 million Russian rubles (\$32,330) on Google for failing to remove "false information" on the country's "special military operation" in Ukraine, state news agency TASS said.

A judge of the Moscow Magistrates' Court said the court found the US tech giant guilty of "committing an administrative offense under Part 2 of Article 13.41 of the Code of Administrative Offenses of the Russian Federation." A notice was sent to Google on the need to remove videos on YouTube, which, among others, contained "false information" on the war that began in February last year. Google stopped selling online advertising in Russia in March 2022 after the military campaign, but kept some free services available. In June, a Russian court fined Google 4 billion rubles (\$4 million) for failing to pay an earlier fine over alleged abuse of its dominant position in the video hosting market.—APP



KUALA LUMPUR: Syed Ahsan Raza Shah presented Letter of Credence as High Commissioner of Pakistan to Yang Di-Pertuan Agong, the King of Malaysia, at Istana Negara. HC conveyed warm greetings to His Majesty from the President of Pakistan.—DNA

## Niger's neighbors running out of options as defense chiefs meet

Niger's coup was seen by the international community and ECOWAS as one too many and in addition to threatening a military invasion, the bloc has imposed severe economic and travel sanctions

NIAMEY: Regional countries are facing a crisis of legitimacy as they run out of options and time to restore democratic rule in Niger after soldiers ousted the president last month, say analysts. Defense chiefs from the West African regional bloc, ECOWAS, are meeting in Ghana Thursday to discuss Niger's crisis after a deadline passed for mutinous soldiers to release and reinstate President Mohamed Bazoum or face military intervention. Bazoum was overthrown in July and remains under house arrest with his wife and son in the capital, Niamey. This is the first meeting since ECOWAS ordered the deployment of a "standby force" last week to restore constitutional rule in the country. It's unclear if or when troops would intervene. A force would likely consist of several thousands of soldiers from Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Senegal

and Benin and could take weeks or months to prepare, say conflict experts. ECOWAS has a poor track record in stemming the region's rampant coups: neighboring Burkina Faso and Mali have each had two within three years. Niger's coup was seen by the international community and ECOWAS as one too many and in addition to threatening a military invasion, the bloc has imposed severe economic and travel sanctions. But as time drags on with no military action and a standstill in negotiations, the junta is entrenching its power, leaving ECOWAS with few choices. "ECOWAS has few good options ... particularly as the (junta) seems unwilling for the moment to cede to outside pressure," said Andrew Lebovich, a research fellow with the Clingendael Institute, a think tank. "An intervention could backfire and damage the organi-

zation in numerous ways, while a failure to extract major concessions from the (junta) could weaken the organization politically at an already fragile time," he said. The top security body of the African Union met Monday to consider whether it would support military intervention but has yet to make public its decision. The AU's Peace and Security Council could overrule a military intervention if it felt that wider stability on the continent was threatened by it. If it rejects the use of force, there are few grounds under which ECOWAS could claim legal justification, said Lebovich. But on Thursday, Abdel-Fatau Musah, the ECOWAS commissioner for peace and security, told reporters that the bloc was working with the United Nations on Niger's situation and didn't "need any approval from the Security Council to find a solution to the crisis."

In recent years, Western countries have poured hundreds of millions of dollars of aid into Niger, which was seen as one of the last democratic countries in the Sahel region south of the Sahara Desert that it could partner with to beat back a growing jihadi insurgency linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State group. France and the United States have approximately 2,500 military personnel in the country, which trained soldiers and, in the case of France, conducted joint operations. Since the coup, both countries have suspended military operations, which Sahel experts say is leading to an increase in attacks. On Tuesday, at least 17 Nigerien soldiers were killed and nearly two dozen wounded in the Tillaberi region in the biggest attack by jihadis in six months. Former militants have told The AP that active jihadis are leveraging the coup to

move around more freely and plan further violence while Niger's security forces are distracted in Niamey and Western assistance has halted. Displaced people who fled jihadi violence and are now living in makeshift huts in Niamey say they've suffered enough from the extremists. They don't want more problems from their neighbors. "I ask God not to bring (ECOWAS). We lost more than 600 people (from jihadi violence). I support the military, and God curse anyone who doesn't love Niger," said Daouda Mounkaila. Last year he, his wife and their 11 children were chased from their home in Tillaberi, one of the hardest-hit regions in the country. Others in the capital are trying to cope with the impact of the ECOWAS sanctions. Niger relies on neighboring Nigeria for up to 90% of its energy, which has in part been cut

off. The streets are littered with generators powering shops. Restaurant owners say they can't keep their fridges cold and have lost customers. The sanctions are making it hard for aid groups to get food and supplies in. Before the coup, more than 4 million people in Niger — a country of some 25 million — were in need of humanitarian assistance, a number that's now expected to surge, say aid groups. Trucks are stuck at the borders with Benin and Nigeria. Routes through countries that have ignored the sanctions, such as Burkina Faso, are dangerous because they're infiltrated with extremists. "With the closure of land and air borders, it's hard to bring aid into the country," said Louise Aubin, the U.N. resident coordinator in Niger. Supplies such as food and vaccines could run out. It's unclear how long the current stock will last, she said.—Agencies

## Armenia's exploitation of UNSC 'counter-productive, utterly destructive'

Baku hopes Yerevan realizes solution lies in 'constructive engagement, good-faith implementation of int'l law, commitments within this framework,' says Foreign Ministry

BAKU: Azerbaijan said early Thursday that Armenia's manipulation and exploitation of the UN Security Council is "counter-productive and utterly destructive" in terms of taking the process of normalization between Baku and Yerevan forward. "Armenia's attempt to instrumentalize the UN Security Council in its campaign of blackmailing failed for yet another time," the Azerbaijani Foreign Ministry said in a statement following a meeting of the UN Security Council on the situation in the Lachin road. The statement said it hoped Armenia realizes that the solution to regional issues lies in "constructive engagement and good-faith implementation of international law, and commitments undertaken within this framework." It further said that the basis for peace and stability in the region is "a recognition of sovereignty and territorial integrity both in words and deeds" as emphasized by numerous UN Security Council members during the meeting. It expressed Azerbaijan's appreciation of the statements made by several Security Council members, as well as Türkiye, on the need for such dialogue and engagement regarding the opening of routes proposed by Azerbaijan, especially the Aghdam-Khankendi road, to deliver goods to meet the needs of Armenian residents of the Karabakh region. It added that the meeting confirmed that Azerbaijan's proposal on the use of the Aghdam-Khankendi road was received positively and Armenia's obstructions in this regard need to be abandoned. "Moreover, acknowledgment of legitimate security concerns of Azerbaijan by some member states is a promising step toward overcoming certain challenges in the region," the statement said, further expressing that Baku is "firm to protect our sovereignty and territorial integrity by all legitimate means enshrined in the UN Charter and international law." "Azerbaijan remains committed to constructive engagement with all those who bear sincere interest in taking forward the normalization agenda and thus, is willing and able to contribute to attaining long-awaited peace and stability in the region." Despite ongoing talks over a long-term peace agreement, tensions between the neighboring countries rose in recent months over the Lachin road, the only land route giving Armenia access to the Karabakh region, where Azerbaijan established a border checkpoint in April on the grounds of preventing the illegal transport of military arms and equipment to the region. Relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia have been tense since 1991 when the Armenian military occupied Nagorno-Karabakh, a territory internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan, and seven adjacent regions. In the fall of 2020, Azerbaijan liberated several cities, villages, and settlements from Armenian occupation during 44 days of clashes. The war ended with a Russia-brokered peace agreement.—DNA

## Wang Yi addresses 7th China-S. Asia Expo opening ceremony

BEIJING: Wang Yi, director of the Office of the Central Commission for Foreign Affairs, attended and addressed the opening ceremony of the seventh China-South Asia Expo in Kunming, southwest China's Yunnan Province. Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, said that this year marks the 10th anniversary of the expo and also the 10th anniversary of the Belt and Road Initiative and the neighborhood diplomacy featuring amity, sincerity, mutual benefit and inclusiveness. "Over the past decade, we have consolidated solidarity and cooperation to safeguard regional security and the development environment. We have continued to build the Belt and Road and made gratifying progress in connectivity, infrastructure, trade and investment. We have carried out in-depth friendly exchanges, adhered to the principle of openness and inclusiveness, and built a multi-level platform for people-to-people exchanges," Wang said. He stressed that China stands ready to work with South Asian countries to strengthen solidarity and coordination, foster new development drivers, build a community of development, and contribute to enduring peace, stability and prosperity in the region. Wang made suggestions on cooperation in four areas: deepening strategic mutual trust, deepening connectivity, deepening economic and trade cooperation, and deepening people-to-people exchanges. Sri Lankan Prime Minister Dinesh Gunawardena, Lao Vice President Pany Yathotou, Nepalese Vice President Ram Sahay Prasad Yadav, and Vietnam's Deputy Prime Minister Tran Luu Quang attended the opening ceremony. All parties thanked China for creating an efficient cooperation platform to help South Asian countries catch a ride on China's fast train of development.—DNA

## French gov't to hold crisis meeting as heatwave mounts

PARIS: France's government will on Thursday hold a crisis meeting to tackle a heatwave that could reach its high point at the weekend, Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne's office told AFP. Senior civil servants from Borne's office as well as the interior, health, agriculture and transport ministries were set to meet at 5:00 pm (1500 GMT). Paris has been stepping up hot weather protection measures this summer after 2022 brought intense heat and fierce wildfires, with four of mainland France and Corsica's 96 departments currently at elevated fire risk and drought affecting two-thirds of water tables. Some 500 hectares were scorched in the Pyrenees-Orientales department bordering Spain on Monday night. And seven departments in southeastern France are on alert for summer storms and intense heat. Meanwhile the SPF public health authority said Thursday that at least 30 more deaths than normal had occurred during a July heatwave in the southeastern Provence-Alpes-Cote d'Azur region, on top of 80 in a first episode in June. More than 4,800 deaths were attributed to heat in France last summer, out of 61,000 across Europe. On Thursday, temperatures above 30 degrees Celsius (86 degrees Fahrenheit) were expected across much of southern France, with peaks of up to 37. A so-called "heat dome" trapping new hot air arriving from the south is expected to form in the coming days. "These high temperatures are set to last, with peaks nearing 40C on the Mediterranean coast and the Rhone valley from this weekend," weather authority Meteo France said. Heat will spread into central and northern France as well, with temperatures of 35C forecast for Paris. Thermometers will not begin to fall until "the middle or even the end of next week," Meteo France added.—APP

## 10 people die after plane crash in Malaysia

KUALA LUMPUR: At least 10 people, including six passengers and two crew members, were killed when an aircraft crashed in Malaysia on Thursday, police said. The plane crashed in Elmina area in the capital Shah Alam of Selangor state, police told the state-run Bernama news agency. The deceased include eight people who were onboard the aircraft, as well as the driver of a car and a motorcyclist that were hit by the crashing plane. According to the Civil Aviation Authority of Malaysia, the Beechcraft model 390 aircraft flew from Langkawi International Airport and was scheduled to land at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport for a domestic flight. Videos and images of the crash site were widely shared on social media.

## Ukraine extends martial law for another 90 days

KIEV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Thursday signed bills to extend martial law and general mobilization for another 90 days, until Nov. 15. The law becomes effective as of Aug. 18 when the term of the previously announced martial law and general mobilization ends. Zelenskyy submitted two draft bills on July 26 to the Verkhovna Rada, or parliament, on extending martial law and mobilization. The parliament approved them on July 27. Martial law was first declared by Zelenskyy immediately after the start of the Russia-Ukraine war on Feb. 24, 2022 and has been extended several times. Ukraine's upcoming parliamentary elections were scheduled to take place in October 2023. However, the country's constitution prohibits to hold elections during martial law. The ongoing Russia-Ukraine war has killed over 9,000 civilians and wounded more than 15,700, according to the latest UN figures.—APP

## Thousands flee wildfires in Canada's far north

OTTAWA: Thousands ordered to flee wildfires advancing on one of the largest cities in Canada's far north crammed into a local airport on Thursday to board emergency evacuation flights, as convoys snaked south to safety on the only open highway. The order late Wednesday to evacuate Yellowknife in the Northwest Territories marked the latest chapter of a terrible summer for wildfires in Canada, with tens of thousands of people forced to leave their homes and vast swathes of land scorched. Tiffany Champagne was one of many awaiting flights at the airport in Yellowknife. "I have asthma and the wildfire smoke was making it increasingly difficult to do anything," Champagne, wearing a face mask, told the CBC. "I'm just kind of mentally checked out at this point." As of early Thursday, more than 1,000 wildfires were burning, in-

cluding about 230 in the Northwest Territories. More than 20,000 residents of Yellowknife, the regional capital, have been given until noon Friday to leave by road or on commercial and military flights. "We're all tired of the word unprecedented, yet there is no other way to describe this situation in the Northwest Territories," regional premier Caroline Cochrane said on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter. Yellowknife Mayor Rebecca Alty warned drivers that the flames were skirting the edges of highways and they would encounter limited visibility as thick smoke turned the sky orange. Flights to nearby Alberta province were scheduled to depart Yellowknife starting at 1:00 pm (1900 GMT) Thursday. "Kilometers of vehicles started leaving yesterday, and there were folks flying out yesterday and to-

day," she told public broadcaster CBC. A wildfire was within 16 kilometers (10 miles) of Yellowknife on Thursday. Yellowknife declared an emergency earlier this week, and that was soon expanded across the huge northern territory as firefighters were forced to pull back in some areas. Strong winds stoked the flames, and several towns and Indigenous communities were already under evacuation orders. "Unfortunately, our wildfire situation has taken another turn for the worse with a fire burning west of Yellowknife now representing a real threat to the city," NW Territories environment minister Shane Thompson told reporters late Wednesday. "Without rain, it is possible (the fire) will reach the city outskirts by the weekend." Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Ottawa would "assist however we can." Several military aircraft were dispatched along with more than

120 soldiers to help beat back the flames. In what had already been declared the Northwest Territories' largest-ever evacuation, the emptying of Yellowknife now means half the population of the near-Arctic territory will soon be displaced. On Monday, the Canadian military started airlifting residents of smaller communities in the region to safety after roads were engulfed in flames. For many, it was the second time in recent months that residents were forced to leave their homes. Separated by several hundreds of kilometers, most of the villages in the territory are difficult to evacuate by land, officials said. Images shared on social media and on Canadian television showed large swaths of blackened forests. On those cars and trucks that made it out before roads became impassable, headlights were melted and paint peeled off the vehicles. On social media, Maggie Noble said

the escape from Yellowknife was "slow going" in the darkness, taking her sister five hours to drive just 100 kilometers. According to wildfire official Mike Westwick, the situation "continues to be critical, with thick smoke hampering efforts to bring the blazes under control. The evacuation of Yellowknife is the second time a Canadian city has been cleared due to wildfires since 100,000 residents of Fort McMurray in Alberta's oil and gas producing heartland were forced out in 2016. More than 2,000 homes and businesses were destroyed in that blaze. Earlier this year, suburbs of Halifax on the Atlantic coast were evacuated. Fires this season have spread across Canada with remarkable intensity, scorching 13.5 million hectares (33.4 million acres), according to the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre. Four people have died so far.—Agencies

## Briefs

**Gold edges up for third consecutive session**

DNA

KARACHI: Gold in Pakistan continued to edge up for the third consecutive session on Thursday despite a decrease in the international bullion market. According to data released by the All-Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association (APSGJA), the price of gold (24 carats) increased by Rs1,200 per tola and Rs1,029 per 10 grams to settle at Rs225,000 and Rs192,901, respectively. Meanwhile, the price of the yellow metal also fell by \$5 to settle at \$1,900 per ounce in the international market. Gold hovered around a five-month low internationally after data pointed to a resilient US economy and raised prospects that the Federal Reserve may hike interest rates once more this year. "Gold is being hit by a perfect storm with multiple negative factors arguably feeding on itself, which is self-reinforcing," said independent analyst Ross Norman.

**Capital police forms 'Minority Protection Unit'**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad police on Thursday formed a "Minority Protection Unit" (MPU) comprising 70 policemen for the "protection of minority places of worship and communities". In a post on X (formerly Twitter), the police said, "Seventy jawans (policemen) have been posted in the 'Minority Protection Unit'." The move comes a day after a violent mob of hundreds ransacked and torched at least five churches and attacked the residences of members of the Christian community following an alleged incident of blasphemy in the Jaranwala town of Faisalabad district. A Christian cemetery and the office of the local assistant commissioner were also vandalised. The incident had led the Punjab government to call in Rangers while 3,000 police personnel from various police units, including the Elite Force, had been deployed as well.

**Hawaii officials say 'no regrets' about lack of sirens**

DNA

MAUI: Embattled officials in Hawaii who have been criticised for the lack of warnings as a deadly wildfire ripped through a town insisted on Wednesday that sounding emergency sirens would not have saved lives. At least 110 people died when the inferno levelled Lahaina last week on the island of Maui, with some residents not aware their town was at risk until they saw flames for themselves. But the head of Maui's Emergency Management Agency, which operates a network of 80 sirens, on Wednesday defended the decision not to sound them as fire bore down on Lahaina's more than 12,000 people.

# 'High-level' probe ordered into vandalism of churches

Punjab govt to 'restore' churches, Christians' homes ransacked during Jaranwala violence: Naqvi

DNA

LAHORE: The interim Punjab government has ordered a high-level inquiry after a mob set fire to a number of churches and vandalised Christians' homes during a rampage on Wednesday, with authorities saying over 100 people had been arrested. The mob made its way through a predominantly Christian area on the outskirts of the industrial city of Faisalabad after allegations spread that the Holy Quran had been desecrated. "This was a well thought out plan to disrupt peace and a high-level investigation is underway regarding the desecration of the Holy Quran and incidents that take place afterward," a spokesperson for the provincial government said in a statement. The spokesperson said police "foiled" the bid to attack the homes of the minorities and that the "peace committee" mobilised to ensure similar attempts are thwarted. "The frequency and scale of such attacks — which are systematic, violent and often uncontrollable — appear to have increased in the last several years," said the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. The rights group called for the setting up and equipping of special police forces to

## Ulemas offer apology over Jaranwala incident

LAHORE: A delegation of the Muslim Ulemas-Mashaykh also offered apology to the Christian leaders and Christian community over desecration of the secret and holy place of the Christians and also announced to observe **Condensation Day** on Friday, August 18. Speaking with media along with the Muslim and Christian leadership here on Thursday, at Cathedral Church Lahore, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi said that the government should get repair and rebuild all the holy places of the Christian community damaged in Jaranwala incident. Those who have done such a horrific deed have defamed both Islam and Pakistan and the horrible act done in Jaranwala is very deplorable and denouncing. The Ulemas-Mashaykh also said that the Jaranwala incident will also be condemned in Friday sermons all over the country and a high-level delegation of religious leaders will also visit Jaranwala on Saturday, said Ulemas-Mashaykh. The Punjab government should complete the investigation as early as possible and make the report public on Jaranwala incident. Chairman Pakistan Ulama Council Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, Archbishop Sebastian Shah, Pastor Emmanuel Khokhar, Pastor Saleem, Maulana Nauman Hasher, Maulana Muhammad Shafiq Qasmi, Maulana Asadullah Farooq, Maulana Zubair Abid, Maulana Muhammad Ashfaq Patafi, Maulana Tahir Aqeel Awan, Maulana Muhammad Aslam Siddiqui, Qari Abdul Hakeem Athar, Maulana Muhammad Aslam Qadri, Mufti Naseem Islam, Maulana Qari Mubashir Rahimi and others said that those who attacked the secret places of the Christian community in Jaranwala have defamed Islam and Pakistan. A speedy trial should be conducted against the criminals involve in this incident inside the Jaranwala city. — Agencies

protect religious minorities' sites of worship, as directed by a 2014 Supreme Court judgment. Caretaker Prime Minister Anwar ulHaq Kakar called for stern action against those responsible for Wednesday's violence. "I am gutted by the visuals coming out," he said. Police and rescue officials said at least four churches had been set on fire, while residents said as many as a dozen buildings with church status had been damaged. Several thousand police have been sent to secure the area and dozens of people detained, Amir Mir, the information minister for Punjab province, said in a statement that also condemned the alleged blasphemy. Yasir Bhatti, a 31-year-old Christian, fled his home in a narrow alley next to one of the churches that was ransacked by the mob. "They broke the windows, doors and took out fridges, sofas, chairs and other household items to pile them up in front of the Church to be burnt. They also burnt and desecrated Bibles, they were ruthless," he told AFP by phone. Blasphemy is a sensitive issue in Pakistan, where anyone deemed to have insulted Islam or Islamic figures can face the death penalty. Pakistani bishop Azad Marshall, in the neighbouring city of Lahore, said the Christian community was "deeply pained and distressed" by the events.

## 'Civil judge also used to torture teenage maid'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Besides his wife, Civil Judge Asim Hafeez also used to torture Rizwana — a 14-year-old domestic help who was brought to the hospital in critical condition after being subject to brutal torture last month — accused the victim's grandmother. The case came to light on July 25 when the victim was shifted to a hospital in Lahore with serious injuries. Taking swift action on the reports, the police filed a case against the wife of the civil judge for the alleged brutal torture of the 14-year-old girl, employed as a domestic help at their house. Talking to Geo News, her grandmother said, "The judge's family used to lock her granddaughter in a room before leaving for Kashmir for a couple of days." She was subjected to severe torture, her grandmother added. Sonia — her sister — said that Rizwana used to speak briefly on the phone, adding that she did not tell them about the torture as the telephonic contacts were made in the presence of the judge's wife.



ISLAMABAD: US Ambassador to Pakistan H.E. Mr. Donald Blome calls on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force. — DNA

## Pak-US enjoy cordial ties as key allies: CAS

ISLAMABAD: U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan H.E. Mr. Donald Blome called on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force in his office. The discussion underscored matters pertaining to geo political environment leading to emerging regional security challenges, augmenting the already fortified bilateral ties and fostering collaborative endeavours within the realms of defence and aviation. The Air Chief accentuated the cordial relations that exist between the two nations while emphasizing his steadfast determination to elevate the existing synergistic partnership between the two key allies. Chief of the Air Staff further said, "Pakistan deeply values its robust diplomatic, economic and defence ties with the United States of America which are firmly rooted in mutual consensus concerning all important matters pertaining to regional peace, security and stability." During the meeting, the visiting envoy extolled the commendable level of professionalism of Pakistan Air Force personnel and acknowledged the remarkable strides made by PAF through indigenization under the current leadership. Recognizing the importance of rigorous and comprehensive training, he assured to play his role to address the gaps in the training domain so as to ensure that PAF personnel receive the highest quality training, enabling them to meet the evolving challenges of modern warfare. The US Ambassador also expressed his admiration for Pakistan's unwavering commitment to facilitate regional peace and stability. Both sides concurred to further optimize the existing military-to-military relationship between the two countries with specific focus on enriching training and bolstering operational competencies. The meeting between the US Ambassador and Chief of the Air Staff manifests the deep interest and willingness on both sides to further consolidate the longstanding bilateral strategic ties into concrete and mutually rewarding defence partnership. The visit will contribute to further enhancement of multi-faceted collaboration between the two countries. — DNA

## Amid Quran burnings, Sweden raises 'terror' threat

STOCKHOLM: Sweden has faced international condemnation after a string of desecrations of the holy book by anti-Islam activists. Sweden's security service, SAPO, has raised its assessment of the level of threat against Sweden to 4 on a scale of 5 amid mounting international tension over the burning of copies of the Quran at demonstrations in the Nordic country. "The threat against Sweden has gradually changed and the threat of attacks from actors within violent Islamism has increased during the year," the security service said in a statement. SAPO said Sweden had gone from being regarded as a legitimate target for "terrorist" attacks to being regarded as a priority target. In the past few months, Sweden and Denmark have faced a backlash from Muslim countries after a string of anti-Islam activists burned copies of the Quran, the Muslim holy book. Under free speech laws, Quran burnings are permitted in Sweden, but the act is considered sinful by the Muslim world. While Denmark and Sweden have condemned the burnings and are considering new legislation to stop them from happening, domestic critics have said it would undermine their laws on protected freedoms. Numerous countries have denounced the Quran desecrations. In Muslim-majority nations, people protested and tried to vandalise the Swedish and Danish embassies. In response, Denmark and Sweden tightened their border controls this month after fearing "revenge" attacks for the burnings. Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said religious texts should not be burned. "I think it would be wrong if someone stood there and burned the Bible. I also don't think we should burn the Torah for the sake of those who belong to the Jewish faith," he told the public broadcaster DR. Last week, the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office warned citizens against visiting Sweden due to an increased possibility of an attack due to the Islamophobic displays. In the updated travel advice, Britain said Sweden had successfully disrupted some planned attacks and made arrests. The ministry told visitors, "You should be vigilant at this time. ... Terrorists are very likely to try and carry out attacks in Sweden." — DNA

## More than 60 migrants feared dead at sea

WEB DESK

DAKAR: More than 60 migrants have possibly lost their lives after a boat carrying them was found capsized at Cape Verde peninsula of Senegal in the West African region, as per the official notice. Thirty-eight people, including children, were rescued, BBC reported, adding that footage showed survivors being helped ashore — some on stretchers — on the island of Sal. It is believed that almost everyone on the boat — which spent more than a month at sea — was from Senegal. To help stop additional migrant deaths, Cape Verde officials have called for worldwide action. The vessel was first spotted on Monday, AFP reported citing police officials. While initial reports suggested the boat had sunk, it was later clarified that it had been found drifting. A Spanish fishing boat spotted the wooden pirogue-style boat capsized some 320 kilometers (200 miles) off Sal, and immediately contacted the authorities, the police added. An International Organisation for Migration (IOM) official also confirmed that four children — between the ages of 12 and 16 — are among the survivors.

## Saudi Arabia hopes to see Iran's Raisi visit

*Saudi Arabia broke ties with Iran in 2016 after protesters attacked its embassy in Tehran in retaliation for Riyadh's execution of a prominent Shiite cleric*

WEB DESK

DUBAI: Saudi Arabia hopes to see Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi visit the Kingdom following an invitation from King Salman bin Abdulaziz, Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan said on Thursday in a press conference with his Iranian counterpart. Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian arrived Thursday in Riyadh on his first trip to Saudi Arabia since a landmark rapprochement deal in March. Amir-Abdollahian has confirmed that Raisi will visit Saudi Arabia anytime soon. Iran and Saudi Arabia earlier agreed in a China-brokered deal to end a diplomatic rift and reestablish relations following years of hostility that had endangered regional stability in the Gulf, as well as in Yemen, Syria and Lebanon. Saudi Arabia broke ties with Iran in 2016 after protesters attacked its embassy in Tehran in retaliation for Riyadh's execution of a prominent Shiite cleric. Prince Faisal added that the countries' corresponding ambassadors will start in their positions in their respective embassies after their reopening as a result of the two countries ending a diplomatic rift in March and reestablishing relations. He also thanked the Iranian envoy for his country's support in Saudi Arabia's bid to host Expo 2030. Amir-Abdollahian has said that talks with Saudi Arabia have been successful, and both parties have agreed to work together and find immediate solutions to pressing issues in the region. He also reiterated that Tehran was committed to efforts in achieving security and peace in the region.

## Rohingya refugees fled Myanmar only to 'live in fear' in India

MONITORING DESK

NUH, INDIA: Abdul Jabbar, a Rohingya refugee living in a camp 80km (50 miles) from New Delhi, went to a nearby store earlier this month to find out what was keeping his 14-year-old son, who had left hours earlier to buy powdered pepper for that night's meal. When he arrived, bystanders told Abdul Jabbar that police had apprehended his son while he connected to the shop's WiFi to play games on his phone. Abdul Jabbar, who fled Myanmar in 2014 to live in one of two Rohingya refugee camps in Nuh, went to the nearest police station only to be told that his son wasn't there. After three days of searching, Abdul Jabbar discovered that his son, who claimed police had beaten him, had been sent to a juvenile correctional facility on suspicion of being involved in setting a police station on fire when violent clashes broke out in Nuh last month. "People from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) have advised us to not leave the camp to avoid any police action. How can we go out for riots? The only time we go out is to get groceries from a nearby store," he said, denying the charges against his son. Days of sectarian clashes erupted on July 31, killing six men, including a Muslim leader in Gurugram and two po-

lice officers in neighbouring Nuh, the only Muslim-majority district in Haryana. The violence started during a procession by a prominent Hindu right-wing military organisation, Bajrang Dal, and its parent organisation, Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), along with other similar groups. In the aftermath of the clashes, in Nuh and surrounding violence-affected areas, at least 150 people have been arrested, and more than 1200 properties, mostly belonging to Muslims, have been bulldozed by Haryana's right-wing government of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). "The atmosphere of fear is such that, to evade being apprehended by the police, we hide in the fields and forests nearby during the night," Abdul Jabbar told media. "There is no one to advocate for us in case the police detain any of us." Along with Abdul Jabbar's son, three other Rohingya Muslims in Nuh were apprehended by the police, including a 17-year-old who had accompanied Abdul Jabbar's son to the shop. The father of the 17-year-old searched for his son for two days before learning that he had been sent to a juvenile correctional facility on the same charges as Abdul Jabbar's son. At another refugee camp in Nuh, 21-year-old Saifullah, who makes and repairs shanties, was picked up by police on August 4, according to his wife. Shiri Jahan told media that she doesn't know where her husband is or why he was arrested.

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